The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

Papers 2000

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Editor:
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The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History
1975-2000

Standing at the portal of our second quarter-century as a Canadian Learned Society, dedicated to the study of Presbyterian and Reformed History

Remarks from the President

With a gratifying sense of nostalgia does one recall 1975, the year our society was founded during the centennial of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the fiftieth anniversary of the United Church of Canada. Commemorative communion tokens were struck and banners hung in sanctuaries across the nation. A modern Presbyterian Archives had been opened in Toronto. Members of the Society were invited to tour this state-of-the-art facility, following the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History.

For many years, the need for a national museum, displaying and interpreting Presbyterian artifacts, had been discussed. Now a tour of the new National Presbyterian Museum in Toronto is tentatively planned at the time of our annual meeting in September 2001. Of special interest to the Society will be the display of thousands of communion tokens originating in Great Britain, continental Europe and North America, as well as 17th to 19th century books and various examples of pewter and silver communion ware.

Now your society carries its mandate into the new millennium. For the past quarter-century, Society members have listened and responded to learned papers presented on the last Saturday of each September in Toronto (once in Hamilton). The society has been enriched by the catholicity of both presenters and subject matter. Speeches are published, bound and distributed annually. Included in this package are the five most recent papers delivered last year. It is suggested that members encourage their friends to attend the next meeting of the society, beginning at 10 a.m., September 30, 2001, Knox College, Toronto.

Membership in the Society is open to individuals and institutions interested in its objectives — the promotion of public interest in this field of history through the holding of meetings and the publication of papers. Persons considering the presentation of a paper in the future or seeking further information are asked to consult the president, John A. Johnston, 183 Chedoke Avenue, Hamilton, ON, L8P 4P2.

Annual dues of $15.00 include membership in the organization and one printed bound copy of papers for the current year. Payment may be sent to the secretary-treasurer, Michael Miller, 293 Shanty Bay Road, Barrie, ON, L4M 1E6, or presented at the annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
John Alexander Johnston, Ph.D., D.D.

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Biographical Notes on Contributors

Bruce Cossar was a librarian at Trent University for twenty-one years before entering the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. After serving the Stirling/West Huntingdon charge he has been semi-retired since 1997.

T. Melville Bailey is the Minister Emeritus of the South Gate Presbyterian Church in Hamilton. He is also a local historian and editor and has been the former secretary of the Committee on History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Duncan James Jeffrey has served the Presbyterian Church in Canada in a number of capacities. Currently he is working for the Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Bermuda.

Geoffrey Johnston has been a Presbyterian missionary in Nigeria and Jamaica. Before his retirement he as director of Pastoral Studies at Presbyterian College in Montreal.

Michael Millar is a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society of Canada. He is the Clerk of Session at St. Andrews's Barrie and has been a member of the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Committee on History since 1984.

CHURCH UNION IN KINGSTON

by Bruce Cossar

This paper was first prepared for the Kingston Historical Society. For that audience it was necessary to explain some church terminology and then "set the scene" in terms of the Church Union movement in the first quarter of the 20th century. For this audience no such preliminary is needed. We can therefore move immediately to a brief introduction to Kingston and its churches at that time.

Kingston was still a small city, but with increasing development outside the limits. The village of Portsmouth was a separate municipality on the western edge, but for our purpose it is included here as part of the city. Apart from scattered villages, the surrounding townships were still almost totally rural.

The 1911 census recorded a population of 20,660. By 1921, in spite of many men lost in the Great War, it had increased to 24,104. Ten years further on it was 25,780. The religious distribution is shown in Table 1.

Kingston Churches Before Union

Looking at the three denominations discussing Church Union, we find the following:

a. Congregational Churches

In 1911 there were three Congregational Churches:

-- First Church, downtown, had roots dating back to the 1820s. Their fine gothic building had been erected in 1865, and rebuilt and enlarged after a fire in 1891. About1900, however, the congregation began a slow but steady decline.

-- Bethel Church was founded in 1874 in recognition of the need of a congregation on the outskirts of the city. By 1911, their building a block from the Roman Catholic cathedral was really 'mid-town.' They had also developed an independent and evangelical spirit which did not respond favourably to the Church Union proposals.

-- Calvary Church was established in 1889 as a joint project of First Church and Bethel to serve the north part of town.

All three were numerically small and financially weak. All three had difficulty attracting ministers or keeping them for any length of time.

b. Methodist Churches

There were five Methodist churches:

-- Sydenham St. congregation was formed in the late 1840s when British and American Methodist movements in Canada were united. Being now a prosperous and respectable element in society, and accounting for almost 10% of the population, they erected a large new sanctuary in a fashionable part of town, emulating the church buildings of other large denominations in the city.

-- Princess St. started in 1850 as a Methodist mission a mile or so west of town. It adopted the name Princess St. Church in 1889.

-- Queen St. began in 1858 as an extension from Sydenham. Its first building had been destroyed by fire in 1886; a new building was dedicated the next year.

-- There was a small congregation of 40-some out in Portsmouth, dating from the 1850s. They worshipped in a little stone building on King St. on the edge of the Rockwood Asylum property.

-- And in 1911 there was also a Methodist Church downtown on Brock St. I am not sure when this congregation began, but their building was erected in 1878, with a steeple and spire almost as tall as that at Sydenham St. In 1911 they had over 300 members. When Queen St. suffered another disastrous fire in April, 1919, its members went over to Brock St. for their worship services.

When Queen St. reopened the next year, however, it was decided to amalgamate the two congregations. The Brock St. building was sold and became an automotive garage. It was torn down in 1948 and replaced by a non-descript structure, but the old brick smokestack is still there and still in use. At the back corner you can still see the buttresses which are so common in church architecture; and inside you can still find old gothic window frames.

c. Presbyterian Churches

The Presbyterians had four congregations. The oldest was St. Andrew's, begun in 1817, and its first stone building dated from 1820. When that structure was destroyed by fire in 1888, the present edifice was quickly erected in its place. It was one of the largest Presbyterian congregations in eastern Ontario.

As in so many other places in Canada, the 1843 Disruption in Scotland also had its effects in Kingston. A considerable number of Free Church supporters left St. Andrew's to form Chalmers Church. At the same time, another group wanted to associate with the Free Church in Ulster. They formed Cooke's Church - locally known as the "Irish Frees."

By 1900 the three churches were all thriving congregations, each with a fine stone building. It was too bad that they were located within a four-block spread.

The fourth Presbyterian congregation was Zion Church, a much smaller group and facility, begun in 1890 by the Queen's Missionary Society to provide religious education, worship and pastoral care in a part of town not well-served by the Presbyterian Church.

Thus, there were 12 congregations in Kingston when the Union movement began in 1902.

Responses to the Union Movement

When the Basis of Union document went before the denominational authorities in 1910, Methodists and Congregationalists gave approval with strong majorities. Subsequent votes by congregations were equally supportive. Had their Presbyterian friends felt the same way, Union might have been completed quickly. Instead the fight went on for another 15 years. What happened in Kingston is best described on a denominational, church-by-church basis.

Congregational Churches

In 1910, Kingston's Congregational Churches all voted in favour of Union (Table 2). Over the next few years, however, their positions changed considerably.

In 1917 Bethel Church pulpit was vacant, and the First Church minister helped to cover their needs (the buildings were actually only six blocks apart). Morning services were at Bethel, evening services at First Church. They briefly considered calling one minister for the two congregations, with a student assistant, but nothing came of the idea.

In April, 1918, First Church formally proposed amalgamation of the congregations, with a building committee to dispose of one or both sites and eventually arrange a new facility on a central site. In the meantime, worship services would be at First Church; prayer meetings, etc. at Bethel. Though the idea was strongly supported by Dr. W. T. Gunn, General Secretary of the Congregational Union of Canada, Bethel politely but firmly rejected it.

The people at Bethel believed that their up-town site was the better location for worship services, and they were determined to continue on their own. Five years later, joining the Union was "deemed unwise," and they voted unanimously to remain an independent church.[1] They were one of only five congregational churches in Ontario to reject the Union. All were strongly evangelical and foresaw little evangelistic benefit from the Union.

Downtown, sad to say, First Church was dying -- steadily losing members through deaths, people moving away, and numerous transfers to Sydenham, Chalmers, Cooke's

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[1] *Bethel Church Centennial Chronicles, 1874-1974* (Kingston: Bethel Congregational Church 1974), p. 9.

and St. Andrew's. New ministers came and soon left, discouraged about the congregation's survival prospects. One church officer wrote candidly: "There seems to be very little interest among the members of the church to carry on the work."[2]

The Congregational Union of Canada was trying to maintain every congregation so that it could properly enter the United Church. At a meeting of the congregation in March, 1919, Dr. Gunn urged First Church to "go on as well as possible until Church Union becomes effective, which should be not later than June, 1921."[3] When it became obvious that Union would be delayed, and that First Church could not survive, he recommended linking up with Chalmers, which was clearly going to enter the United Church.

Early in 1921 appropriate discussion was held with Chalmers officials, who quickly approved the proposals. As a trial run, they agreed on a federation in which they worshipped together at Chalmers, but each congregation retained its own identity, memberships rolls, management and finances. First Church members were warmly welcomed at Chalmers, and the Rev. Wilson readily took over the additional pastoral responsibilities. The agreement was renewed and continued in effect until overtaken by Church Union in 1925.

Disposal of the First Church facilities took quite a while. Some of the furnishings, including the pulpit and platform chairs, went to Calvary Church. The building was transferred to the Canada Congregational Missionary Society, which eventually sold it to the Masonic order for $25,000 -- much less than the Society wanted, and much more than the Masons first offered. (Incidentally, now the Masons have shrunk numerically in Kingston, and the building is again for sale. On the outside, at least, it's a gothic gem, but what it can now be used for I don't know.)

Calvary Church was still small, and struggling through a series of short-term ministries. The congregational papers for the 1920s have been lost, so we have no firm record on how they felt on Church Union. But it appears that they went into Union quite readily, and their minister, the Rev. F.G. Sanders, conducted the inaugural service of the new denomination.

Methodist Churches

So strong was Methodist support for Church Union that they didn't lose a single congregation, and indeed, only one even held a vote on the question.[4] Support in Kingston was as strong as anywhere else.

A brief history of Princess St. Church makes a passing mention of their entrance into the United Church, but throughout the 1920s their primary focus was on erecting a larger church building, something finally achieved in 1932.

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[2] J.H. Davis to W.T. Gunn, 1 Nov. 1920, First Congregational Church (Kingston) Correspondence, Box 2, Queen's University Archives, Kingston.

[3] *Minutes*, First Congregational Church (Kingston), Queen's University Archives.

[4] S.D. Chown, *The Story of Church Union in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1930), p. 90.

A brief centennial history of Queen St. Church offers no more details about the transition there. They were already a union church, having absorbed Brock St. in 1920.

Enthusiasm at Sydenham St. Church is illustrated by a news report of events there on June 7th, three days before the official Union:

> The first United Church of Canada was reared by active young carpenters inside Sydenham St. Methodist Church. It was complete in all details, with tower, steeple and bell. It was part of the flower exercises of the Sunday School. The drama was both inspiring and emblematic of union and aroused great enthusiasm. Hundreds of children passed through the edifice, to recall years hence the splendid occasion and the history created.

Using this substantial model church they presented a pageant entitled the "Building of a Church." Various aspects of church history and church music were described, and at the end a sign was hung over the door. It read "The United Church of Canada, 1925."[5]

I have found no record about the Portsmouth congregation's feelings on the matter, but they also entered the United Church. They were never a large congregation, and in the 1960s they amalgamated with another one.

Presbyterian Churches

For my Kingston audience I had to explain the Presbyterian struggle in some detail: the 1912 and 1915 votes, the delay caused by the war, the determination to press ahead, the propaganda war between the Presbyterian Church Association and the Unionists' Bureau of Literature and Information, and the voting requirements set by the Act of Parliament. I covered all that to provide context for my description of the Presbyterian votes taken in Kingston. For this audience, happily, no such background details are necessary.

In Kingston, in spite of all the literature and public rallies for and against Union, the pattern was set from the beginning and never changed. In all votes, Chalmers, Cooke's and Zion were in favour of Union and St. Andrew's was opposed. In the first two rounds, voter turnout was mediocre: not much above the 50% line anywhere. In 1925, in Chalmers and St. Andrew's the outcome was not in question, and the turnout was around 75%. At Cooke's, where there was plenty of dispute, it was slightly over 90%.

By 1925 Zion Church didn't need a vote. On January 6th, the Rev. E. H. Burgess gladly wrote to the Assembly officers:

> You can count Zion on the side of Union. No opposition matured. On the advice of some of the leading men of the congregation I announced two weeks ago that if any desired to have a vote taken they should let me know during the week. If no one desired it we would consider ourselves as going into the United Church. There was no request from anyone, so last Sunday I stated that as no vote was desired, and as nearly all of our people had

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[5] *Daily British Whig*, 8 June 1925, p. 3.

signed a petition to Parliament in favour of Union, we would consider the matter settled.[6]

The other three churches did vote, with St. Andrew's going first. They began on Jan. 7, with over 150 persons voting the first night. Two weeks later they found that St. Andrew's had rejected Union by 334 to 47. In the Annual Report at the end of the year the congregation "rejoiced that during a year of stress and strain in which the very existence of the Presbyterian Church seemed imperiled, St. Andrew's people stood firmly by the Church and faith of their fathers."[7]

Chalmers began their vote just as St. Andrew's finished, and the outcome was 261 in favour of Union, and 51 opposed. At the end of the year their *Annual Report* noted that "in relation to this Union Chalmers made her decision in a spirit worthy of her best traditions of mutual forbearance and individual loyalty to the dictates of conscience."[8]

The outcome in both St. Andrew's and Chalmers had been foreseen, and there was minimal disharmony when the results were announced. That was left for Cooke's, which had enough for them all. There the minister, the Rev. T. J. S. Ferguson, was actively campaigning for Union. He and his supporters made it known that if they lost the vote, they would leave the congregation. That, of course, did not sit well with their opponents. In his 1924 Easter sermon, Ferguson's pro-Union comments so upset two members that they stood up and rebuked him on the spot, and then walked out.[9]

Although the Cooke's battle was not as bitter as that experienced in some communities, both sides worked hard and the outcome was uncertain. The minutes of their congregational meeting on February 4th contain elaborate details of how the vote was to be conducted, who were to be scrutineers for each side, the form of the ballot, and exactly when the ballot box would be opened and the votes counted. One can picture that it was a difficult meeting.[10]

On Feb.19th they met again and learned that the vote was 250 for Union, and 169 against, with one spoiled ballot. Within two hours the Anti-unionist group had decided that it must be they who would withdraw.[11]

There was one angle of this whole matter as it worked out in Kingston which did not apply in places like Peterborough, Ottawa or Hamilton. That was the presence of a

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[6] E.H. Burgess to J.H. Edmison, 6 Jan. 1925, Church Union Collection, Box 9, file 200, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

[7] *St. Andrew's Annual Report*, 1926, p.11; Historical Records, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kingston.

[8] *Chalmers 79th Annual Report*, 1925, p.8; Historical Records, Chalmers United Church, Kingston.

[9] *Daily British Whig*, 21 April 1924, p. 12.

[10] Cooke's United Church (Kingston) Collection, Box 7, file 177, United Church of Canada Archives.

[11] *Ibid.*

Theological College run by the Presbyterian Church. In Kingston all of the theological professors were pro-Union. Further, the University Principal, Bruce Taylor, and some other faculty members were also Presbyterian members. The majority of them attended Chalmers Church, strengthening the Unionist position there. Together they also had a substantial influence within the Presbytery.

The total vote among the three churches showed 558 for Union and 554 against; add in Zion's 89 members and it becomes 647 to 554.

Leading Kingstonians in the Church Union Movement

Facts and figures can be interesting, but ultimately history is about people. I thought it appropriate, therefore, to say something about some Kingston citizens who were deeply involved in the Church Union movement. I have selected five: 1 Congregationalist, 1 Methodist and 3 Presbyterians; 1 layman and 4 clergy; 2 Kingston natives and 3 in-comers.

a) J. H. Davis

John H. Davis ran the Davis Drydock Co., a major city business which specialized in ship repairs and building medium-sized steam workboats and yachts. Born in Kingston in 1869, he lived there all his life. His father had founded the company in 1878, and John joined the firm at an early age. In due course the son took over and expanded the works. He was well known in the city and widely respected for his integrity and progressive business spirit.

The Davis family were charter members of Calvary Congregational Church, but in 1917 John transferred to First Church and very soon became Secretary of their Management Board. In Queen's Archives and in the United Church Archives there are extensive files of correspondence between Davis and Dr. Gunn, in which they discussed the many problems facing First Church and worked out the ultimate solution of federating with Chalmers.

In 1924 Davis joined with leaders from other Kingston churches in lobbying the local MP to support the Union Bill in Parliament. After Union he became an active member of Chalmers, holding various offices for several years. When he died in March, 1937, his funeral was held at Chalmers and the pall-bearers were all fellow-elders.

In one way Davis was a man after my own heart: he was thrifty and abhorred waste. His business received many letters from suppliers, and many of these did not need to be retained. So he used the backsides for the carbon copies of his own out-going correspondence. Anyone trying to trace the history of the Davis Drydock would do well to examine the archives of the First Congregational Church, Kingston.

b) Rev. R. J. Wilson

A native of Bond Head, Ont., R. J. Wilson graduated from Knox College and was ordained in 1903, at the age of 31. After 15 years as minister at St. Andrew's Church in Vancouver, he succeeded Dr. Malcolm Macgillivray at Chalmers Church, Kingston.

When he arrived there in April, 1918, he might reasonably have anticipated remaining in that city for the rest of his life, but Church Union took him away after only five years.

Wilson was a strong supporter of Union, and in 1922 he was asked by the Presbyterian Union Committee to supervise their publicity campaign. For a few months he tried to do so while carrying on his work at Chalmers, but the task was too large. So he resigned from Chalmers to become full-time director of the Joint Union Committee's Bureau for Literature, Information and Public meetings -- their propaganda machine. People at Chalmers regretted his departure from Kingston, but saw it as part of their contribution to the Church Union movement overall.

c) Rev. J. W. Stephen

A native of Ashburn, Ont., John Stephen graduated from Knox College in 1901. He served briefly out west, and then at Avenue Rd. Church in Toronto. He went to St. Andrew's, Kingston, in November, 1916.

In the church at large Stephen was noted for his wisdom in deliberation and his knowledge of procedures, and he needed both qualities as he fought against the proposed Union. Further, as minister of one of the largest Anti-union Churches in eastern Ontario, he was often called to help others of like mind in the area.

Stephen was elected Moderator of Presbytery in 1924-5, and held the same post in the restructured Presbytery after Union took effect. In that capacity he became embroiled in the battle which that summer erupted at St. John's Church in nearby Pittsburgh Township. I have seen some of his personal letters from that summer, and clearly he found the whole process very trying.

In the continuing Presbyterian Church Stephen's abilities were well recognized. He was named to the Senates of both Knox and Presbyterian College, and in 1928 received an honourary D.D. from the former. Upon retirement in 1939 he was named minister-emeritus at St. Andrew's. When he died in 1945, the local paper published a full account of the funeral. (His son, Bill, is still a member at St. Andrew's.)

d) Rev. S. D. Chown

As General Superintendent of the Methodist Church from 1910 to 1925, Samuel Dwight Chown was their leader in the Church Union movement. He was born in 1853 into a Kingston family prominent at Sydenham St. Church. He studied at Victoria College, was ordained in 1879, and ministered in several Ontario congregations before being drawn into church administration.

A hearty advocate of Church Union from the beginning, it was Chown who signed the documents on behalf of the Methodist Church, and then had the honour to pronounce the three historic bodies to be one communion within the Body of Christ. He was a natural choice for the office of Moderator of the first General Council, as was Dr. George Pidgeon, the leading Presbyterian Unionist. But in the interest of co-operation and absolute unanimity at the outset of the new enterprise, Chown declined the nomination, leaving the way clear for Dr. Pidgeon to be acclaimed. This was recognized

by all as a magnificent act of self-effacement, called by one newspaper editorial "the crowning act of a great ministerial career."[12]

Chown was a tall man of robust physique, a dominating presence in any gathering. Renowned as an eloquent preacher, he received several honourary degrees. In British Columbia you can find a peak named Mount Chown, honouring his contribution in Canada's social development. This was a fitting recognition, for he was also a keen outdoorsman who loved canoeing and rock-climbing.

When he died on 30 Jan. 1933, Chown's body was taken back to Kingston and lay in state at Sydenham Church until burial at Cataraqui Cemetery. A commemorative plaque was later placed in the church sanctuary. In 1975, when Canada Post recognized the 50th anniversary of the United Church of Canada, it was Dr. Chown who appeared on the stamp.

e) Rev. D. M. Gordon

Born in Pictou Country, N.S., Daniel Miner Gordon was ordained in 1866, and was soon one of Canada's leading Presbyterian ministers. In 1885 he was in a Winnipeg congregation, and for a few weeks served as a Chaplain with British troops putting down the second Riel rebellion. In 1902 he succeeded George Grant as Principal of Queen's and oversaw its transformation from denominational college to secular university. By the time he retired in 1917, both the enrolment and the physical plant had doubled (despite the numbers of men fighting in Europe.) All who knew him acknowledged his courtesy, tact, kindness, patience, dignity and pleasant humour. He was a Gentleman!

Dr. Gordon was early drawn into the Church Union process as one of the Presbyterian members on the Joint Committee preparing the Basis of Union. It was his task to shepherd that report through the 1910 General Assembly, and to oversee the first congregational vote in 1912.

At that time, and indeed till the day he died, Dr. Gordon believed in Church Union as such, but only if it included the whole church. He became increasingly unhappy as he watched it being rammed through despite strong minority objections. He was deeply upset by the divisions in his church, and constantly advocated delay until these should be overcome.

Gordon was late in his 70s and in poor health as the battle came to its climax, and there was little he could do except write in support of younger fighters. When they asked about the forthcoming vote, he replied:

> I was for years an ardent advocate for Union, but the Union which has been secured is not the Union I advocated. None can deplore more keenly than I do the divisions that have been created in our beloved Church, divisions which I ascribe to the breach of faith on the part of the General Assembly towards the members of the Church. I cannot endorse or approve that unfaithfulness and therefore I continue to be a member of the Presbyterian Church.[13]

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[12] *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 31 Jan. 1933, p. 5.

[13] W. Gordon, *Daniel M. Gordon: His Life* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1941), p. 302.

The Minutes of the Presbytery of Kingston for 7 July 1925 record that the Rev. D. M. Gordon had asked "that his name be retained on the roll of the Continuing Presbytery of Kingston in connection with the distinctively Presbyterian Church as that of a retired minister."[14] Naturally his fellow presbyters agreed. Eight weeks later, 80 years old and thoroughly worn out, Daniel Gordon was dead. He had lived just long enough to see what he dreaded: a divided church.

Aftermath

As you are well aware, 1925 saw a substantial shuffling of members among Presbyterian churches all across the country. At the end of the year, churches were asked to report their gains and losses. In Kingston, Zion lost none, of course, and apparently gained none either. Chalmers reported the loss of 14, presumably all to St. Andrew's. St. Andrew's lost 12: six to Chalmers and six to Cooke's. The depth of feeling at Cooke's is shown by the fact that of 169 persons who voted against Union in February, 140 had transferred to St. Andrew's before June 10th. Another 10 moved after that date.[15]

Compared to many places we may say that Kingston churches settled the matter amicably. Cooke's was the only one to suffer real damage, losing over 30% of their membership They never really recovered, and 20 years later were discussing the prospect of either closing down or moving from the downtown area. In the 1960s they finally amalgamated with the Portsmouth congregation and erected a new facility in the city's west end.

What might have been?

History is full of "might-have-beens," and we have one here as well. C.E. Silcox tells us all about it. At the 1910 Methodist General Conference, support for church union was very strong, but by no mean unanimous. There were serious objections to both the concept and the particulars, and the issue was debated at length. After the proposals were approved by a substantial margin, those opposed got together to consider their future course of action in the face of possible disruption of the church. As Silcox writes,

> After a period of earnest prayer together in an effort to envisage what such a disruption might mean to the cause of Christ in Canada, these leaders agreed among themselves that since the church had expressed its will in a constitutional manner and most emphatically, they would recognize that decision as the voice of the church and withhold further opposition.[16]

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[14] *Minutes 1910-1925*, 7 July 1925, Presbytery of Kingston; Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Toronto.

[15] Church Union Collection, Box 9, file 200; United Church of Canada Archives.

[16] C.E. Silcox, *Church Union in Canada: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933), p. 188.

How different Canadian church history would have been if Presbyterian opponents had taken that route as well. But they didn't, and the movement towards union ended also with division; and as it went in Canada, so it went also in Kingston.

Table 1

City of Kingston (including Portsmouth) [17]

Population Tabulation by Religious Affiliation

Year	1911	1921	1931
Anglican	5,483	7,321	8,322
Baptist	412	484	501
Congregational	625	423	-
Jewish	241	320	269
Methodist	4,804	5,159	-
Presbyterian	3,173	3,556	2,552
Roman Catholic	5,359	6,142	6,125
United Church	-	-	6,963
Other	563	699	1,048
Total Population	20,660	24,104	25,780

Table 2

Kingston Congregational Churches -- 1910 vote

Church	# members	for	against	total votes
First	140	34	0	[illegible]
Bethel	85	32	8	[illegible]
Calvary	79	29	3	[illegible]

[17] *Canada Census*, 1911, 1921, 1931.

Table 3

Voting Results - Kingston Presbyterian Churches

1912	Q.1 - Organic Union?		Q.2 - Basis of Union?	
	yes	no	yes	no
Chalmers	207	51	167	34
Cooke's	153	53	121	36
St. Andrew's	75	204	58	154
Zion	66	16	(no record)	

1915	Q - In favour of organic union?	
	yes	no
Chalmers	172	75
Cooke's	141	73
St. Andrew's	42	291
Zion	124	22

1925	Q - to enter Union?	
	yes	no
Chalmers	261	51
Cooke's	250	169
St. Andrew's	47	334
Zion	no vote taken	

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ROBERT EDWARD KNOWLES: 1868-1946
Clergyman - Novelist – Interviewer

by T.M. Bailey

Without any prior knowledge of Robert Edward Knowles, except that he was a Presbyterian minister and the author of seven novels, I discovered books about him in antiquarian book stores. Last year, in preparation for today's meeting, I set myself the task of discovering something about this mysterious figure. Frustration came early, for few sources became available. Knowles refused to reveal himself to me in flesh and blood. Then, six months ago, the tables turned completely. Writer Jean O'Grady produced a well-researched book containing Knowles' early life, education, role as a minister-novelist and as a famous interviewer for the *Toronto Star*.[1] Her book contains enough material for several more papers such as this. Consequently, I have been forced to leave out a great deal about this man, who has been described as one who "made a splash in his time." At one stage in his life, Knowles was one of the most flamboyant and prominent opinion-makers on the Ontario scene. Today, he is practically unknown by the public.

Born in the village of Maxwell, Grey County, Ontario, on March 30, 1868, Robert Edward Knowles was the fourth son of the Reverend Robert Knowles, an Irish Presbyterian, ordained in Canada on 31 October 1866. Young Bob experienced an unhappy primary-school life, one that was punctuated with occasions of by snubbed by his classmates. High school was dominated by a brutal male teacher who, when angered, shouted at his offenders, "Do you want me to throw you out of the window?" Home life, too, was only a step away from severity. His stern and silent father's sombre disposition added to the boy's unhappiness. In the father's absence, the mother substituted for him by reading a sermon. Austere sabbaths made Bob feel "sermon stuffed." Upon graduation from high school, the 17 year-old youth spent parts of 1885-1886 at William Tassie's "finishing school" in Peterborough.

Entering Queen's University, majoring in Honours Classics, he was befriended by Principal Grant and had Alfred Gandier as a classmate. Described as "a mild rebel," Bob loved leisure more than study. This led to his trial of impeachment by the students,

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[1] Jean O'Grady, ed. *Famous People Who Have Met Me: The Life and Interviews of R.E. Knowles* (Toronto: Colombo & Company, 1999).

charged with "undue pride of person" and "ostentatious expenditure of the currency of the realm." By sheer preparation and oratory the accused won his own case.

At the end of the first year, he surprised everybody -- except God and his mother -- by taking a summer mission field appointment in Saskatchewan. There, such "cathedral" elements as the wide-open spaces of the prairies, with their profound silences and eternal possibilities, instilled in the susceptible student minister a sense of the greatness of the Gospel and the power of the ministry. His first sermon was delivered to a dozen people sitting around a table.

Having left Queen's University before graduation, Bob now entered Manitoba College, Winnipeg, where he received a diploma in theology, at age 23. Then, on June 9, 1891, he was inducted into Stewarton Presbyterian Church, a growing young congregation in the then suburbs of Ottawa. Described as a "dark-haired intense young man with slightly chubby cheeks," Bob took his ministry seriously, winning the hearts of his congregation.

A Christmas holiday in North Carolina in 1895 led him to be smitten by the beauty of 20 year-old Emma Katherine Jones, whom he married a year later, when he was 28. Two children were later born to them: Elizabeth in 1899 and Robert in 1905.

Life in Ottawa was considerably enlarged as he now shared in the lives of three famous Canadian "Confederation" poets: Duncan Campbell Scott, William Wilfrid Campbell and Archibald Lampman. This encouraged the young pastor to arrange for a visit to Ottawa by the Scottish author Ian MacLaren. Other celebrities followed, such as the evangelist D.L.Moody.

Meanwhile, after eight years of experience, Knowles' preaching had considerably increased the Stewarton congregation. However, when a call came to him from Knox Church, Galt, the 29 year-old accepted it and was inducted 29 March, 1898. This would prove to be the last pastoral charge in his ministry. He became that congregation's first native-born minister, sweetened with a higher-than-usual stipend of $2,500 paid by the 1100 communicant members. Known as the "Citadel of Presbyterianism in Canada" the Knox building held 1700 seats. Possessing an Irishman's gift of oratory, Knowles was described in one Knox Session meeting minutes thus: "a seer and prophet hath dwelt among us." His overflow audiences soon required "extra chairs in the aisles."

Knowles did not take a written sermon into the pulpit, relying only on headings, which allowed him freedom to explore the inspiration of the moment -- swaying his listeners with extemporaneous oratory and humour, although he later could not recall what he said. Such sermons were characterized also by floods of Bible-inspired rhetoric, a poetic vocabulary and the gift of story-telling. His sermons were meant to "comfort sinners, and offer hope to the weary through the message of divine love and forgiveness." Because the congregation still continued to lick its old wounds, inflicted by a former minister, the topic of reconciliation became a prominent strain. One *forte* Knowles exhibited during a 17-year pastorate in Galt was his visitation of the elderly and the sick, who were often reached on horseback.

In a highly-Scottish population, Knowles' presence in Galt was increased by his passion for the town's well being. During Prohibition time, his sermons helped a swing to the dry vote. In 1904, he declined an invitation to run for mayor. He also served as a member on the high school board. In addition, he hosted at the manse celebrities such as

William Jennings Bryan, the American lawyer-politician and William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army.

Later, the public was surprised to see Knowles engage in a literary career, although it was not uncommon that clergymen's sons did so. Knowles was already a student of literature, with knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and versed in history and biography. He wrote seven novels, one each year between 1905 and 1911. Their titles in order were: *St Cuthbert's*, *The Undertow*, *The Dawn at Shanty Bay*, *The Web of Time*, *The Attic Guest*, *The Handicap*, and *The Singer of the Kootenays*. In 1908, *The Web of Time* outsold *Anne of Green Gables* and in 1915 *St. Cuthbert's* became the most-purchased book in Canada. There were readers who called him the Canadian James M. Barrie.

As a writer, Knowles spent the first hour and a half of every day composing 800 words or more in his home study. The rest of the morning was devoted to background reading for his forthcoming book, or on sermon preparation. Afternoons were passed golfing or curling, followed by house visitation. The toil of evening meetings brought their toll, as well.

In the book world at that time publishers searched for new writers. Knowles' novels, mostly written on Canadian and church-related themes, became popular in Canadian, American and British markets. All of his work was not of the same high quality, suffering such criticisms as "emotional claptrap" and "hysterical balderdash." Other reviewers likened him to Thomas Hardy and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Perhaps his greatest weakness was in trying to describe the human soul, rather than let it be shown in characterization. At any rate, the *Globe* newspaper touched the reason for his popularity by saying: "one looks up from his chapters with misty eyes, but sunshine all around."

A spin-off from his fame was the adulation Knowles enjoyed as an after-dinner speaker. His publisher showed him off to the New York public, and introduced him to American celebrities. Across the continent he travelled as a speaker, where he was known for his wit and eloquence. Extensive holidays were spent with his family on the continent, where he was well-received.

Then, as the clouds of war began to loom on the world's horizon in the early 1900s, clouds of a different nature shrouded the clergyman-novelist. They produced twin disorders, one mental and the other marital. Some laid the blame for his sudden attacks upon a trauma caused by his experience in a 1907 train disaster near Guelph. Consequently, the year 1911 saw him often away from the pulpit. Then, adding to his afflictions, came two negative reviews of his latest writings, shaking him to the core. One came from *Saturday Night*, the other from the *Presbyterian* magazine -- the latter warning the public against an immoral element found in Knowles' latest novel about the Kootenays. It was claimed that this shed a poor light on the Church's mission there. Of course, Knowles responded in defence, but nothing helped his nervous disorder, physical fatigue or his refutation of the charge.

Late in 1912, the battered 44 year-old minister expressed his need for an assistant. A year later he was granted a six-months leave of absence, followed by a similar period in 1914. Finally, in January 1915, Knowles resigned. Not long later Mrs Knowles left their marriage, never to return to him. She eventually secured a divorce in Ohio in 1923. Meanwhile, the besieged Knowles took up residence in Toronto, intermittently raising his children when not in hospital and leaving them with his sisters when he was ill. The

days that Knowles spent in his Babylonian exile lasted until one day in the early 1920s. That's when a third great career opened up for him.

Around that time, the *Toronto Star* sought a greater readership through different "lifestyle" articles, embracing new sections on humour, entertainment, fiction, comics, etc. In 1921, J. H. Cranston, the *Star's* editor, was approached by the sickly-looking, 51 year-old Knowles looking for a job as a reporter. He was accepted. His first article appeared a month later and opened up a career in journalism unmatched by few. Given the name of "special writer" and with an office of his own, the new reporter regaled his readers with articles, editorials, fiction and humour. So popular was his appeal that he often made the front page.

Knowles' new-found profession sent him everywhere, covering such sensational cases as the Scopes "Monkey Trial" in Tennessee. Some of the well-known people interviewed included Winston Churchill, Father C.E. Coughlin, Albert Einstein, Mary Pickford, Mackenzie King, Stephen Leacock, Ramsay MacDonald, Nellie McClung, F.D.Roosevelt, Hugh Walpole, William Butler Yeats and Aimee Semple McPherson.

His new career covered two decades and produced about 2800 articles, between 1921 and 1940. They brought to readers information that won immediate attention. Knowles always prepared well for his interviews, looking upon them virtually as a ministry. So uniquely did he make himself a part of the interview that readers discovered almost as much of himself as the subject. Reporters alleged that his interviews should be entitled "Great People Who Have Met Me." Most of the journalist's career occurred while living in Galt. Five days a week he travelled with a train pass to the *Star* office, often writing his articles "en route." Sometimes he accidently met famous people on the same train.

Established once again as a man of reputation, reporting made him feel like an important being. A new marriage was consummated in 1923. Miss Georgia Hogg was 37; he was 55. It proved to be a happy union. He attended his old congregation for worship, often visibly apparent by making copious notes on the sermons. At the time of the Church Union vote, he expressed favour with the United Church and joined that body in 1925.

During World War Two, the son Robert Knowles, himself a *Star* reporter, was killed in a motorcycle accident in England. The father now began to show increased frailty, spending long periods in bed. This resulted in him leaving the *Star* in 1940. At home in Galt, his health continued to worsen. He died on November 15, 1946, and lies buried in Mountain View Cemetery, Cambridge.

Is there any reason why Robert Knowles should be remembered today? I leave that for you to decide.

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WATCHMEN OR ACTIVISTS? : THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF THE CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE DURING THE THATCHER YEARS

by Duncan James Jeffrey

The years between 1979 and 1997 may be remembered by British historians as the "Thatcher Years." Many have argued that during the historically long Conservative government from 1979-1997, Britain changed more than it has done at any time in modern history.[1] Certainly there was an abandonment of the comfortable social democratic consensus which governed Britain under both Labour and Tory administrations from 1946 -- 1978. In its place emerged an unusually doctrinaire and ideologically focused government under an idiosyncratic but authoritarian leader: Margaret Thatcher. During her tenure as Minister of Education in an earlier Conservative administration, headed by Prime Minister Edward Heath, Mrs. Thatcher ended the free quarter-pint milk ration which had nourished generations of British school children during their morning recess (and warmed the hearts of dairy farmers!). Lampooned by the press as "Thatcher the Milk-Snatcher," this was only an early shot in her battle with the welfare state. "School milk" was the last remnant of the state nutrition scheme, designed by the architects of the welfare state, to counter rickets and other diseases of the malnourished which were endemic among the British poor throughout the Depression Years. (Free orange juice, cod-liver oil and infant formula had earlier been axed as Britain faced fiscal disaster during the 1960s.) Thatcher's "snatching" of the milk bottle from the lips of British children was an early, yet apt symbol of her abhorrence for the

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[1] Although John Major became Prime Minister in November 1990, the continuation of the Conservative mandate ensured that the "New Right" policies championed by Mrs. Thatcher would continue to be vigorously pursued. Mr. Major's lackluster personality and lack of personal charisma, together with the absence of significant changes in Conservative policy, make it easy to overlook his administration. History will regard even the "Major Years" as part of Mrs. Thatcher's "reign." For ease of reference this paper refers to the years 1979 - 1997 as "Thatcher Years."

entire social-democratic Welfare State. As Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Mrs. Thatcher would have far more scope for her re-invention of British society.

This paper will examine the response of the Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland to the unprecedented changes that took place in Scotland from 1979-1997 as a result of the policies of the Conservative administration. The Church and Nation Committee can be seen as a direct analogue to the Justice Ministries of the Life and Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. In recent years it has covered some of the same territory as its Canadian counterpart regarding health care, biotechnology and cloning. In addition, it is hoped that the experience of the Church and Nation Committee in the Scotland of the 80s and 90s may be instructive to a Canadian Church attempting to formulate an appropriate prophetic response to the emergence of ideologically-driven conservative governments in several areas of this country over the last decade. This paper will seek to answer four questions.

- 1) Was the Church and Nation Committee faithful to its prophetic office?
- 2) How was its prophetic witness expressed in its reports to General Assembly and in other pronouncements and activities during these years?
- 3) Was the voice of the Church and Nation Committee representative of the Church of Scotland?
- 4) What was the effect (if any) of the work of the Church and Nation Committee on Scottish society and on government policy during this era?

In a speech made in 1989, Norman Shanks, then Convenor of the Church and Nation Committee, made clear the Committee's prophetic duty to be a critical witness of nation, society and government, while claiming at the same time that the Committee's work was politically neutral.

> ...it is the particular task of the Church and Nation Committee to address the sorts of questions I have been considering. The way our remit puts it is "*to watch over developments of the nation's life in which moral and spiritual considerations specially arise, and to consider what action the church from time to time may be advised to take to further the highest interests of the people.*"...we attempt to interpret the will and word of God in relation to particular issues that are important to Scottish life. We do so from a distinctive standpoint as a committee of the church *free from any partisanship or political bias.* We base our approach on theological understanding and insight and not on any party political ideology. We confine our attention to topics on which we think we can speak with authority and we seek to speak both to church and to nation.... The underlying questions which we are always asking is "what kind of society do we want?" "what kind of society does God want for us?" "how does that compare with the society we have?"...What kind of society do we want? what is the way forward? *Is it a society based on the pursuit of self-interest above all else, an insidious and pernicious possessive individualism with the weakest going to the wall? A society wherein the free market is God, the power of local government is being eroded, the*

independence and standing of the universities is threatened, the whole fabric of the welfare state is disintegrating?[2]

In spite of Shanks' protestations of political neutrality, the last paragraph seems particularly pointed at the ten year old programmes of the Conservative government. So then, how well did the Church and Nation Committee live up to its remit, "to **watch over** developments of the nation's life in which moral and spiritual considerations specially arise, and to consider **what action** the church from time to time may be advised to take to further the highest interests of the people"?

Although the annual Church and Nation Report to the General Assembly ranges over matters as diverse as fisheries and nuclear power, this paper will focus on two persistent, related themes of the "Church and Nation Reports" during the Thatcher years: poverty and unemployment. The objective existence of both absolute and relative poverty in Scotland over this period is attested to in a recent United Nations report. Published in August 1997, the report revealed that poverty rose by more than half under the Conservative governments between 1979-1991 to 14.6% of the population. Almost half of single parent families and 13.7% of two parent families lived below the poverty line.[3] These statistics are averaged over the U.K., including the prosperous south-east "Home Counties" surrounding Greater London, thus the picture in Scotland is considerably grimmer. Poverty and its close companion unemployment were the visible symptoms of the impact of the Thatcher revolution upon the ordinary Scottish citizen. By examining the pronouncements of the Church and Nation Committee on poverty and unemployment during the Thatcher years this paper will show how the Church and Nation committee played a prophetic role in calling to judgement the dominant power-value system of British society.

The most obvious and accessible witness to the work of the Committee is the annual "Church and Nation Report" made to the General Assembly. (Once debated and passed by the General Assembly, the motions made in the report become the "Deliverance of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on the Report of the Church and Nation Committee." In this paper the terms "Deliverance" and "Report" are used interchangeably.)

The Report of the Church and Nation Committee in 1989 drew attention to the "The theme of poverty in Scotland, the widening gap between rich and poor in our society, and the Church's particular interest in this issue in the light of God's concern for justice and community,"[4] and reminded commissioners that this was a reprise of the Committee's reports to the 1987 and 1988 General Assemblies. The 1988 General

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[2] Norman Shanks, Convenor of Church and Nation Committee (1989), unpublished manuscript of speech given to Directors of Social Work Conference, Inverness, 19 April 1989. (Filed under Church and Nation at New College Library, Edinburgh.) Italics added.

[3] "Poverty up 50% under Tories," *The Herald*, Friday, 13 June 1997, p. 10.

[4] "Report of the Church and Nation Committee," *Report of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1989*, (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 155-156, para.3.31. (Abbreviated as C&N 1989 below.)

Assembly had passed Deliverances concerning the responsibility of congregations regarding poverty and hardship within their parishes and had expressed concern about the incidence of poverty among older people, and the particular plight of young people, especially those who were homeless or unemployed.

The 1989 Report lamented the fact that there had been no evidence of significant improvement in these areas. This points to the fact that the Church and Nation Committee could be faithful to its prophetic office by witnessing to the wrongs in Scottish society through its annual reports, but that the annual passing of Deliverances had little effect on a government that was not listening to anyone. The Committee also agonized over the impact of new social security arrangements that reduced entitlement to benefits to certain groups. They noted that the effects of the discretionary social fund, under which many disadvantaged groups of people no longer had the automatic right to certain items of basic expenditure, had *greatly increased the demands made on charitable organisations and churches*. The Committee hoped that presbyteries and congregations would continue to give priority to these matters as central to their missionary concern. The casualties of doctrinaire "New Right" economics in Scotland as elsewhere were turning up on church doorsteps.

A major concern of the 1989 Report was the proposed "community charge." This was a major component of the Tory platform. Also known as the "poll tax," this replaced the historic property based taxation (known as "rates") for education and local government budgets, paid only by property-owners, with a per capita charge, the "poll tax." It would now be collected from tenants and owner-occupiers alike.

The pilot scheme was to be introduced in Scotland ahead of the rest of Britain. Scotland has historically had a far greater proportion of government housing tenants than England and Wales, with over a third of the Scottish population living in "council housing." Scotland's areas of "multiple social deprivation" (an umbrella term covering poverty, unemployment, family and community violence and various addictions) were synonymous with the vast council housing schemes which surround Scottish cities. Thus, the legislation threatened the most disadvantaged sectors of Scottish society with a new and regressive form of taxation.

The Committee, exercising its prophetic voice, had expressed opposition to the arrangements for the "community charge" in the previous year's report. In a rare call to activism, local congregations had their attention drawn to the possibility of taking part in a "week of action," to bring about a last-minute change of mind on the part of the government. The 1989 Report reflected on the response to its call to action the year before.

> This suggestion was taken up in some quarters and *was misunderstood and resented in others*. As was made clear in last year's report the Assembly's opposition to the community charge is based on theological and not political grounds and does not imply satisfaction with the rating system; but it does not make sense to replace a defective system with one that is likely to result in even greater hardship and injustice...*At no point in the Committee's involvement with this issue has non-payment been*

> *advocated*: last year's report indicated, as is still the Committee's view, that it was not considered appropriate to recommend this course of action.[5]

The dynamic at work here is quite evocative of the relationship between the Church and Nation Committee and the membership of the Church of Scotland at large. It was only when the Church and Nation Committee moved from its prophetic "watchdog" role to the actual advocacy of activism that its work was "resented." The vast majority of the membership of the Church of Scotland comes from the property-owning middle class. It was precisely this section of society which stood to gain from the replacement of the old system of "rates" based on property evaluation with the new "community charge." This points to the difficulty of pursuing a prophetic calling in a church that is predominantly middle class. The response to the poll-tax week of action in 1988 suggests the presence within the membership of the Church of Scotland of a dissatisfied middle class constituency that did not share the same concerns as the Church and Nation Committee.

Letters to the editor of *Life and Work* magazine in June 1988, following the controversial visit and speech of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to the General Assembly,[6] revealed a stratum of discontented conservative middle-class members in the Church of Scotland. "The membership of the Church of Scotland is a minority of the adult population of Scotland, and of that membership a substantial proportion must have voted for the Prime Minister's party."[7] Another reader wrote:

> It should be remembered that congregations are made up of people of all political persuasions. If the leadership openly supports one sector of the political sphere, then there is a risk of alienating those of differing views.... Great Britain owes a debt of gratitude to Margaret Thatcher under whose leadership a bankrupt, strike-ridden, high inflation nation, with little standing internationally, has been transformed. I just wish that the many church members who feel as I so would take the trouble to make their views known.[8]

These letters, published under the masthead "Readers' Bouquets to a Blue Lady" were, according to the editor, not alone. "Other readers have written in similar terms," the editor commented, adding that space had been provided over two months for the airing of views on both sides of the issue. Thus, there was a groundswell of conservative opinion within the membership of the Church of Scotland that was largely not heard, except when a crisis or a confrontation occurred.

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[5] C&N, 1989, para. 3.33 (italics added).

[6] This speech was immediately if flippantly headlined as "The Sermon on the Mound" from the location of the General Assembly buildings on Edinburgh's Castle Mound.

[7] J. Kerr to the editor of *Life and Work Magazine*, June 1988, p. 7.

[8] (Sir) Ian Campbell to the editor of *Life and Work*, June 1988, p.7.

These two issues: the "Sermon on the Mound" which allowed Margaret Thatcher a "pulpit" for the theological justification of Conservative policies; and the "poll tax" controversy which threatened middle class pocket-books, allow a partial answer to the third question asked above, "was the Church and Nation Committee representative of the Church of Scotland?" As in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, there may be quite a powerful, if informal self-selecting mechanism channelling the members of church committees according to interests and political affiliation. It is almost self-evident that those with interests in social-justice issues and affiliation with leftward leaning political parties will find themselves in committees such as the Church and Nation Committee. Conservatives (both large and small "c") are often attracted to church committees with responsibility for evangelism and fiscal concerns. The effect of this mechanism may be to skew the composition of a committee to either "right" or "left," in neither case being a fair representation of the "mind" of the church.

The Church and Nation Committee from 1979-1997 can be seen as *unrepresentative* of the Church of Scotland in two ways. Firstly in terms of the composition of the committee, it was unlikely, given the historical culture of the committee, that conservatives would be attracted to join its ranks. Secondly, in terms of the middle-class membership of the church, it may be theorized that at least a sizeable minority held conservative political convictions and thus gave some form of allegiance to the Conservative government. The Church and Nation Committee would hardly have represented the views of this plurality, at least in terms of political economy. (Of course, the breadth and scope of the Committee's interests, meant that it might well have represented the interests of this sector of church membership in other issues, for example its anti-nuclear weapons stance.) In fact, the Church of Scotland sponsored a statistical, attitudinal study of its membership in order to answer questions of this sort.[9] "According to the *Lifestyle Survey* the membership of the Church of Scotland is more conservative in its politics than the population as a whole, and supports policies and social programmes dramatically at variance to the Church and Nation Committee on these matters."[10]

The unrepresentative nature of the Committee during the Thatcher years was perceived as relatively harmless as long as the Committee confined its activities to passing Deliverances at the General Assembly. However, as soon as its activism overstepped this bound (as in the case of the Poll Tax "week of action"), or attracted national media attention (as in the case of the furore over the "Sermon on the Mound"), then conservative interests within the church intervened to bring pressure on the Church and Nation Committee to retreat from its radical activity or pronouncements on behalf of the church. While the committee may have been enabled to pass any number of Deliverances criticizing the state of Scottish society under the Conservative administration, activism was frowned upon, and even the Committee drew the line at the civil disobedience which would have been implied by non-payment of the new tax! This makes clear the limits to the prophetic role that were considered appropriate for the Church and Nation Committee, as well as its limited representation of the Church of

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[9] *Lifestyle Survey* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Board of Social Responsibility, 1987).

[10] Michael S. Northcott, "Identity and Decline in the Kirk", *Seeing Scotland Seeing Christ*, (Edinburgh: Centre for Theology and Public Issues, 1993).

Scotland's membership at large. These limits must have been frustrating to the exercise of the prophetic role of the Church and Nation Committee during the Thatcher Years.

If alienation from its middle-class membership was one source of frustration to the Church and Nation Committee, the other dimension to the frustration of the Committee during this period was its distance socially and spiritually from the very population of the poor and unemployed on whose behalf the Committee had so tirelessly advocated to successive General Assemblies. The frustration felt by the members of the Committee may be judged by the fact that they felt obliged, in their 1989 Report, to repeat a Deliverance of the 1987 General Assembly "conscious of a cultural, social and economic gap between the life of Scotland's poor and the life of the Church, instruct the Church and Nation Committee to consider what means may be necessary to bridge this gap and report to the General Assembly."[11] How could the predominantly middle-class Church of Scotland develop "an identity as the Church of the poor" when most of the Scottish working and un/underemployed poor experienced a "sense of exclusion and alienation...in relation to the culture, values and priorities of the Church?"[12]

Reading the 1989 Report, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Church and Nation committee played the prophetic role of a voice crying in the wilderness, ignored or rejected by the conservative membership of the church, and distanced by social class from the very people for whom it was advocating. Disapproval by the membership and church courts was incurred by the rare foray into activism provoked by the inequitable poll tax. While it lived up to its prophetic office and remit in the duty of "watching" over the national life, there is little sense in the Report that its "actions" were in any way effective, or that it was representative of either the middle-class church membership or the working class poor of Scotland.

In 1990, the Church and Nation Committee once again turned its attention to the problem of poverty. Indices pointed consistently to the widening gap between rich and poor under the Conservative government. The Committee focused on the problems of *low income*, defined by the Council of Europe, as 68% of average full-time earnings; and of *poverty*, defined by the European Commission, as less than half the average income per head in the member state. By either standard, Britain was doing badly in 1990. The Low Pay Unit, an independent research group, estimated that 37% of the total full-time work force, as against 28% in 1979, earned less than the threshold figure; and the European Commission, in its 1989 Report "Social Europe," stated that poverty in Britain had increased more between 1975 and 1985 than in any of the other member states. Figures in Scotland were considerably worse than the national average for the U.K. The most recent figures available to the Committee in 1990 indicated that in Scotland 1.64 million people (31% of the population) lived in poverty or on its margins.[13]

The Committee brought these figures under prophetic judgement stating that poverty was a contradiction of freedom and a denial of love. "The Church dare not ignore

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[11] C&N 1989, para.3.35.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Report of the Church and Nation Committee, 1990 (C&N 1990) *Report of the General Assembly 1990* (Edinburgh, 1990) pp. 138-145, para. 2.14.

the truth that is staring us in the face: the poor are around us all over Scotland. It is not enough simply to tell them about their God-given freedom and Christ's triumph over adversity. They have to be shown that this freedom is real and not illusory: love is the only effective remedy."[14] The Church was called to action in several different ways at various levels. The Committee pointed to the continuing need for the adjustment of social policies, and suggested that there was scope for action "by all Church members both nationally and locally, both corporately and individually, through representations to Government and discussions with Members of Parliament and local councillors in the light of particular local circumstances."[15]

In 1990, however, the Church and Nation Committee did not limit the exercise of its prophetic office to passing Deliverances or to calling for letters to members of Parliament. By 1990, the Committee had joined its voice to those of other concerned church groups throughout Britain in the declaration "Hearing the Cry of the Poor," which was launched on 4 December 1989 in Glasgow and London, by the ecumenical organisation Church Action on Poverty.

The declaration was drawn up after consultation with a wide range of individuals and groups throughout Britain and was supported by all the major churches. It sprang from the urgent concern of Christians who saw society being driven in a direction that contradicted the Gospel and highlighted the widening gap between rich and poor. "Hearing the Cry of the Poor" called upon Christians not only to criticize social and economic policies, but also to engage in **action** towards bringing about the necessary changes in priorities.[16] In spite of its acknowledgement that the deep-seated and long-standing nature of the problem stretched back beyond the office of any particular government, and its avowal that it did not seek to blame the politicians from the side-lines, it is clear from the text of the report -- printed in full as an appendix to Report of the Church and Nation Committee in 1990 -- that the wider socio-economic-political agenda of the Thatcher government was in the sights of Church Action on Poverty. The Church and Nation Committee also endorsed ecumenical action.

> This declaration springs from the urgent concern of Christians across all the Churches. We have heard with our own ears the cry of the poor. We have seen with our own eyes our society being driven in a direction that contradicts the Gospel. Wounding effects are witnessed and experienced daily. They challenge us to seek a new social order founded upon that vision and possibility of human wholeness which is contained in the Christian message and which speaks to all human experience. As we survey our society, *our inescapable conclusion is that many are being hurt in Britain today, damaged and discounted by public policy.* This is the story that emerges from the pastoral experience of teachers, social workers, community workers, doctors, clergy and others in urban and rural

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[14] C&N 1990, para.2.19

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] C&N 1990, para. 2.25.

areas. Over recent years, social divisions have widened and community life has been gravely eroded. These trends and the suffering they cause diminish everyone. They must cease.[17]

In a clear reference to the "economic miracle" of the Thatcher years, the report acknowledged that many people were enjoying new opportunities and living more comfortably. However, it asked how far their financial security required others to be deprived and how far their freedom of choice curtailed what was available to others. In the form of a litany headed "it cannot be right", the report went on to catalogue the consequences of conservative polices over the previous ten years. Perhaps not coincidentally, the report was published to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the Thatcher administration.

It cannot be right

- that over one third of a million are homeless and the number of homeless households has nearly doubled in the last ten years.
- that hospital wards are being closed but waiting lists grow.
- that the mentally ill are discharged from hospital without adequate support.
- that people are demoralised by long term unemployment and short term job schemes.
- to cut taxes as an incentive to the rich but reduce incomes to spur on the poor.
- that public services are so seriously under funded and the commitment of their staff so undermined.
- that local government is being weakened and public accountability becoming more remote.
- to pass community assets and essential services into private control.[18]

The report identifies some of the major policy initiatives and most hallowed social goals of the "New Right" in Britain. Proclaims the report, "we believe a new social order is needed in Britain." It was clear that the prophetic voice of the Church and Nation Committee was developing a more radical focus on Conservative polices by 1990, and **acting** by joining its voice to an ecumenical community throughout the U.K. that was attempting to bring the poverty agenda to the forefront of public attention.

In 1995, the Report of the Church and Nation Committee returned to the familiar themes of unemployment and poverty. For the first time the report dealt with the emerging reality of working poor in a post-industrial setting. "In Scotland, the number of people employed in manufacturing fell over the fifteen years between 1979 and 1994 by 250,000 (41%); while employees in the finance sector increased by 41% (81,000) and in health and education by 23% (131,000)....New jobs tend to be in the service sector, and more often for women."[19] Once again the prophetic witness of the Church and Nation

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[17] "Hearing the Cry of the Poor," appendix to C&N 1990, p. 146.

[18] *Idem.*

[19] Report of the Church and Nation Committee *Report of the General Assembly of the*

Committee was heard in its criticism of the ideological underpinning of Conservative policies, particularly as they impacted upon the most vulnerable in society. The report criticized the "ideology of the free-market" with its assumption that "deregulation benefits everyone in society in the long run, even the poor, by allowing market forces to operate freely."[20] The downside of the unrestricted operation of market forces, argued the report was "social fragmentation, disorder and hardship".[21]

The 1995 Report urged that it was necessary for some regulation and intervention by the state to counteract the effects of the operation of unrestricted free market forces. The Report stopped short of advocating a "command economy,"[22] but offered the model of an economy which would serve the people and their needs. In summary, the Church and Nation Deliverance in 1995 was a pretty unexceptional critique of some of the shibboleths of Conservative economic policy. Once more, it was long on social criticism and short on social activism. The role of the church was

> not to play safe with the powerful in the world; to stand beside the marginalized and the weak: but also to stand beside the rich and powerful and to question their assumptions; to educate ourselves and others in issues which affect us all; to have the courage to question even the experts. Social and economic structures are created to serve people; they need continuous scrutiny and correction if they are not to become corrupted. The responsibility of the people of God is to use heart, soul, mind and strength in searching after social and economic justice for all people.[23]

The 1996 Deliverance continued the Committee's prophetic witness to increasing inequality and poverty, commenting that the "gap between rich and poor is greater now than it has ever been".[24] There was no attempt to formulate a programme of action by the church or its members. The following year, 1997, the report once again addressed the issues of poverty in Scotland. Although the report was issued on the eve of the defeat of the Conservative Party by Tony Blair's "New Labour," the figures and findings all related to trends which had emerged over the preceding years since 1979. The Report quoted from two major studies to show that poverty and inequality in Britain had increased significantly.

Church of Scotland 1995 (Edinburgh, 1995) pp.138-145, para. 3.2.

[20] C&N 1995, para. 3.4.

[21] *Idem.*

[22] C&N 1995, para. 6.1.

[23] C&N 1995, para. 6.10.

[24] Report of the Church and Nation Committee *Report of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1996* (Edinburgh, 1996), pp.52-55, para. 2.3.

The first, *For Richer, For Poorer - The Changing Distribution of Income in the United Kingdom, 1961-1991,* by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as part of its Programme of Work on Income and Wealth,[25] found that the increase in income inequality during the 1980s had dwarfed the fluctuations in inequality of previous decades. Real incomes had grown by around 84 per cent on average over the past three decades, but the incomes of the richest tenth had risen twice as fast (up 113 per cent) as those of the poorest tenth (up 57 per cent). The real incomes of the poorest tenth, ranked by income after housing costs, had actually fallen from a peak in 1979 of £73 per week to just over £61 per week in 1991 (both in 1991 prices) which represented a return to the living standards of a quarter of a century before. Once again, it is important to caution the reader that global economic statistics for the entire U.K. mask serious regional inequalities which would skew downward the figures for peripheral economic zones such as Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North East of England. In other words, as grim a picture as these figures paint, the situation in these less prosperous and more economically blighted areas of the U.K. would be considerably worse.

The second report cited by the Church and Nation Committee in 1997, was *Jobs, Wages and Poverty* by the Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics (January 1997).[26] This report had found that the fall in pay at the bottom end of the job market had resulted in a tightening of the "poverty trap". That is, the situation in which there was less chance of getting a job that made it worth giving up welfare benefits. One result had been that while the probability of moving from non-employment into work had fallen for single men and women and married men, it had nearly doubled for married women whose husbands already worked. Increasingly, couples had either no job or two jobs because the level of pay at the bottom of the earnings distribution was too low to support a family or to warrant giving up benefits. People who left unemployment for a low-paid job had a higher chance of becoming unemployed again. These studies noted the link between increasing levels of poverty and increased levels of unemployment. Although the unemployed represented a significant proportion of the poorest sector in Scottish society it was those in paid employment that made up the largest proportion of those in the poorest 10 per cent of the population.

Once again, the 1997 Church and Nation Report had diligently continued in its prophetic role of "Watchman." Again, the Committee had assembled an impressive, if depressing range of statistics to give the lie to the ideologues of the New Right who proclaimed that what was good for the markets and business was good for everybody, and that a little short term pain would be more than offset by long term gains. The prophetic voice of the Church and Nation Committee was joined in ecumenical solidarity with groups such as Church Action on Poverty as well as non-religious bodies which also raised their voices against this dominant interpretation of reality. As the social conscience of General Assembly, and thus of the Church of Scotland, the committee

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[25] Cited in the Report of the Church and Nation Committee in the *Report of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1997* (Edinburgh, 1997) pp. 11/31 - 11/37 (A new system of pagination, according to section, was introduced in the report of 1997).

[26] C&N, 1997, p.11/30, para. 1.

continued to be the advocate within the church for welfare and social-democratic government policies. In 1997, the Committee, in noting the appalling statistics on the condition of the working poor concluded that "the only way to begin to tackle poverty among those in employment is to introduce some form of minimum wage."[27] To date, there has been no announcement from the New Labour administration of Tony Blair, that such a measure is under consideration.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, then, how well did the Church and Nation Committee live up to its own remit? There is no doubt that the Committee diligently kept before the public eye an alternative vision of society to the "success" oriented, market driven, fiscally conservative, individualistic agenda of the Conservative government and its supporters. This paper has focused on only two of a wide range of topics upon which the Church and Nation Committee reports each year. However, poverty and unemployment were extremely significant in Scotland during the seventies and eighties. If the political-cultural climate of South-East England was shaped by the amazing success stories of the 80s and 90s, the climate of Scotland was shaped by the forces of de-industrialization, unemployment and the existence of massive areas of social deprivation where poverty is a multi-generational phenomenon. The focus of the Church and Nation Committee on poverty and unemployment as its major concerns in the domestic arena was the correct one in the Scottish context. It did much to correct the Pollyanna vision of much of the British media that focused on the emergence of the "New Britain." For most Britons living outside the Home Counties, the New Britain was more myth than reality. So the Church and Nation Committee certainly provided a corrective optic to this kind of selective social vision. It had at least satisfied that part of its remit that spoke of "**watching over** developments in the nation's life in which moral and spiritual considerations arise."[28] The Committee had been *faithful to its prophetic office* in bearing annual witness to the inequalities and injustices which stalked the land.

How *effective* was the work of the Committee? Here, perhaps issue can be taken with the performance of the Committee in light of the second *fiat* of its remit: "to consider what **action the Church might take**...." With the exception of the controversial participation in the "Week of Action" over the poll-tax, and its affiliation with broadly based ecumenical anti-poverty coalitions, there was little action the Church could take. This, in spite of the fact that, "the absence of a political decision making body in Scotland often turns the Assembly in to a kind of Scottish parliament."[29] However, the General Assembly is but a toothless parliament, and this lack of any political clout often lends to it a wilderness prophet image which indeed may appear to

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[27] C&N 1997, p.11/36, para. 6.

[28] W. B. Johnson, "Church and State," p. 8.

[29] *Ibid.*

reduce its utterances to impotent rant. Political scientist Mark Wickham-Jones comments on the relationship of the Assembly to political process in Scotland:

> The main way in which the Church and Nation Committee works is through its annual report....The report is widely distributed throughout Scotland and England: every Scottish MP and each Cabinet Minister receives a copy. The reason that the Church and Nation Committee is not as effective as it might be is because too much emphasis is placed on the Report and its place within the General Assembly. As a result other methods of presenting its views are not used which other pressure groups might try and indeed rely on. Essentially the dominance of the General Assembly means that producing a report and voting on it becomes an end in itself. Too much emphasis is placed upon passing Deliverances. The committee is seen as the servant of the Assembly and has little room to manoeuvre independently. The result is that the committee cannot build up its own authority. This means that committee becomes too inward looking, too much time is spent writing the report and not enough on what should be done outside the annual cycle. How, is an issue to be followed up or the pressure sustained? The committee does not address itself to these problems. Instead the powerful democratic ethos of the Assembly means that activists seem to regard passing a Deliverance as being enough and tantamount to changing the law.... Passing motions becomes an end rather than a means.[30]

Wickham-Jones seems to be suggesting here that it is the want of a more sophisticated lobbying or public relations apparatus, coupled with the political delusions inherent in a pseudo-parliamentary format, which reduce the political effectiveness of the Church and Nation Committee. Indeed, former Secretary of State for Scotland in the Labour Government, The Rt. Hon. Bruce Millan, now a Glasgow MP, recounts that when he was in office, "I don't remember him (the private secretary) ever bringing the (Church and Nation) report to me when I was Secretary of State."[31] Like Wickham-Jones, Millan identifies shortcomings in the *process* used by the Church and Nation Committee in its effort to influence the political process, that is the "action" portion of its remit. In a phrase, Millan's criticism could be summed up as "follow-up". He also finds fault with the passing of Deliverances as the measure of the "productivity" of the Committee. "...it isn't much use the General Assembly agreeing a Deliverance which says that the government ought to do certain things if you don't actually go to the Government and say 'Look, this is what we want you to do.' "[32] Millan criticizes the Church and Nation

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[30] M.E. Wickham -Jones "The Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland," in Alison Eliot and Duncan B. Forrester eds., *The Scottish Churches and the Political Process Today* (Edinburgh, Centre for Theology and Public Issues, 1986), p. 69

[31] The Rt. Hon. Bruce Millan, MP, "Church and State in Scotland Today" in *The Scottish Churches...*," p. 17.

[32] *Iibid.* p. 18.

Committee for their failure to *follow up* on Deliverances by taking action, (e.g. lobbying, networking, public relations, press releases etc.), and then by reporting their action at a subsequent Assembly. In spite of the inevitable rebuffs, he suggests that this would represent a more meaningful role for the Committee, and hence for the Church of Scotland in the political process.

Political effectiveness, however, is not the only measure of effectiveness which can be used in evaluating the Church and Nation Committee. Millan points out that it would be a mistake for the church to think simply in terms of its immediate impact on the political process with regard to particular issues at particular times. There is a more diffuse influence on the public opinion at large that is....

> difficult to assess....some of the pronouncements that have been made by church leaders in Scotland on the whole problem of the bomb...will have had a considerable effect, not only among active church members but on the public generally....the Church and Nation Committee should not...judge results simply by the government of the day, but should have regard to the influence which the church is having on public opinion in the widest sense....the mission of the church is not just simply to deal with Secretaries of State or civil servants: it is to deal with the whole community.[33]

It is this diffuse, cumulative effect of Deliverances of the Church and Nation Committee upon the "collective consciousness" of the Scottish Nation that is most difficult to assess. The pseudo-parliamentary panoply of the annual Assembly with its pomp and circumstance -- the Queen's garden party at Holyrood Palace, attendance of distinguished visitors -- all combine to imbue the Assembly with the kind of prestige which a national assembly has. Furthermore, the print and electronic media treat the Assembly as if it were a gathering of heads of state. Whole page spreads in prestigious newspapers such as the *Herald* and *Scotsman* are devoted to reporting and analysing the Assembly. While of course this is not done in the exhaustive fashion of the church's own *Report of the General Assembly*, prominent, and particularly controversial issues discussed at the Assembly do enter into the common citizen's political consciousness during the days of the General Assembly. The impact of this on "public opinion in the widest sense" has never been assessed in any meaningful statistical survey. Thus, although the General Assembly and the Church and Nation Committee may appear to be "paper tigers" in terms of their relationship to what is perceived as the "real" political process in Scotland, there is much to suggest a more general, diffuse influence on public opinion. While not having the sophisticated sociometric analysis available to sort through variables, it is plausible that the singular lack of success at the polls by the Conservative Party in Scotland over the years in question might well have been partially caused in part by this diffuse influence. The social-democratic, welfare-statist leanings of the Church and Nation Committee have never been out of favour in Scotland whatever the political orientation of some of the Church's middle-class membership. The ballot box does not lie. Scots do not vote Conservative. In essence the Committee has probably

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[33] *Ibid.*, p.13.

in even measure both reflected and shaped a Scottish political consciousness which has always elevated the common good above the individual right.

The Church and Nation Committee during the 80s and 90s spoke prophetically in a very difficult context. The Britain of the Thatcher years was divided regionally, ideologically, economically and politically. There was nothing like the near consensus in favour of social programmes that swept the post-war Labour government of Clement Attlee into power in 1946. Scotland is one of several regions of high deprivation on the periphery of British society. In this limited context, the Church and Nation Committee reflected and nurtured the dominant value system of Scotland that was not that of the more prosperous, economically booming South East of England. It kept this alternative vision of life in Britain before the General Assembly, Church of Scotland and the entire nation during years when the entire apparatus of state and business were busy promoting the ideology of free-markets and individualism. The Church and Nation Committee acted more as Prophetic Watchmen than Social Activists during the Thatcher years.

Formosa for the Record

by Geoffrey Johnston

This paper is part of a larger project in which I examine the picture of "overseas" that missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in Canada presented to the home constituency. The principal sources are the magazines of the Women's Missionary Society and the *Presbyterian Record.* Until 1925 the *Record* was the main missionary magazine of the church at large, and after 1925 the only such magazine. I follow the story from the arrival of the first Canadians until 1960.

The modern Taiwanese church dates from 1865 with the arrival of Dr. James Maxwell, from the English Presbyterian mission in Amoy, who settled in Tainan or the south terrace. Seven years later, in January 1872, a young man from the backwoods of Upper Canada, George Leslie MacKay, arrived from Amoy, looking for a place to start a mission of the Canada Presbyterian Church. He settled in Tamsui, a town at the northern end of the island. The Presbyterian Church has had personnel in Taiwan ever since, apart from the years of the Pacific War.

This paper will be organized under two broad headings: the people with whom the missionaries worked, and the empire within which they lived.

The late Ch'ing administration in Taiwan was a pretty ramshackle affair. MacKay hardly refers to it. He had to deal principally with local government. In the nineteenth century neither government nor popular opinion was particularly sympathetic. His adventures in Bang-Kah illustrate the point.

Bang-Kah was a town of some consequence in those days; now it is a suburb of Taipei. MacKay described it as a stronghold of conservatism -- social and religious -- and very much in the hands of three strong clans. MacKay was not one to shrink from a challenge; he decided to beard the lion in its lair. He began work quietly enough, but before long there was a riot in the making. The story is long and dramatic, with a howling mob, a distraught functionary, a helpful British consul, and above all the heroic missionary, armed with Bible and forceps, determined to extract teeth and preach the gospel.[1]

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[1] *The Record, April 1878,* letter dated December 17th, 1877, *From Far Formosa, The Isalnd, its People and Missions* by George Leslie MacKay DD, edited by J.A. MacDonald (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1895), pp. 164-168.

The literature of China missions is full of such stories, and MacKay contributed his share.[2] But with MacKay the genre took on a distinct flavour. Taiwanese society became the background for the exploits of the heroic missionary. The same might be said of the Taiwanese environment. The island might be beautiful, but it was also dangerous. In June 1878, he described one of his many tours:

> ... we started south the 7th inst., and in the evening arrived at Liong-lek drenched with wet and with feet blistered. Saturday 8th we set out for Ang-Muk-Kang, and were again overtaken with rain which seemed literally to pour down. Mrs M was blown off the chair in which she was sitting, and the men who were carrying her were prostrated on the side of the muddy path. On and on we went without any food to eat (for we were not travelling the main road) until the evening when we entered our chapel at Ang-Mug-Kang.

The tale goes on. The next day they travelled under a blistering sun and had to wade three raging torrents. By the end of the day they were in the middle of a horrendous thunderstorm. Then, as it turned out, the people they were looking for weren't there. Even if the trip was fruitless, it made good copy.[3]

But the environment was not the last word. In January 1887, MacKay described a trip in the neighbourhood of Tamsui.

> There was a neat chapel at Toa-lion-pong, opened August 15th, 1875, but was in a field between two towns. It was pulled down and a mock grave with a figure representing the writer of these lines lying in it. I completed the largest church of solid stone on the largest site ... with the best finishing in North Formosa in two months. . . . I began to build the three chapels mentioned above on October 25th, 1886, and on Christmas day, December 25th, 1886, made the last round and saw all finished....Mark well there is a *stone church on the site or in the place of every one that was pulled down by the furious mobs.* I did this *purposely* and put the "burning bush" on them. The Chinese are too shrewd not to see that. Stone buildings now stand out conspicuous wherever they stand. The effect is aplendid. T'is all-t'is all for Christ....[4]

The Formosan Mission was consistently portrayed as a smashing success, a triumph of the gospel against all odds. It was bit overdrawn. MacKay's last report, for 1900, gives 1891 communicants after 28 years work. It was hardly a mass movement.

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[2] See *The Record*, April 1879, p. 101; April 1883, pp. 101-102; Sept 1885, p. 240; June 1887, pp. 157-158).

[3] *The Record*, September 1878, p. 241.

[4] *The Record*, June 1887, p. 158.

But characteristic of the last report, and of MacKay's reporting in general, is the high praise he has for his converts and especially the preachers.

MacKay was a firm believer in a Chinese ministry, and from the beginning spent a great deal of time with his students, meeting under trees, on the beach at Keelung, in chapels as they were built, and finally at Oxford College. One of his earlier converts was a man called Tan He, who as baptized in 1874 and became a preacher the next year, and was ordained in 1885. When he died in 1898, MacKay had high praise for him.

> It has been truly said that we should not expect Christians from heathenism to be on a level with those from a long line of Christian ancestry. There are notable exceptions, however, and the Rev. Tan He is one. Here is a native lifted at once to a high level of Spiritual power. A man full of the Holy Spirit and daily manifesting the Spirit's fruits. "This one thing I do" seemed to inspire him in his daily life. What one thing? To work and work for Jesus Christ, for the salvation of souls.
>
> Think of his life and labours for twenty five years!
> Think of the thousands who heard the gospel from his lips!
> Think of the hundreds who rejected idolatry through his influence!
> Think of the scores saved by his instrumentality![5]

MacKay's colleagues shared his confidence in their Chinese colleagues. Annie Jamieson, who was in Taiwan from 1883 to 1891, devoted a whole letter to the preachers. She found them polite, straightforward, remarkably well informed, "not angels...but faithful devoted men." Tan He and A Hoa get special mention:

> In character A Hoa is kind and patient, but he is a SOLDIER, his very nature strong, full of energy and force; he has already stood, he is ready to stand anywhere for the truth....Whether in short dress wading through the mud, or in long silk robes entertaining a mandarin, he is just the same; always straightforward and strictly truthful, with him no pretence and no concealment, no making bad good under a false idea of charity; wrong is wrong, right is right, and if he sees wrong that may be made right he does not hesitate to plainly point it out....[6]

With MacKay's death in January 1901 the tone of missionary letters changed. MacKay was a born propagandist; he knew how to present his work with style and passion. William Gauld, his successor, was cut from a different cloth. From the beginning he was concerned to set the record straight.

MacKay might have told the truth and nothing but the truth, but not always the whole truth. He had reported four self-supporting churches. True enough, but two of them were shaky, and tea prices, a principal source of income, had recently been very

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[5]*The Record,* November 1908, p. 289.

[6]*Missionary Monthly Leaflet,* February 1887, pp. 4-7.

low. Again, MacKay had reported two ordained pastors and sixty evangelists. Since MacKay's last report one pastor had died and one was on sick leave. Of the sixty evangelists he had reported, sixteen had died and nineteen had gone on to other work. Of the fifteen students, one had died and eight others had moved on.[7]

Despite a softening of the rhetoric, the missionaries maintained their confidence in the Chinese staff. But the coming of the Japanese brought a major change to their description of the environment. China ceded Taiwan to Japan by the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895. The transfer was not universally popular with the Taiwanese, and it was three years before the Japanese had established really effective control over the island.

The first missionary reaction was a matter of fact account by Wm. Gauld in a letter dated June 10th, 1895,[8] Gauld admitted that, even in Tamsui, it was difficult to sift fact from fiction, but hazarded the opinion that the native Christians had not been much interfered with. Subsequent letters had a different story. Mackay wrote in March 1896, telling how a plan to visit the southern stations had been interrupted by an insurrection. The Japanese put it down in short order. The Pipohoans, the barbarians of the plain suffered the most, as they were suspect to both Chinese and Japanese. MacKay and a colleague from the English mission intervened with the Japanese governor, apparently with every success.[9]

Once the Japanese were established, missionary comment was generally very positive. At the end of 1906, Milton Jack published a long article in the *Record*, recounting the improvements the Japanese had brought. They had almost finished a railway between Taipei and Tainan, developed a fine road system and a network of coastal steamers. Telephone and telegraph services were in place, and also a very efficient postal system. The judicial system was a vast improvement over the Chinese one. They had established a system of primary and secondary schools, as well as some modern hospitals. The schools gave Jack the most concern.

> It must be remembered that these Japanese schools are in no direct way connected with Christianity, and tend to reflect rather the materialistic spirit that is so prevalent in Japan. In this Mission, it has been pointed out more than once by others, we need a well-equipped school for boys in which the sons of Christian Chinese and others may receive a thorough training under Christian influences and away from the materialistic atmosphere of the Japanese schools.[10]

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[7]*The Record*, February 1902, pp. 91-92.

[8]*The Record*, August 1895, pp. 210-211.

[9]*The Record*, February 1897, p. 36.

[10]*The Record*, November 1906, p. 481. See also G.W. MacKay in *The Record*, August 1912, p. 350, and Duncan MacLeod in *The Record*, June 1910, p. 259).

Thus began the campaign to establish a secondary school for boys, a campaign that became even more serious when it was realized that Japanese policy did not include post primary education for the Chinese, only the Japanese. G.W. MacKay returned from overseas study in 1912 and started the Tamsui Boys' School. Apart from the duration of the Pacific War MacKay remained as its principal all his working life.

Meanwhile, in 1905 the WMS sent two women, Hannah Connell and Jane Kinney to establish work among women. The Girls' School was opened on October 1st, 1907. It was a small start, only a couple of dozen girls, but Jane Kinney was hopeful.

> About one half the pupils who have entered have already attended the public school, one having completed the six years' course, the others having spent from two to five years in the schools. The other half have never attended any school, and the majority of these have been taught little or nothing at home, so we have quite raw material with which to work. But in their ability to learn they compare quite favourably with home children.[11]

Teachers don't have to praise their students. One can appeal to a home constituency just as well by describing the hard slog to bring children out of savagery. There were two "savages" or aboriginals in the first batch, but Miss Kinney was at pains to stress that they were very well behaved and friendly young people, doing very well, despite the fact that they had first to learn Chinese before they could begin.

A very positive assessment of the Taiwanese is characteristic of the literature as long as MacKay was alive. His "students" and colleagues were probably his contemporaries, and many of them his friends. With the exception of the school teachers his successors were not as enthusiastic about their Taiwanese colleagues. It is true that in 1904 they received permission from Canada to form a presbytery and it met for the first time in October of that year. Unlike a mission council, a presbytery is a normal Presbyterian institution, made up of ministers and elders representing congregations. Theoretically, its formation should signal the beginning of ecclesiastical independence, but in fact the missionaries hardly mention it. Rather they seem to have worked within the presbytery to establish a system of missionary supervision.

It may be that they were starting from scratch with a new batch of ministerial candidates. Thurlow Fraser, in a generally sceptical review of the church, noted that many of the ministerial candidates were "little, if anything more than boys in years, and so few even middle aged." Death and retirement, he noted, would have accounted for some departures but, he conjectured "not a few" must have left for better paying work. In any case, the missionaries certainly gave the impression that the Taiwanese preachers could not be trusted to work on their own.

> We cannot emphasize too strongly the need of more men to supervise the work of the native evangelists, in our opinion, in order to ensure the most effective results, there should be an ordained missionary for every fifteen native evangelists stationed in chapels. Such provision would allow for

[11] *Foreign Mission Tidings*, January 1908, p. 137. See also *FMT*, September 1912, p .6.

> quarterly Sabbath visits.... This means that at the present time, there should be four ordained foreign missionaries devoting all their time to this work. . . .[12]

There were always exceptions. The east coast was hard to get at, involving long rides on trains and steamers, many miles on foot and many nights on hard Chinese beds. The mission was quite happy to ordain a seasoned preacher, Keh Hsin to supervise the work on the Gilan Plain. Otherwise only self-supporting congregations got ordained Taiwanese ministers. Three years later the system was more or less in place.

> The foreign missionary, co-operating with the native preachers and Christians must still take the lead in bringing the Gospel to the heathen. The mission station forms the centre and from this centre the missionary and his staff of native workers, carries on the most important work of the Church, preaching the Gospel to those who are still in heathen darkness.[13]

In March 1923, K.W. Dowie described one of his weekend visits. He went by train, and was met by some of the local people. They talked business, ate, of course, and had a public meeting at which Dowie preached. After the service he went to the room they had hired for the night. But he had brought a camp bed and preferred to sleep outside, as assorted small creatures had already occupied the bed inside. The story closes with a quotation from a veteran missionary, "I have faith to believe that you can convert the Chinese to godliness -- but to cleanliness -- never!"[14]

The local preacher, whom one might expect to be treated as a colleague, was a shadowy, nameless figure. Another figure, an elder was a little more visible, but he was at best a sapphire in the rough. The protagonists in the story are Dowie and the people at the meeting, a few Christians, but mostly "heathen natives." This was not a story about a church in the making, but about life in a colonial mission.

The events of 1925 were traumatic for the Formosan Mission. Although it was assigned to the Presbyterians, most missionaries had voted union, and many left the field for other work. Of the veterans, only George W. MacKay remained among the men. Six of the women stayed. Two relatively new appointments, Dr. Gushue Taylor and Hugh MacMillan remained at work, soon to be joined by Jim Dickson and his wife Lillian. The mission staff underwent a major overhaul in the mid twenties, an overhaul which was to some extent reflected in the letters home.

The most striking difference was in the estimate of the church. One of the earliest post-union letters described a day in the life of the congregation in Soren, a suburb of Taipei. It seems to have been a busy place, with lots of children. Of the Superintendent, a man named Tan, the correspondent said:

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[12] Milton Jack in *The Record*, July 1908, p. 307.

[13] *The Record*, May 1912, Formosa Mission for 1911, p. 205. See also J.Y. Ferguson in *The Record*, March 1920, pp. 81-82.

[14] K.W. Dowie, *The Record*, March 1923, pp. 80-81.

> He has little education and his occupation is humble, but for love and faith in his Lord, and willingness to serve...he has few equals. Christians turn to him often in times of need, whether for comfort in time of trouble or to seize the opportunity of an open door for the message... The congregation's preacher seems to have been cut from the same cloth: The present preacher is much beloved by his people, one who truly loves his Saviour. Listening to his preaching one feels that his love for his Saviour is the motive power of his life. [15]

The correspondent acknowledged that not all churches were as lively as Soren, but he, or she, left a good impression about the Taiwanese leadership.

Ten years later the *Record* published an account of the presbytery of 1937. Four churches had reached the point where they could call a minister, three new candidates for the ministry passed their examinations, and the presbytery adopted a scheme to replace the diminishing grants from Canada over a twenty year period.

> Can it be done? The number of aid-receiving churches at present is about sixty. This would mean that three churches every year would become self-supporting. It presents a difficult objective worth striving for. And the spirit of the presbytery in responding to such a plan is praiseworthy.... [16]

The best laid plans of the late 'thirties were rudely upset by the Pacific war. By early 1941 all the missionaries had left the island, handing over responsibility for Christians and property alike to their Formosan colleagues. George Mackay gave some of the details to the Synod of Hamilton and London, naming and praising the men who had taken on the leadership of the church and its hospital. The schools had been transferred to the government some years earlier.[17] The only sign of hesitation was Mission Council's packing the Board of Trustees with their nominations before they handed over the property.[18]

The 'thirties also saw a significant shift in the missionary portrayal of the Japanese administration. The second generation, the men and women who took the work over from G.L.MacKay had, on the whole, been very positive about the Japanese. They saw them as constructive colonialists, bringing Taiwan into the twentieth century. Their major criticism was Japanese reluctance to offer much in the way of post-primary education to Taiwanese, reserving such training largely to the Japanese. Even as late as 1932, when numerous senior Japanese officials attended the Jubilee of the mission, relations seem to have been very cordial.

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[15] *The Record*, December 1927, pp. 377-378.

[16] *The Record*, July 1937, p. 212.

[17] *The Record*, July 1941, pp. 216-217.

[18] *The Record*, April 1941, p. 116.

The first hint that all was not well came in 1933. Bella Koa, G.L.MacKay's daughter and a pillar of the WMS, sent the *Glad Tidings* a report of the Society's activities, in the course of which she referred to one of the Bible women.

> One of the Bible women reported having been questioned by some policemen as to what she was teaching and telling about. She told them she was teaching people to read Romanized writing, and telling about the Jesus doctrine. She told them about it too. They nodded their heads, said "thank you" and walked off. She is not afraid to speak out for the truth.[19]

The Japanese were great assimilationists. In 1935 the teaching of Chinese, both in characters and Romaized was forbidden. Even the Bible was to be taught in Japanese. One could still pray in Formosan, but that was about all. The missionaries reported this development without comment.[20]

The logic of assimilation led to the absorption of independent educational institutions. The mission put on a brave face.

> The decision of the Board of Missions and the Women's Missionary Society (WD) to give over to the Government their secondary schools...marks a forward movement in mission work in that country. Founded because of the lack of educational facilities in the early days, the schools were pioneers in this field, rendering a service of which the people have been most ready to express appreciation and with which the Government has shown the heartiest sympathy. The situation in regard to secular education at the present time, however, is in striking contrast to that in the pioneer days in which Christian schools were founded and developed. The primary purpose of the Church in Formosa is not to give an advanced secular education, and the time has gone when it had to lead in that field....[21]

This was strange reading in the *Glad Tidings* after many articles in which the missionaries told of the Christian atmosphere of the school, and noted how many girls had become Christian.

Missionary comment on public life in Taiwan during the thirties was very muted Not until they had left the island did they begin to tell it like it was.

> We who come from Formosa have already lived many years under the shadow of war, under a shadow that daily grew darker and more menacing, until peoples' hearts everywhere were filled with fear and with foreboding of the days to come. Our freedom to do Christian work had

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[19] *The Glad Tidings*, March 1933, p. 89.

[20] *The Glad Tidings*, June 1935, p. 216.

[21] *The Glad Tidings*, Nov. 1936, p. 361.

> become sharply restricted, our movements from one place to another were subject to suspicion, and often native Christians with whom we talked or had fellowship were detained and questioned by the military police... we could feel discouragement creeping in everywhere. It had its roots in fear and uncertainty as to the future, as luxuries and finally even everyday necessities had to be flung into the hungry maw of war. Its immediate cause was the rationing of food, especially of that most precious staff of life to the Formosans, rice. When long queues formed each day in front of the rice shops, when the narrowing rations got down to four ounces a day for each person (about enough for one meal) then everyone's interest in food became proportionately hysterical and abnormal.[22]

As British and American policy became increasingly hostile towards the Japanese, missionaries became increasingly suspect. They became the worst of spies. In these circumstances they were at best an embarrassment and at worst hazardous to their Chinese colleagues. Finally, in 1940, the British consul advised the withdrawal of all British subjects. Everybody was home by the beginning of 1941.[23]

George Mackay got a letter in October 1941 from Bella Koa, his sister, but there was no further contact between Canada and Formosa until December 1945. Bella Koa resumed the correspondence, with others, at the end of 1945 and in the spring of 1946 Jim Dickson returned to Taipei to a royal welcome. When he had left the island foreigners were vilified spies. Now they were sought after guests. Two days after he arrived Dickson was speaking at a mass meeting in the town hall.

> Most of the audience... were not Christians, but when I arose to speak the fifteen hundred people arose to their feet and applauded, and finally, all together, made a respectful bow. The government officials are also most friendly. There are some Christians among them, who attend our churches regularly. The prestige of the "Foreigner" has never been as high as it is today. Every kindness and consideration is shown him on every hand. Here in Formosa there is a great sense of appreciation of the allies, who made possible the defeat of Japan.[24]

The island itself had changed out of all recognition. In 1941 it had been something of a colonial backwater, stable, peaceful and regimented. In 1946 one could hardly get a seat on the bus, partly because the public services had run down, and partly because Taipei was booming. But with the boom came inflation. Rice had gone from 14 yen to 20 yen a pound. Other items had doubled or more in price. The departure of the Japanese had opened numerous posts in the civil service, paying much more than the

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[22] Lillian Dickson in *Glad Tidings*, May 1941, p. 196.

[23] Jim Dickson in *The Record*, February 1941, p. 35-36.

[24] Jim Dickson in *The Record*, September 1946 p. 238.

church could afford. Nevertheless most people, both ministers and teachers, had stayed with the church, but were calling desperately for missionary assistance.

The most striking new theme in the post-war period had to do with the aborigines. During the thirties Dickson had recruited a Tayal woman named Chi Oang and sent her to school as a Bible woman. Chi Oang was a very capable woman. She established her credibility with the Japanese by mediating between them and the Tayals, and during the war she returned home, by now well into middle life. Nevertheless she was one of the key people in bringing the gospel to the aborigines. Already in 1946 there were thirteen churches among the Tayal alone, and the total Christian community among the aboriginals of all tribes was around three thousand.

Once the confusion following the collapse of the Japanese empire had been resolved two themes stand out in particular, opportunity and the Cold War.

> Generally speaking the Formosans, particularly the young, are precariously teetering between the security and well ordered efficiency of a thoroughly regimented Japanese regime and the new freedom now being experienced under the more liberal, but less secure Chinese regime. Like a fledgling pushed from its nest forced to test its wings, they are rather fearful. They are more, they are uncertain, bewildered, seized with a nostalgic memory of what used to be and not sure what to do with this new freedom ....[25]

She then went on to describe a couple of mass meetings the "missionaries and pastors" had organized. One of them featured a speech by a woman from the mountains.

> When the little woman, a young Christian from the Tyal [sic] tribe, spoke her message you could have heard a pin drop. O! wonderful moment of potential miracle, when a Christian stands before her fellow countrymen and tells them the wonder of Christian faith.[26]

She concluded:

> Doors wide open - the hinges are off. This is the hour for the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. It calls to the Presbyterian Church in Canada -- not for unlimited funds, nor for unlimited personnel, but for sufficient personnel and funds to support that personnel to help rehabilitate the Formosan church which is aware of its opportunity and responsibility but too terribly weakened to make the grade alone.[27]

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[25] Laura Pelton in *The Record*, Dec 1948, p. 323. Laura Pelton was a senior executive with the WMS WD.

[26] *Ibid*,, p. 323.

[27] *Ibid*., p 343.

Taiwan was not to have a moment's rest. If the reversion to China was not dramatic enough, the island soon had to absorb a million and a half mainlanders. Dickson claimed that rents in Taipei were higher than in New York. The streets were full of soldiers, and the sleek American automobiles that the wealthy had managed to bring with them. Some of the newcomers were Christians, and the church had to accommodate them. Jim Dickson, the principal correspondent in the *Record*, was pleased with how the church handled the crisis.[28]

In 1950 the Americans decided that Taiwan was, after all, within their defence perimeter, and put the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straits. Taiwan suddenly became one of the flash points of the Cold War.

The Cold War loomed larger in Canadian minds than in Taiwanese. In 1952, G. Deane Johnston, then the Chairman of the Board of Missions went to Taiwan to sort out some tricky property questions with the church and government. He commented that the Church and mission had problems, but they were problems that arose partly from the church's growth and partly "from the extremely difficult political situation which has arisen in that part of the world."[29]

The Cold War and its problems, he went on, were "temporary things." The basic facts were the existence of a church well on the way to self-support and that "we are in the midst of a mass movement towards Christianity among the Hill tribes probably unequalled anywhere in the world today".[30]

E.H. Johnson made a similar point three years later. They pulled the curtains in the plane as it came into Taipei, and when he reached the city he was impressed by the air raid shelters and pill boxes. Nevertheless life went on.

> ...we were amazed how calmly and normally Formosan life goes on... Our conferences and consultations with missions and church people went forward without change, not because of any quiet display of courage but simply because there was little sense of imminent peril.[31]

In the missionary literature opportunity loomed larger than the Cold War, and no opportunity was more exciting than that in the mountains. Jim and Lillian Dickson were particularly involved with this work, and Lillian was a persuasive advocate.

> Far up in the mountains of Formosa in a little mountain church which was dark except for wood flares, missionaries among the tribes people were finishing up a few days ministry which had consisted mainly of Bible stories and new songs. On the last night we offered to tell them something

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[28] J. Dickson in *The Record*, January 1950, p. 3.

[29] G. Deane Johnston in *The Record*, May 1952, p. 16.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] E.H. Johnson in *The Record*, June 1955, p. 4. E.H. Johnson had recently become Secretary for Overseas Missions.

> about health and how to deal with minor illnesses. There was a great silence for several minutes, and then the chief arose, tall and commanding, and spoke with dignity and yet finality. "We thank you for offering to tell us about health, " he said, " but we would rather hear about God. We believe that if we are right with God, all other things will follow."[32]

The *Record*, and the *Glad Tidings* are peppered with stories about forays into the mountains.[33] Lillian Dickson is reminiscent of G.L. MacKay; her stories usually feature either a black night or pouring rain, or perhaps both. Visits by other missionaries were less dramatic. Again, as in MacKay's stories, the missionaries are rarely alone, but usually accompanied by the "native pastor." The Taiwanese, however remain shadowy and usually nameless figures.

A striking exception to that general observation is H.A. MacMillan, who joined the staff in 1924. One cannot discover from his articles in the church press what MacMillan actually did. He never talked about his own work, but that of his Formosan colleagues. In the summer of 1951 an article appeared in the *Record*, ostensibly about the first General Assembly, but really about the church in which the meeting was held.

Siang Lian began life in a shop near MacKay Memorial hospital, with Go Khoan-ju, a convert of G.L. MacKay as the first pastor. In 1917 they built a small chapel, but ten years later it was too small, and they turned it over to a new leprosy work that was starting out of MacKay Memorial and built a new church next door. In 1939 the Japanese widened the street and cut the church in two. The congregation got some compensation, and started a building fund. But the war prevented any building, and the inflation that followed the war destroyed the building fund. Undaunted they started again. "Now that their building is up they have reason to be thankful to God and proud of its achievement." The accompanying photo shows the General Assembly in front of a very impressive church.[34]

This is a story of Taiwanese achievement. MacMillan avoided the usual conclusion, a call for Canadians to come and help the Taiwanese. He just told the story. MacMillan was almost unique in his choice of Taiwanese subject matter. But another notable exception was the article on Tan Su-Ti.

Tan Su Ti succeeded George W. MacKay as principal of the Boys' school, and added the girls' school to his responsibilities as well. He was a graduate of the Boys' School, and absorbed the musical as well as the literary tradition of the mission.

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[32] Lillian Dickson in *The Record* June 1951, p. 169.

[33] See for example the *Glad Tidings*, June 1952, p. 247, February 1953, pp. 56-58, October 1955, pp. 391-392, March 1958, pp. 34-35.

[34] Hugh MacMillan in *The Record*, July August 1951, p. 218. MacMillan is not clear why Japan's defeat destroyed the building fund. Inflation seems the likeliest explanation. See also MacMillan's letter in the *Glad Tidings*, November 1952, pp. 457-458, a short biography of an *anicula Christiana.*

> He has faced many problems which arise out of a time of war, out of a change of type of government, and of official language. With his Canadian and Formosan colleagues, he has worked out many of these problems, until now the schools are at a place where with strong leadership and a programme of progress, they may make a greater contribution to the life and welfare of Formosa.[35]

By the fifties mission orthodoxy had recognized the end of the imperial era. Missionary and native had changed places; missionaries had ceased to direct; now they supported. But this sea change is not reflected in the missionary literature. It is conceivable that the missionaries took that point for granted, at least in principle, and didn't feel they needed to stress it. Perhaps they weren't very happy with it. The evidence is inconclusive. Lillian Dickson was too much of a missionary entrepreneur to take a back seat to anyone. On the other hand, Taiwanese, like Tan Su Ti, began showing up in Canada for study or on visits. The Chinese began to supplant the missionaries as interpreters of Taiwan. But these visits may have been Board rather missionary initiatives. From the published material to the end of the period under review, it is not clear how seriously the missionary community took their Taiwanese colleagues.

To sum up, the picture of Taiwan varied over the some ninety years under review. It began as background for the heroic missionary. With the coming of the Japanese it became a mundane colony. After the Pacific War it was either a front line in the struggle for the soul of humanity, or a place of ecclesiastical opportunity. The missionary portrayal of the Chinese was enthusiastic with MacKay, sceptical with his successors, and hard to tell during the long tenures of Dickson and MacMillan.

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[35] *The Glad Tidings,* March 1958, p. 15.

THE GROWTH OF PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE SIMCOE DISTRICT OF UPPER CANADA: THE FIRST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS: 1822 – 1847[1]

by

Michael Millar

Presbyterianism in what is now the County of Simcoe, Ontario, had its origins in three of the Scottish churches which sent missionaries out to British North America in the early years of the nineteenth century. These were, in order of appearance, the Presbytery of the Canadas -- connected with the Associate Synod in Scotland; the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, in connexion with the Church of Scotland -- the "Kirk Synod;" and the United Associate Secession Mission in Canada, in connexion with the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church of Scotland. All three of these groups were involved with the first organized Presbyterian congregation in that part of the Home District of Upper Canada that on the 11th of January 1843 became the Simcoe District and, in 1849, Simcoe County. This paper will cover the development of Presbyterianism within the District

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[1] This paper had its origin in a talk I gave some three years ago to a men's group from the Uptergrove, Esson and Willis pastoral charge in the Presbytery of Barrie. That talk gave a much more cursory overview of the actual Presbyterian history of the County and centred more on the overall origins and history of the denomination. For this paper, because of the size of the subject and the volume of material available, I decided to concentrate on the first quarter century of recorded Presbyterian history in the area. The story from 1847 on, which includes the major centres of Barrie, Collingwood and Orillia, will have to wait for another day. Once again, I am very much indebted to my daughters, Ellen and Elizabeth for proofreading and suggesting changes. Ellen for vetting the footnotes and Elizabeth the paper itself. My thanks also to the Presbyterian Church in Canada archivist Ms. Kim Arnold for her continued support and assistance. Any historical errors or omissions contained herein, are solely my responsibility.

over the first twenty-five years from 1822, when the first congregation was established in the Scotch Settlement of West Gwillimbury Township.

In the period 1822-1847 thirteen congregations or mission stations were erected. Of these, only two still exist today: Emmanuel United Church, Bond Head, as the direct descendent of the original West Gwillimbury congregation of 1822, and Fraser Presbyterian Church, Tottenham, which descended from the first Presbyterian congregation in Tecumseth Township. Congregations in the present-day major centres of Barrie, Orillia and Collingwood did not come into formal existence until 1849, 1851 and 1852 respectively. To give some context to the story, details of some of the thirteen congregations will be continued beyond 1847.

For the purposes of clarity it should be noted that the Presbytery of the Canadas changed its name to the Synod of the Canadas in 1819 and to the United Synod of Upper Canada in 1825. As well, the United Associate Secession Mission in Canada became, on Christmas Day 1834, the Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas, the Missionary Synod in Canada in 1843, and the United Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1847. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connexion with the Church of Scotland retained its name without any change throughout this period. Where reference is made to "Simcoe" in the paper, it simply refers to the area whether part of the Home District, the District or the County of Simcoe.

The Simcoe County of today is not as large as it was in the time period covered by this paper. Five townships in what is now Grey County and two in what is now Dufferin County were originally part of Simcoe. These were: Artemesia, Collingwood, Euphrasia, Osprey and St. Vincent Townships, separated on 15th of April 1852 when Grey County was established; and Mono and Mulmur Townships, separated on 24th of January 1881 when Dufferin County was established. In addition, the forty-four Townships lying to the North of Simcoe, in what are now the Districts of Muskoka and Parry Sound, were initially connected with Simcoe for judicial purposes. For the purposes of continuity, Presbyterian activity in all of these separated areas, where applicable, will be touched on, but a detailed examination is outside the scope of this paper.

The Rev. William Fraser recorded in the First Church, West Gwillimbury, Kirk Session Minute Book the origin of the first Presbyterian congregation in Simcoe: "West Gwillimbury, January 6, 1822 – A Presbyterian Church was constituted in the "Scotch Settlement" by the Rev. William Jenkins, and fourteen persons were received as members."[2]

This congregation was organized among the inhabitants of the Scotch Settlement, Township of West Gwillimbury under the auspices of the Synod of the Canadas. The Scotch settlement had come into existence between 1816 and 1820 with the arrival of the Selkirk Settlers who had been driven out of Manitoba by the Hudson's Bay Company. They took up land in the south part of the township mostly in the first six concessions and the first eight or nine lots. The sixth concession became known as the Scotch Line.

A second account of the origin of this congregation is to be found in the West Gwillimbury section of the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Simcoe County*:

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[2] Cited in Andrew F. Hunter, *A History of Simcoe County*. 2 Volumes (Barrie: The County of Simcoe, 1909; reprinted by the Historical Committee of Simcoe County in 1948), vol. 1, p. 312. (Page references are to reprint edition).

> With the extension of settlements within the township, it presented an inviting field for spiritual labour, and attracted the Rev. Mr. Jennings, of Richmond Hill, to the locality, in his parochial capacity, he having been the first to hold religious services in Gwillimbury. Mr. Jennings was of the Presbyterian persuasion, and conducted services periodically (about four times a year) in a log cabin which had been built for secular as well as spiritual educational purposes, on Lot 8, Con. 6. It was in connection with the "Kirk" of Scotland, of which the first resident minister was Rev. Peter Ferguson.[3]

Apart from calling William Jenkins, Jennings and stating that the congregation was in connection with the "Kirk" of Scotland, this accords with other contemporary accounts detailing the origins of the congregation.

A fuller account of the church's history has been reported in the "Auld Kirk" section of the *Cemetery Inscriptions Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Townships, Simcoe County, Ontario*:

> On Jan. 6, 1822 a Presbyterian Church was constituted when a traveling preacher from Richmond Hill, the Rev. William Jenkins, received fourteen people as members. The next year the site for a church and burying ground on the South ½ of lot 8, Concession 6, was given by John Faris for a small consideration. The Rev. Mr. Jenkins, who came four times a year, ordained as elders Adam Goodfellow, William Sutherland, Alexander Bannerman and John Mathieson Jr.
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> A log cabin built in 1823 served for both school and worship. John Carruthers[4] doubled as teacher and catechist. A Mr. Moffat became the first regular teacher. The first language heard in the Auld Kirk was Gælic and newcomers from Scotland joined the congregation.
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> A frame church was built in 1827. The old log church was moved along the 6th line to lot 5 and became the first No. 3 school on that site.[5]

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[3] *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Simcoe, Ontario* (Toronto:H. Belden & Co., 1881; repr., Port Elgin, Ont.: Cumming Atlas Reprints, 1975), p. 12.

[4] "Appointed a catechist and missionary; died 1866." See Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiæ Scoticanæ: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation.* Vol. VII: *Synods of Ross, Sutherland and Caithness, Glenelg, Orkney and of Shetland, the Church in England, Ireland and Overseas.* New and revised edition. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1928), p. 630.

[5] *Cemetery Inscriptions Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Townships, Simcoe County, Ontario* (Bond Head, Ont.: Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society, 1982), p. 151.

Andrew F. Hunter's comprehensive *History of Simcoe County* (1909) dealt at some length with the origin of the West Gwillimbury congregation, using details recorded in the Kirk Session Minute Book of the congregation. Because he had access to primary sources his account differs from that recorded by the compiler of the *Historical Atlas* account and the "Auld Kirk" section of the *Cemetery Inscriptions of Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury*. For example, he notes that the Mr. Carruthers, referred to above, was a Catechist and Exhorter in the employ of the Presbytery of York of the Kirk Synod. However, the Kirk Synod did not come into existence until 1831, eight years later.

Hunter also recorded: "Among other ministers who occasionally came from the frontier townships to preach or administer the Sacrament in the little log cabin church, was the Rev. James Harris, of York (now Toronto)."[6] Mr. Harris, minister at First Presbyterian Church, York, was connected with the United Synod. Hunter also records the date when Mr. Jenkins ordained the four men noted above as being the 29th of January 1824 and that a Kirk Session was constituted on the same day.[7] The congregation does not appear to have had a settled minister until sometime in the summer of 1831 when the Rev. Peter Ferguson[8] was inducted to the charge by the York Presbytery of the United Synod of Upper Canada. Hunter reported:

> September 26, 1830. – The name of Rev. Peter Ferguson, from the Secession Church in Scotland, appears for the first time as the Moderator of Session. Mr. Ferguson afterwards took charge of the congregation as a settled pastor, and was their first minister. The date of his induction is nowhere on record, but from a minute of a congregational meeting held on the first day of August, 1831, at which a petition praying for the settlement of Mr. Ferguson, and at which Messrs. Adam Goodfellow and John Mathieson were appointed delegates to lay the petition before the Presbytery, it may be presumed that the pastoral relation was formed some time in the autumn of the same year.[9]

By this time the charge also included two congregations in the neighbouring Townships of Tecumseth and Essa. The date of their erection is not known. Mr. Ferguson was translated to Esquesing Township in the Gore District, now Halton Region,

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[6] Hunter, *A History of Simcoe County*, vol. 1, p. 312.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] According to Professor Gregg, Mr. Ferguson arrived in Upper Canada from Scotland in the Autumn of 1830. "In the month of May of that year [1830] he had been ordained by the United Associate Presbytery of Falkirk and Stirling. On presenting a certificate of his ordination, and also a very respectable recommendation from the members of that body, he was received as a member of the united Presbytery on the 20th April, 1831, and was soon afterwards inducted to the pastoral charge of West Gwillimbury." William Gregg, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto: Presbyterian Printing and Publishing Company, 1885), p. 373.

[9] Hunter, *A History of Simcoe County*, vol. 1, p. 312.

on the 11th of April 1832[10] and at that point the West Gwillimbury congregation became divided -- part remaining with the United Synod and the other part aligning themselves with the Kirk Synod.

Because the events in West Gwillimbury are of considerable significance I am going to follow these divided congregations past 1847, to provide a better overall picture. This is not to say that Presbyterian activity in other parts of the Simcoe District of Upper Canada isn't significant; it's just that prior to 1840-42 there wasn't, except for the Townships of West Gwillimbury, Tecumseth and Essa, a whole lot of it going on.

When the West Gwillimbury congregation divided, those who opted to join the Kirk Synod retained the building. According to Hunter, the United Synod congregation appears to have met for worship at the homes of Adam Goodfellow and John Cerswell. I'll return to this group shortly.

The Kirk Synod congregation remained without a minister for nearly three years until 1834, when they called Rev. William McKillican, M.A. Mr. McKillican was translated to St. Thomas in 1838, although the *Fasti* indicates 1840[11]. The Charge then remained vacant until 19th of January 1842 when Rev. John McMurchy was inducted.

A second congregation at Cherry Creek in Innisfil Township came into existence as part of this Charge. The building, on Lot 16, Concession 2, still exists -- as the Honey House on the east side of Simcoe County Road 4 (formerly Highway 11). The church was built in 1845 and opened for worship on 28th of January 1846, with Rev. Andrew Bell, Clerk of the Presbytery of Toronto, as the guest preacher.

On the 1st of November 1858 a half-acre lot was purchased from John Coulson for $50 on the south side of Lot 15, Concession 11, West Gwillimbury, for a third church and cemetery site. This church, called St. John's, at Coulson's Hill, was opened for worship during 1859.

So now we have a three-point Kirk Synod Charge -- the Auld Kirk; St. John's, Coulson's Hill; and Cherry Creek. While it is unclear from the Synod Minutes - which simply show West Gwillimbury and Innisfil -- it would appear that the Auld Kirk continued to be part of the Charge until 1871, when the church was closed, although occasional services were held there until 1875.[12] Many of the early settlers are buried in the cemetery there.

James Croil, in early 1865, toured all the congregations of the Kirk Synod in his capacity as Agent for the Schemes of the Church. He painted a less than flattering picture of this pastoral charge:

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[10] "In 1832 the first Presbyterian Minister, the Rev. Peter Ferguson, was 'settled' over the 'Boston' congregation in the Scotch Block, where he remained for many years...." *Historical Atlas of Halton County* (Toronto: Walker & Miles, 1877; repr., Port Elgin, Ont.: Cumming Atlas Reprints, 1971), p. 55.

[11] "Appointed by Colonial Committee and ordained to West Gwillimbury 1834; minister at St. Thomas 1840-42." See Scott, *Fasti*, vol. 7, p. 643.

[12] The building still stands, with a Province of Ontario historical plaque erected in front, and is now under the care of the Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society.

> There are three places of worship. St. John's Church in the centre of the charge, and near the town of Bradford, is a neat structure; that at the Scotch Settlement is old and dilapidated, while the one at Innisfil is decidedly *infra dig.* There is no manse, but there is a lot of 18 acres of land within the town limits, which is valued at $1800. Bradford is situated on the margin of a dismal swamp through which the sluggish Holland River flows, in summer time exuding malaria as pestilential as the Pontine marshes.[13]

We now return to the congregation that continued its connection with the United Synod. As noted earlier, Mr. Ferguson demitted the charge on Tuesday the 10th of April 1832. At a congregational meeting held the following week, on the 19th, a majority of those present resolved to apply to the Kirk Synod for supply of ordinances with a view to uniting with that body. Hunter noted: "This step was the beginning of a disruption in the church, which ended with the establishment of two independent churches – one at Bond Head, and the other remaining in the Scotch Settlement."[14] Hunter gave a number of other references to the disruption, but he appears to have confused the United Synod of Upper Canada with the Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas.

> April 23, 1832. – A portion of the congregation were dissatisfied with the resolution to seek a minister from the Church of Scotland, and having consulted with the congregations in Tecumseth and Essa, held another meeting at which it was unanimously resolved to abide in connection with the Missionary Synod of Upper Canada [sic], being the body in connexion with which the congregation had at first been organized.
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> May 5, 1832. – A meeting of delegates from the several parts of the congregation, namely: West Gwillimbury, Tecumseth, and Essa, was held at the house of Adam Goodfellow, at which Mr. Goodfellow was appointed to make application to the Missionary Synod of Upper Canada in connection with the United Secession Synod in Scotland [sic], for occasional preaching, and a resolution was adopted for building a new church.[15]
>
> From various hindrances this resolution was not carried into immediate effect, although afterward a church was erected at Bond Head in the year 1837. Although without a meeting-house, the Bond Head branch of the original congregation, however, soon secured the services of a pastor as the following entry attests:-

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[13] *A Historical and Statistical Report of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connexion with the Church of Scotland for the year 1866.* 2nd edition (Montreal, John Lovell, 1868), p. 44.

[14] Hunter, *A History of Simcoe County*, vol. 1, p. 313.

[15] *Ibid.*

> October 9, 1833. – The Rev. Jas. Howey was ordained to the office of the ministry and to the pastoral charge of the congregations of West Gwillimbury, Tecumseth and Essa.[16]

Here some background on the United Associate Secession Synod in Scotland is needed. It decided, in the late 1820s, to become involved in some form of overseas missionary activity. Canada was chosen as their field of labour. In 1832 they sent out three missionaries. These were William Proudfoot, Thomas Christie and William Robertson. Robertson contracted typhoid fever and died shortly after their arrival in Montreal, but Proudfoot, after a short stop in Prescott, came on to York and met up there with Thomas Christie, who had traveled across the Atlantic in a different vessel.

From William Proudfoot's correspondence, which is in the Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, and his diaries, in the Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario, we can learn a great deal about the establishment and growth of this mission. While Thomas Christie settled in the area where Cambridge is today, William Proudfoot, with some exceptions, established his mission field among the Scottish settlements in and around London. The exceptions included the three point West Gwillimbury pastoral charge. Some of the correspondence seems to indicate that William Proudfoot and Thomas Christie initially entertained the idea of associating themselves with the United Synod when they arrived in York in 1832. A letter in the collection from Andrew Bell, Clerk of the United Synod, to Adam Goodfellow at Bond Head, indicates that William Proudfoot was going to preach for a possible call to the congregation. For a number of reasons, not the least of which was a requirement for Gælic, the call was not proceeded with, although William Proudfoot conducted at least one service there. The letter, dated Markham, 2nd October 1832, reads:

> I write to introduce to you the Rev. William Proudfoot, who goes up to preach to you on Sabbath. His object in coming to this country on behalf of the United Secession Church &c &c he will explain to you himself. I believe he intends to cooperate with our Body as far as possible – he has our authority to preach in our vacancies & should he take a call from any of our churches, he will join our Presbytery fully.
>
> I send also a copy of a resolution of Presbytery which you will submit to the congregation & take the sense of those who are attached to our Body, upon it. I hope there will be an elder from Gwillimbury at the meeting of Presbytery.[17]

What was the resolution referred to above? Was it the proposal that the United Synod unite with the Kirk Synod? We don't know. What we do know is that William

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[16] *Ibid.* p. 314.

[17] Rev. Andrew Bell, Markham, Upper Canada to Adam Goodfellow, Bond Head, Upper Canada, 2 October 1832, Rev. William Proudfoot file, Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Don Mills, Ont.

Proudfoot preached at Bond Head on the 7th of October 1832. While Messrs. Christie and Proudfoot had been most cordially received by the United Synod, they felt that their mission lay in the Scottish settlements in the West of the Province, independent of both the Kirk and the United Synod.

A turn of events took place in June of 1833 when three missionaries arrived from the Secession Church of Ireland and were received by the Presbytery of York, United Synod of Upper Canada. One of these, James Howey or Howie,[18] -- a licentiate -- was ordained and inducted into the West Gwillimbury Charge on 9th of October 1833. Mr. Howey was suffering from tuberculosis and tragedy struck early. While conducting public worship on the Sunday following his induction, Mr. Howey suffered a debilitating seizure and was unable to continue his ministerial functions.

It is not clear what precisely happened at this point. But following the forced demission of Mr. Howey, the entire pastoral charge of West Gwillimbury, Essa and Tecumseth, left the United Synod and associated themselves with the Missionary Presbytery. We can, perhaps, indulge in a little speculation as to the reasons for this move. We know that at this time the United Synod was in active discussions with the Kirk Synod regarding a union of the two bodies. The recently concluded divisive process between the Kirk and United Synod factions within the congregation undoubtedly engendered some hard feelings. One can speculate that there would be an unwillingness to continue a connection with a body that, in all likelihood, would soon become part of the Kirk Synod. It is possible too that the congregations felt they had been abandoned by the United Synod during Mr. Howey's illness, and decided to cast in their lot with this new missionary organization.

Support for this argument can be found in part of a report William Proudfoot submitted in March 1835 to the Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions in Scotland. The Missionary Presbytery during its meetings at the end of December 1834 had directed Messrs. Proudfoot and Christie to make a tour of all of the congregations:

> "That in order the more fully to promote the great objects of the mission two members of presbytery shall be deputed to visit all the churches and stations under the inspection of the presbytery, to examine into their state, to give such advice as may be found needful, and to encourage and comfort and strengthen them."[19]

They commenced their tour on the 19th of January 1835 and finished it on the 7th of March "... having traveled through the best part of Upper Canada seven hundred miles, partly in sleighs, partly in wagons and sometimes, when neither were to be had, on foot."[20] Regarding West Gwillimbury, the report stated:

> In the above list of churches we have not included West Gwillimbury, on the south-west of Lake Simcoe. The church there belonged to the United

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[18] I have seen his name spelled both ways.

[19] Gregg, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, p. 515.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 516.

> Synod of Upper Canada, and had a minister settled amongst them, who has been for more than a year and a half afflicted with pulmonary consumption. He never preached to them after his ordination. He is still living, but in an exceedingly helpless state. The congregation intends to join our presbytery at the first meeting. The Synod of Canada had no preachers, and during the whole time of Mr. Howey's illness they gave them no supply. We have sent Mr. Fraser to preach to them in the meantime with Mr. Howey's approbation. There is every prospect of the congregation doing well.[21]

William Proudfoot assisted the congregations by sending, in succession, Rev. Alexander MacKenzie and Rev. William Fraser to serve for several weeks each in the winter and spring of 1834-35. Both men were Gælic-speaking natives of Pictou County in Nova Scotia and were graduates of Rev. Dr. Thomas McCulloch's Pictou Academy. They arrived in Upper Canada from the Secession Synod of Nova Scotia in response to a request that William Proudfoot had sent to Rev. James Robson, the Synod Clerk, for Gælic-speaking ministers, none being available in Scotland to come out to Upper Canada. In July the congregation extended a call to William Fraser and he commenced his labours on the 9th of August 1835. According to *Cemetery Inscriptions Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Townships*, this induction service took place in John Cerswell's barn at lot 23, Concession 7, Tecumseth Township.[22] At about the same time Mr. MacKenzie received a call to three congregations in Goderich, Stanley and Tuckersmith Townships in the Huron District.

William Fraser is not well known today, but in his time he played a key role in many of the events leading up to, and following, the formation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. He was a Gælic-speaking native of McLellan's Creek, Pictou County, Nova Scotia, born on 19th of May 1808. He was ordained on 2nd of September 1834 and sent to Upper Canada as the result of William Proudfoot's request to Rev. James Robson for Gælic speaking ministers. Mr. Robson's letter to William Proudfoot reads as follows:

> In consequence of communications from the Revd. Alexr. Blaikie, the Committee of missions, appointed by the Synod of Nova Scotia, understand that you and your Brethren in Upper Canada wish to have some Gælic Preachers from this country, to aid you in your evangelical labours. And by a letter lately received from the Revd. William Peddie, Secretary of the United Synod's Mission Committee, we are requested to send you two Gælic Preachers, who are to receive from the Synod's Mission fund the same aid that is afforded to their own Preachers. Mr. William Fraser, who is well acquainted with the Gælic Language, has agreed to go to Canada on these terms; and will leave this, in order to join you, as soon as possible after his ordination, which will take place, it is expected, in a few weeks. We have another Gælic Preacher, Mr.

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 532.

[22] *Cemetery Inscriptions Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Townships* , p. 185.

> MacKenzie, but have not yet had an opportunity of consulting him about the subject. But by the time that Mr. Fraser leaves us, we shall probably be able to speak more decisively as to his willingness to undertake the Mission.[23]

Six weeks later William Fraser arrived in Upper Canada. The letter of introduction he carried from James Robson to William Proudfoot stated:

> I wrote you some time ago, intimating that, in consequence of a communication from the Secretary of the Committee on Missions at home, the Commission of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia had appointed Mr. William Fraser, a Gælic Pictouan, to proceed to your assistance in Upper Canada; and I now beg leave to introduce Mr. Fraser to your personal acquaintance. Since I wrote you last, he has been ordained to the work of the Holy Ministry, and has also taken to himself a wife to accompany him to Canada. I trust you will find him a useful and respectable and agreeable assistant in the work of the Lord, and that he will be a successful instrument of building up the Church in Canada.[24]

A prefatory note in the Minute Book of Congregational and Trustees Meetings of the First, West Gwillimbury congregation, written on the first page by Rev. William Fraser on the 2nd of February 1847 reads as follows:

> The congregation of the United Secession Church (now the United Presbyterian) was received into the connexion by the Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas in 1835. The Rev. William Fraser was inducted into the pastoral charge in June 1836.[25]
>
> The congregation has hitherto been small. A church was built near the village of Bond Head in 1837 on an acre of ground granted for that purpose and for a burying ground, by Mr. Fraser.
>
> Meetings of the congregation were held from time to time as occasions required, but most of the minutes of those meetings have been irrecoverably lost. At the Annual Meeting in February 1847 it was

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[23] Rev. James Robson, Pictou, Nova Scotia to Rev. William Proudfoot, London, Upper Canada, 19 August 1834, Rev. William Proudfoot file, Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

[24] Rev. James Robson, Pictou, Nova Scotia to Rev. William Proudfoot, London, Upper Canada, 27 September 1834, Rev. William Proudfoot file, Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

[25] Hunter notes that William Fraser gave his first sermon as pastor on the 9th of August 1835, but that his formal induction did not take place until the 17th of June 1836. See Hunter's, *History of Simcoe County*, vol. 1, p. 314.

unanimously agreed that henceforward the proceedings of congregational meetings should be recorded in a Book to be kept for the purpose. The minutes of former meetings to be as far as practicable collected and first entered in said Book.[26]

Within a week of his arrival Mr. Fraser moderated a Session meeting in the home of Mr. George Dinwoodie, an elder and one of the organizers of the Essa congregation. The first three pages of the First Essa, Kirk Session minute book contained an account of the early days of the West Gwillimbury charge, written in February 1836 by William Fraser. It also recorded the congregation's switches in Presbyterian affiliation.

Names of the Congregation
1. United Associate Secession Presbyterian Congregation of Essa, County of Simcoe, Upper Canada, 1835.

Named
2. The United Presbyterian Congregation of Essa.
June, 1847.

Named
3. The First Canada Presbyterian Congregation of Essa
by resolution of Congregational Meeting
February 16, 1863.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT.

The first Presbyterian Congregation of Essa was formed, along with a Station in Tecumseth, as a branch of a congregation in West Gwillimbury. The Presbyterian Congregation of West Gwillimbury was organized on the 6th day of January, 1822, by the Reverend William Jenkins, of Markham and Scarboro', one of the Ministers of the Ecclesiastical Body known as the United Synod of Upper Canada. The precise time at which the congregation of Essa commenced to receive a share of Gospel Ordinances from Presbyterian Ministers is not anywhere recorded; but from a minute contained in an old Book in the possession of the Congregation of West Gwillimbury, it would appear that Essa and Tecumseth must have been constituent portions of the Congregation known as the Congregation of West Gwillimbury, Tecumseth and Essa, at the latest, some time before the year 1832.

The Reverend Peter Ferguson was the first settled Minister, and though there is no record, accessible, naming the exact date of his

[26] First Church, West Gwillimbury, "Minutes of Congregational and Trustees meetings, 1847 – 1908," Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

induction, it must have been in the Autumn of the year 1831. Mr. Ferguson resigned the Charge in April, 1832.

Immediately upon the retirement of Mr. Ferguson the congregation of West Gwillimbury became divided - a part uniting with the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connexion with the Church of Scotland, and a part remaining in their first relation under the United Synod of Upper Canada. With this latter portion of the congregation of West Gwillimbury, the congregations in Essa and Tecumseth resolved to remain united and to form one pastoral charge.

On the 9th of October, 1833, the Rev. James Howie was ordained to the United Congregations. Though not recorded at the time, it is known that Mr. Howie was seized with fatal illness immediately after his settlement, and that, on attempting to conduct the Public Worship on the succeeding Lord's Day, he was compelled to desist. Shortly thereafter he went to reside with relatives in the Township of Cavan; was never, from that time forth, able to perform any public duty, and was removed by death early in the year 1835.

On the 25th of December, 1834, the Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas, in connexion with the United Associate Secession Church in Scotland, was constituted in the City of Toronto. The Presbytery as then organized was composed of eight ministers. The United Synod of Upper Canada, with which the congregations of West Gwillimbury, Tecumseth and Essa had been connected, having, in the same year, been dissolved by its own act,[27] - all the ministers belonging to it with the exception of Messrs. Jenkins, Harris and Porter, joining the Church of Scotland, - application was made to the newly constituted Presbytery, on behalf of the aforementioned congregations for supply of preaching. The application was complied with, and the Rev. Alexander MacKenzie and the Rev. William Fraser were, successively, sent to them, for some weeks in the Winter and Spring of 1835. On the invitation of these congregations Mr. Fraser accepted the Charge of them and entered upon his stated labors [sic], at the beginning of August, 1835.

The Elders of West Gwillimbury at first acted as the Session of the whole Charge, and their names will be found in the first minute in this Book as the sole acting members of Session for Essa. Elders being ordained in the congregation of Essa early in 1836, a Session was regularly constituted, and though, for some time the Elders of the different sections of the United Charge occasionally sat together, yet each part of the congregation, formerly only a branch, assumed the standing of a distinct congregation with a Session acting independently of the other parts, and a Separate Record was thenceforward kept, as follows, of the

[27] Several ministers from the United Synod of Upper Canada (USUC) did join the Kirk Synod in 1834. Difficulty with a Declaratory Act of the General Assembly in Edinburgh, which stated that ministers who wanted to join the Church of Scotland would have to be re-ordained, if they had not been originally ordained by the Kirk, held up the final dissolution of the USUC until 1840.

> proceedings of the Session of the congregation of Essa, the Minutes of Proceedings of the Sessions composed of the Elders of West Gwillimbury, in so far as such proceedings had reference to the congregation of Essa being transcribed into such Separate Record.[28]

William Fraser served this Charge for forty-five years. He purchased the north half of Lot 1, Concession 6, West Gwillimbury, 100 acres on the south-east corner of Simcoe County Roads 27 and 88 (formerly Highways 27 and 88) in Bond Head. From this property he donated a one-acre plot of land where the present day Emmanuel United Church, Bond Head, and the cemetery are located.

William Fraser's influence extended far beyond his pastoral charge. When William Proudfoot found the growing pressure of leading the Missionary Presbytery as Clerk, along with all of his other duties, such as running the Church's Divinity Hall, became too much for him, William Fraser in 1846 was appointed Deputy Clerk and became Clerk in January 1851 when Proudfoot died. At the union of the Presbyterian Church of Canada – the Free Church -- and the United Presbyterian Church in June 1861, that saw the creation of the Synod of the Canada Presbyterian Church, William Fraser was appointed Joint Clerk of Synod, along with Rev. William Reid, the Clerk of the Free Church. When the Presbytery of Simcoe -- forerunner to the present-day Presbytery of Barrie -- was erected out of the Presbytery of Toronto in 1868, William Fraser was appointed the first Moderator of the Presbytery. In 1872 he served as Moderator of the third General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church. He was present at the formation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in Montreal in June 1875 and was appointed a Joint-Clerk of the General Assembly. In 1876 Queen's University conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity on him.

Over the years Fraser's pastoral responsibilities had been reduced to the point where he just had the one congregation, that of First, West Gwillimbury, at Bond Head. He demitted this Charge on 30th of November 1880 and moved to Barrie.[29] He continued to discharge his duties as Joint-Clerk of Assembly until June 1892 when increasing age and infirmity forced him to retire, Assembly according him a unanimous Minute of Appreciation for his labours on behalf of the Church for close to sixty years.[30] He died on Christmas Day 1892 aged 84 years and was buried in the cemetery at Bond Head.

In addition to Fraser's pastoral duties, Hunter records his interest in secular educational matters:

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[28] This minute book, along with all of the other records of the now-closed First, Essa, (or Braden's) Presbyterian Church, is housed in the Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

[29] Professor William Gregg gives the demission date as the 1st of June 1879. (*History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, p. 511). The November 1880 date is taken from the *Acts & Proceedings of the seventh General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, (Toronto: Presbyterian Printing House, 1881), ccxliii [p. 243].

[30] *Acts & Proceedings of the eighteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto: 1893), pp. 34-35.

> While in this charge, in addition to his regular church work, he took an active part in educational affairs ... He was the first Township Superintendent for schools in West Gwillimbury in 1844, and indeed the only one to hold that office in the township, having been again appointed on the resumption of Township Superintendents in 1850 and re-appointed for twenty-one years in succession, until the office was finally abolished and county superintendents appointed.[31]

Fraser's long tenure in that pastoral charge had been financially difficult. Over the years the three congregations had great difficulty in meeting his stipend. In a letter to William Proudfoot, dated 18th of April 1838, he made reference to having had to draw on the Synod's Mission Fund, with the comment "The amount is very small and I fear that this congregation will fall through unless they obtain some for their assistance."[32] He outlined the situation with regard to the prospects for the congregation in a letter to William Proudfoot, dated 23rd of November 1839:

> When I last wrote I advised you of my having drawn upon the fund for £25 and signified my fears that for the next six months one quarter of that amount would not be raised here for my support. I exceedingly regret to say that the whole amount which I have received in that time is 16/9d. Though this has been the case however the result for the year in the way of contributions is 2 or 3 pounds more than in former years that are past. Experience will perhaps in some measure have prepared you for the reception of such intelligence but no experience can I feel persuaded induce you or the Committee to admit the agreeableness or it maybe the propriety of the continuance of such grants. And nothing I can assure you induces me to continue a stipend on your bounty than these considerations that the salary is sufficiently small that I know that many of my few people are far from being wealthy and that I have some hopes that the cause of true religion will not be prejudiced by my remaining here. The number of members in connection with us has not diminished any for the last year tho the increase has been very trifling. I formerly stated to you the number of families belonging to the congregation and the great proportion which the heads of families have to young people and others in the membership. From this you might suppose that with proper management somewhat more ought to be done towards the support of religion and the conclusion is perfectly just. I have more than once suggested the propriety of fixing Stated times at least twice a year when it shd. be understood that payments shd. be made. But though at the time, the propriety of some different plan [to] that what had hitherto been practiced was admitted yet nothing was arranged and the old systemless

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[31] Hunter, *A History of Simcoe County*, vol. 1, pp. 315-316.

[32] Rev. William Fraser, West Gwillimbury to Rev. William Proudfoot, London, Upper Canada, 18 April 1838, Rev. William Proudfoot file, Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

> course is still pursued – with the same result with which it will always attend, that is that many do not pay at all. Beyond suggesting on this point I have not dared to proceed and even in what I have done I have received warnings against incurring the reputation of being a money-hunter, in the publick estimation a most odious character. I must however make one attempt still to stir up the people to a just sense of their duty in this behalf – I fear that the great and general failure of our Stapling Wheat last harvest will operate most prejudicially on the state of our finances this winter. Half a crop in many instances has not been gathered and in some cases whole fields were not harvested at all.[33]

At the end of the same letter he wrote:

> With regard to the general state of the mission. My remote situation and the infrequency of my intercourse with the rest of the brethren precludes me from having it in my power to give you any information. But I suppose it is scarcely necessary – I have commenced to give a Sabbath in 3 months to a dozen of families connected with us in the township of Innisfil 17 miles distant besides my Stated appointments in the 3 old stations. I am about to take up a station in the township of King commenced by Mr. Jennings where I propose to give them a Sermon at least once a month. This station is also 16 or 17 miles distant - - - I should like extremely well to have some intelligence respecting the determination of the church at home as to the future management of this mission....
> P. S. I have drawn upon the Treasurer for £49-3-3.[34]

The statistical return from his congregations to the Missionary Presbytery for 1840 notes that all of the money contributed by the three congregations for his stipend amounted to £16/13/4d and that no money was contributed to the Presbytery Fund. The number of members is reported as: West Gwillimbury, 38; Tecumseth, 29; and Essa, 28. Number of "Souls" in the congregations is given as 143, 122 and 117 respectively.[35]

From some of the references given previously, we can assume that the Essa and Tecumseth congregations existed at least as early as 1830 but did not have church buildings for some time after that date. According to Hunter, services in Tecumseth were held in the homes of James Ellison and John Carswell (an error for John Cerswell). This indicates that the West Gwillimbury congregation met at Cerswell's farm on occasion, roughly a mile West of Bond Head, as well as at Adam Goodfellow's in the village. The Tecumseth congregation met at Ellison's farm located at the North side of Lot 8,

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[33] Rev. William Fraser, West Gwillimbury, to Rev. William Proudfoot, London, Upper Canada, 23 November 1839, Rev. William Proudfoot file, Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Rev. William Proudfoot. "Tabular view of the Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas for 1840," Rev. William Proudfoot file, Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives.

Concession 2. This would be roughly a mile South and a mile East of Tottenham. According to *Cemetery Inscriptions Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Townships*, the Trustees of the Tecumseth congregation purchased a one acre plot of land at the south-east corner of Lot 7, Concession 3, from a James Corbett for £5, on the 16th of June 1836.[36] Here, almost across the road from the Ellison farm, they built a log church and established a cemetery. In honour of the originator of the congregation they named their church Ellison's. In 1864 the log church was replaced with a frame building. In 1881 the congregation amalgamated with another congregation in Tottenham, and Ellison's Church was closed and taken down. The cemetery continues in use to the present day and both it and the Tottenham Church are called "Fraser's," in honour of their long-time minister.

The Essa congregation met at the home of George Dinwoody, or Dinwoodie, at Clover Hill about a mile West of Perry's Corners, now Cookstown, as well as in the local school house, also at Clover Hill. A log church was later built there. In 1862 a site at the North-West corner of Lot 5, Concession 9, Essa Township, was purchased and First Presbyterian Church, Essa was built on the site. This was also known locally as "Braden's Church." No cemetery was attached to this property because, from 1839, burials for the pioneer Presbyterian families in the area took place at Wilson's Hill Cemetery located at Lot 1, Concession 11, West Gwillimbury, roughly half-way between Cookstown and Bond Head on County Road 27 (formerly Highway 27).[37]

It is, perhaps, worth noting that while the origins of the West Gwillimbury congregation were predominantly Highland Scots, the origins of the Essa and Tecumseth congregations were predominantly Ulster Presbyterians. A knowledge of Gælic was required for a West Gwillimbury minister, but this was not the case with the other parts of the charge.

To conclude this segment of the paper, mention will be made of the small congregation in Innisfil Township mentioned by William Fraser in his letter to William Proudfoot of the 23rd of November 1839. Hunter notes this small congregation as meeting in the home of Gavin Allan at Churchill.[38] Interestingly enough, 1843 is the only year this congregation appears on the Presbytery Roll. Hunter noted:

> In Innisfil, Rev. Wm. Fraser conducted the first Presbyterian services on Aug. 2, 1836, and continued to hold services regularly to the close of 1849. At first the communicants were nominally members of the congregations at Bond Head and Essa, but in 1844 a congregation in Innisfil was regularly organized, and a church was erected at the Sixth Line, near Central Church of the present [1909] time.[39]

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[36] *Cemetery Inscriptions Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury*, p. 35.

[37] *Ibid.* p. 301.

[38] Hunter, *A History of Simcoe County*, vol. 1, p. 314.

[39] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 315.

So far, this paper has been occupied in dealing with the first Presbyterian congregations in the four townships in the southeast of section of Simcoe County, but this is not to say there were no Presbyterians in other parts of the county as well. In the late 1820s and early 1830s there was a major migration of Scots from the Island of Islay to the Townships of Nottawasaga and Oro, but supply of ordinances to them was very much on a hit and miss basis.

In 1837 the Rev. Alexander Lewis, a native of Ulster,[40] who had studied theology under Professor Paxton in Edinburgh, arrived from the United States and joined the United Synod. According to Professor Gregg, Lewis had gone to Nova Scotia in 1818 and had been ordained and inducted into the St. Mary's pastoral charge, Guysborough County. He left there in 1835 and went to the United States. The United Synod sent him to Caledon and Mono Townships.[41] He made his home in Mono Centre where there was a church, manse and cemetery at the northwest corner of Lot 19, Concession 3 EHS (East of Hurontario Street). He traveled far and wide over the area and was responsible for the establishment of a number of congregations in Caledon, Mono and Mulmur Townships. He went into the Kirk Synod in 1840 upon the dissolution of the United Synod. Age and infirmity caused him to demit the charge in 1865 and he died on the 4th of December 1878, aged 88 years, following 60 years in the ministry.

In mid-Summer of 1843 the Presbyterians in the Town of Barrie – the District Seat – sent a petition to the Kirk Synod's Presbytery of Toronto for supply of ordinances and assistance in procuring a church site. This was dealt with at the 16th of August 1843 Presbytery meeting:

> There was presented to the Presbytery, and read, a Petition from the Presbyterian inhabitants in and around Barrie, representing their destitution of ordinances, praying that a minister might be sent to preach and administer Baptism – The Presbytery, at the same time, at their attention directed to the propriety of assisting the Presbyterians at Barrie in obtaining a site for a Church. The Presbytery, after mature deliberation, appointed Mr. Bell [Rev. Andrew Bell, the Presbytery Clerk] to visit Barrie as soon as convenient to spend a Sabbath there, to preach and baptize, and to consult with and advise the friends of the Church there in regard to making application to Government for a site for a Church.[42]

Mr. Bell fulfilled his appointment and reported back to Presbytery at its meeting on the 21st of November. From this we learn the date of the first Presbyterian church service in Barrie as being the 17th of September 1843.

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[40] *Fasti*, vol. 7, p. 639.

[41] Gregg, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, p. 234.

[42] "Minutes of the Presbytery of Toronto of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connexion with the Church of Scotland," Queen's University Archives, Kingston, Ont., vol. 2, pp. 150-151.

> Mr. Bell reported having preached at Barrie, according to appointment of the Presbytery, on Sabbath the seventeenth of September and reported what had been done as to the selection of a site for a Church there. The Moderator [Rev. Dr. John Barclay] was authorized, in name of the Presbytery, to memorialize the Governor in Council to grant the said site for a Church, for use of the Presbyterians in Barrie.[43]

This was the only involvement the Barrie Presbyterians had with the Kirk Synod. From this point forward occasional supply of ordinances, until the formal establishment of the congregation in 1849, was given by the Free Synod. The government granted Order-in-Council 1633, 4th of November 1844, giving Lot 4 (a double lot) on Collingwood Street that backed onto two single lots, 8 and 9 on Blake Street for the church and manse. In addition, another Order-in-Council issued two days later on the 6th, granted Lot 2 in the 4th Range, almost at the intersection of Codrington and St. Vincent Streets of the present day, to the Presbyterians for use as a cemetery. For some reason the Crown Patent on these Lots was not issued until the 8th of May 1850.

On the 10th of July 1844 the "Canadian Disruption" took place within the Kirk Synod, and the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada – the Free Church – was born. This had an immediate affect within the "Auld Kirk" congregation of West Gwillimbury and resulted in the second division of the congregation in the space of nine years.

The Free Church supporters purchased a site for a church and cemetery at the northwest corner of Lot 8, Concession 4, and on it was built Knox Church. Later, following the formation of the Canada Presbyterian Church in 1861, the name was changed to Second, West Gwillimbury. Unfortunately, the early history of this congregation is one of a long vacancy. Initially the congregation was unable to secure the services of a settled minister for almost nine years. Then, in February 1853, the Rev. Thomas Lowry translated from Barrie and Innisfil, but he only remained in the charge until the 3rd of March 1857. In 1858 this congregation was joined with the new Free Church congregation in Bradford as a two point pastoral charge. The Charge did not get a settled minister until the 22nd of August 1862, when the Rev. Charles McKerracher was ordained and inducted.

In the late winter of 1845 the Rev. Angus Mackintosh, the Free Church minister in Thorold, Canada West, undertook a missionary tour that took him up through the Queen's Bush to Owen Sound. From Owen Sound his travels took him through Nottawasaga and Sunnidale Townships to Oro Township to the "Narrows of Lake Simcoe" – now Orillia, to Barrie, Innisfil and West Gwillimbury. He preached, baptized and expounded the cause of the Free Church at all of these locations. For much of the journey through the above-mentioned locations he was accompanied by Mr. James Mair, a Gælic Catechist labouring amongst the Islay settlers in Nottawasaga Township. Mr. Mackintosh reported:

> I reached Nottawasaga late in the evening of Friday the 23rd [of March], having traveled that day a space of 30 miles ... Short as the time was, it was sufficient for giving notice to the people, which was the more easily

[43] *Ibid.* pp. 162-163.

> done that a Mr. Mair, who has for some time performed among the people the part of a faithful catechist, had a regular appointment in the Church for that day. Mr. Mair's services are generally well attended; his efforts seem to have been considerably blessed by the Head of the Church, in promoting religion among the people. ... I called on him on Saturday [24th of March], and from that time till I had nearly finished my tour, he accompanied me, attended almost all of my appointments, usually repeating in Gælic, where English was not well understood, my intimations and what I might say in any place in reference to our principles and the causes of the disruption.[44]

There was no church building in Nottawasaga at this time. It can be assumed the "Church" referred to above, was the Bowmore (now Duntroon) school. The school at this time was located at the northwest corner of Lot 25, Concession 9.[45] Mr. Mackintosh appears to have spent close to two weeks in Nottawasaga and Sunnidale, but an absence of definitive place names makes it difficult to ascertain just where he did preach. It is not known either where Mr. Mair was located.

Mackintosh, with Mr. Mair, then proceeded to Oro Township. In the morning of Sunday the 6th of April he preached at Mackay's school house at Nevis (Old Barrie Road and the 9th Concession). This was in the heart of the Oro Islay Settlement. The narrative records: "After the sermon in the forenoon, an address was delivered by Mr. Mair in the Gælic."[46] In the afternoon he preached at Robertson's school-house at Rugby (Old Barrie Road and the 12th Concession). Monday seems to have been a day of rest. Then on Tuesday, he went to Orillia, at that time generally referred to as "The Narrows of Lake Simcoe" or "The Narrows" for short.

> On the evening of the following day [8th of April] I preached at the village of the Narrows, to a considerable audience. After the sermon, I was invited by James Dallas, Esq., Warden of the District, and his lady, who were present, to stay all night with them, and was treated with much kindness and cordiality. I was given to understand by them that there was a favourable opening for our Church at the Narrows; and that if preaching was afforded, several who belong to other denominations would give their

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[44] Rev. A. Mackintosh, "Narrative of Rev. A. Mackintosh: Nottawasaga, &c," *The Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record for the Presbyterian Church of Canada*, January 1846, p. 147. See also Dec. 1845.

[45] Nottawasaga Centennial Committee, *Nottawasaga "The Outburst of the Iroquois,"* 3rd ed., rev. and enlarged by Charles Garrad (Duntroon, Ont.: Historical Committee Nottawasaga Centennial Celebration, 1934; repr., Duntroon, Ont.: Municipal Council, Township of Nottawasaga, 1981), p. 135 (page references are to reprint edition).

[46] Mackintosh, "Narrative," p. 147.

attendance and support. An earnest desire was expressed by them that the cause of our church might prosper in Oro.[47]

From the Orillia he went back to Oro Township preaching at the 10th Line – possibly at Jarratt's Corners -- and at "the Campbell Settlement." From two sources we get an almost identical account of religious activity at the latter place.

> In the year 1840, when this Township was then known as South Oro, then thinly settled and with few schools or churches, a few neighbours gathered at the home of Mr. Alexander Campbell to try and arrange for the building of a house, which could be used for a school room for the children and also for holding religious services on the Sabbath day.[48]

> The pioneer forefathers who felt the need of a school for their children, and a church for divine worship gathered in the early 1840's at the home of Mr. Alexander Campbell and promised in money and six days labour, with and some without oxen, to build a school which could be used for education and religious purposes. The first log school 20' X 30' was built in 1843 on land given by Mr. Archibald Campbell and located on concession 5, lot 17 N. W. corner.[49]

Alexander and Archibald Campbell were twin brothers who arrived in Oro from Lurabus, Islay in 1835. The location of this combination school and church would be roughly one and three quarter miles North of the present-day Guthrie United Church (Presbyterian up to 1925).

Mr. Mackintosh's narrative continued:

> ... Preached at the 10th Line, to an audience which, notwithstanding the very unfavourable state of the roads, was crowded, affording symptoms of a strong desire on the part of the people for divine ordinances. I intimated that Mr. Rintoul[50] would preach in the same place on Monday, the 14th, at two o'clock in the afternoon, and that a collection would be made for the mission fund. I also intimated that, if his other engagements permitted, he would preach in the centre of Medonte, where there is a large body of

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[47] *Ibid.*

[48] James Ross, "Fiftieth Anniversary, Guthrie Presbyterian Church 1862 – 1912," author's private collection.

[49] Oro Township Historical Committee and the Oro School Board, *A History of Oro Schools 1836 to 1966*, (Oro, Ont.: Oro Township, 1967), p. 30.

[50] Rev. William Rintoul, Free Church minister at Streetsville, Canada West, was convenor of the Synod Mission Committee.

> Presbyterians, who have contributed liberally, and by whom a very great anxiety has been expressed for a supply of ordinances.[51]
>
> On Wednesday morning, 9th April, I preached at what is called the Campbell Settlement, in the south of the township, Mr. Mair having followed me in the Gælic. In the evening of the same day I preached at Barrie, and intimated an appointment for Mr. Rintoul on the evening of Friday, the 11th, and a collection for the mission fund; and suggested to them that it would be well to embrace the opportunity of Mr. Rintoul's visit to take some steps for the promotion of their spiritual interests, and that it was fitting they should come at length to some understanding as to this matter; and that as the people of Oro were making active exertions for obtaining a gospel minister, their best course would be, if they were disposed to unite with the Presbyterian Church, to co-operate with them. Though there are not many Presbyterians in the village, there are several in the vicinity, and others, not Presbyterians, who are waiting for an opportunity of uniting with us, and as it is a place of considerable importance, being the county town, and the Presbyterians have received a grant of land to build a Church, it is a position which should by no means be overlooked.[52]
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> On Sabbath the 13th, preached at West Gwillimbury and Innisfil; in the forenoon in the Scotch [Knox], and in the afternoon in the Irish Settlement, and at Innisfil in the evening [possibly at the 6th Line church]. The meetings were very encouraging, especially in the forenoon and evening. On the evening of Monday, the 14th, I preached at the village of Bradford, and on the forenoon of Wednesday, 16th, again at the Scotch Settlement, Mr. Mair having after addressed them at the latter place in Gælic. I may say, that his services both there and at Oro were very acceptable to the people.[53]

This concluded Mr. Mackintosh's immediate involvement with the Presbyterians of the Simcoe District. While results were not immediately apparent, it can be stated quite fairly that his tour did lay the foundations for organized Presbyterian congregations in the northern part of the district. The Free Church took its responsibilities regarding supply of ordinances to the Presbyterian inhabitants very seriously, as the following extracts from the Minutes of the Presbytery of Toronto show:

> A verbal report was made by the Clerk [Rev. Peter Gray] in regard to a visit which Messrs. McMillan and Gray had paid to West Gwillimbury

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[51] Mackintosh, "Narrative," p. 147.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Ibid.*

and Oro by appointment of the Presbytery. He stated that they had dispensed the Sacrament of the Lord's supper at the church in W. Gwillimbury on Sabbath the 26th ulto. [26 September 1847]:- that they then proceeded to Oro, and ordained elders and deacons over the congregation there on Wednesday the 29th ulto.[54]

... and the following arrangement for the direction of ministers in pressing the claims of this institution [Knox College] upon all the congregations within the bounds of the Presbytery was made – viz: - ... Mr. Boyd [Rev. Robert Boyd, Prescott, C. W.] – Oro, Medonte, Orillia ...[55]

Mr. Rintoul reported that he had visited Barrie, Sunnidale, Nottawasaga, and St. Vincent, and preached several times within these townships and that he had dispensed the Lord's Supper, and baptized forty-two children at Nottawasaga. He also laid on the table a communication from Nottawasaga and adjoining places expressing gratitude for his visit, and requesting that a minister may be appointed to visit them sometime during the ensuing winter, to labor [sic] for two Sabbaths and days intervening in the townships between Sunnidale and St. Vincent inclusive. Said communication also intimated the resolution of the people to subscribe to the Home Mission Fund of the Presbytery, and their desire to have a suitable provision made for their Catechist, Mr. Mair. The Presbytery resolved to appoint Mr. McMillan [Rev. Duncan McMillan, Caledon, C. W.] to visit Nottawasaga in the course of the winter. Mr. McMillan to communicate with Mr. Mair in reference to the time of this visit. The Presbytery agreed to refer to the Home Mission Committee the determination of salary for Mr. Mair ... There was read an Application from West Gwillimbury for the dispensation of the Lord's Supper there at an early date, whereupon the Presbytery appointed Mr. McMillan with Dr. Burns or Mr. Boyd to attend to the service on the second Sabbath of November next – and Mr. Elder [Donald Elder, Gælic Catechist] was appointed to supply Mr. McMillan's charge on that day. Mr. Mair, Catechist, was appointed to visit in the course of the winter, first, Thorah, Eldon, and adjacent parts, before the New Year, and to remain for one month; and thereafter, Oro and adjacent parts before the first of March [1849], to remain for one month. Mr. Rintoul to communicate this appointment to Mr. Mair.[56]

Mr. Harris [Rev. James Harris, Toronto] reported that he had dispensed the Lord's Supper at Oro, assisted by Mr. Elder, that the communicants

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[54] Presbyterian Church of Canada, "Minutes of the Presbytery of Toronto," 4 October 1847, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, Ont., pp. 98-99.

[55] *Ibid*, 19 January 1848, p. 111.

[56] *Ibid*, 4 October 1848, pp. 125-126.

amounted to seventy and that the season had been felt to be a profitable one.[57]

The Kirk Synod never had a very strong presence in Simcoe. Apart from the West Gwillimbury and Innisfil congregations, the only other Townships where Kirk Synod activity has been recorded, in the period covered by this paper, are Nottawasaga and Sunnidale. The Synod Minutes for 1846 show congregations in place in these last two townships. From local histories of both Nottawasaga and Sunnidale Townships it appears that the congregations gathered for worship in local school houses: the Nottawasaga congregation possibly at the Fisher School House located on the East side of Lot 29, Concession 6, roughly a mile East and one and a half miles North of the village of Bowmore (now Duntroon). According to Hunter, the Kirk and Free Church both had their own school teachers: Peter Ferguson for the Kirk and Malcolm Livingstone for the Free. Hunter notes that there was some animus between the parties, even extending to the children:

> ... Peter Ferguson, became the first school teacher at Duntroon, although in this particular, as in some others, there are two accounts of the case, another stating that Malcolm Livingstone was the first school teacher. The truth of the matter is that Peter Ferguson belonged to the Old Kirk and the Livingstone family to the Free Church. Each party had a teacher of its own, and the writer cannot ascertain which was the earlier of the two. One thing is certain; there was strong feeling manifested on both sides, as according to one amusing account, even the children of the respective schools could not pass in the roads without flinging sticks or stones at each other.[58]

The fact that when the Free Church did establish a congregation in Nottawasaga it was in Bowmore village can lead us to speculate that Malcolm Livingstone was indeed the first teacher. That, plus the fact that the Kirk Synod never did have a church in Bowmore. The Kirk supporters did have a glebe just to the east of the village at the west ½ of Lot 24, Concession 7. No church or cemetery were ever established on this site, which appears to have been rented out with the income used for the support of the minister.

The Sunnidale congregation appears to have met for worship in the Sunnidale Corners School House on the southwest side of Lot 11, Concession 11 (now Highway 26). This congregation did have a site for a church and cemetery located on the east part of Lot 5, Concession 11. "The original deed was registered to 'The congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland in the Township of Sunnidale.'"[59] No church was ever built on the site, but the cemetery was in

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[57] *Ibid*, 17 October 1848, p.127.

[58] Hunter, *A History of Simcoe County*, vol. 2, p. 234.

[59] Sunnidale Township Council, *Sunnidale Looks at Yesterday: A History of Sunnidale Township*, (New Lowell, Ont.: Council of the Township of Sunnidale, 1985), p. 22.

use from 1833 to 1897. It may still be seen on the north side of Highway 26 about one mile west of Sunnidale Corners, with the gravestones gathered together in a semi-circle.

The Sunnidale charge did not have a settled minister until the 8th of June 1853. On that date Rev. John Campbell, who had been assisting Rev. Dr. John Machar at St. Andrew's Church, Kingston, Canada West, was ordained and inducted to the charge. At this point the Sunnidale congregation disappeared, possibly uniting with a Free Church congregation erected at Sunnidale Corners in 1852. The total population in Sunnidale Township in 1850 was only 154,[60] perhaps no more than ten to fifteen percent of whom would be Presbyterians. From this it can easily be seen that the small number of Presbyterians would not be able to support two separate churches.

The early history of the Nottawasaga congregation is very sparse, but it is recorded that Mr. Campbell's first task was to have two places of worship built, East Church and West Church. The West Church was located on the north side of Lot 33, Concession 10, southwest of the village of Nottawa, on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. John Campbell.[61] The East Church was located on the west side of Lot 20, Concession 4, two miles east and a mile and a half south of Bowmore on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. Neil Paul.[62] The present-day community of Stayner did not exist in this period. It is quite difficult to try to sort out the early days of the Kirk congregations in Nottawasaga Township. The problem being that what records there may have been were lost when the West Church burned twice, first in 1866 and then again on the 11th of July 1946 when the church was struck by lightning. As a final point, it can be noted that Rev. Mr. Campbell and his family did not live on the glebe lot, but rather on a 92 acre farm located at the West ½ of Lot 24, Concession 8. This was located at the southeast corner of the four corners in Bowmore. The 1861 census lists him as a clergyman, Church of Scotland and a Freeholder. It gives his age next birthday as 41, his wife Jane as 40 and daughter Louisa as 6.[63]

From this point, in the time period covered by this paper, all church growth was initiated by the Free church. We have seen in Rev. Mr. Mackintosh's narrative that he and Mr. Mair preached in MacKay's school house at the ninth Concession and Old Barrie Road in Oro Township early in April 1845. The supporters of this congregation had purchased a lot across the road at the southeast corner of Lot 10, Concession 9, for a church, to be called Knox, and cemetery site. In addition, the east half of Lot 9, Concession 9, 100 acres, had been purchased for a glebe. Timber was taken from the glebe and used to build the church which was opened for worship in June 1845 some two months after Mr. Mackintosh's visit. A history of Knox Church, published in 1986, stated:

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[60] *Ibid.* p.24.

[61] Nottawasaga, "*Outburst*," p. 122.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Canada, Manuscript Census, 1861, Simcoe County, Township of Nottawasaga, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

> The church was officially opened the last Sunday of June, 1845 [29th]. The Minister for the occasion being the Rev. John McTavish of Woodville, his text First Corinthians, Chapter 3, Verse 11 – "Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."[64]

Money to build the church had been provided by Hamilton philanthropist Isaac Buchanan who, after the Canadian Disruption in 1844, promised one hundred pounds currency to the first ten new churches to be called Knox.

Two years later, during 1847 a congregation was established to the north of Knox in Medonte Township. The Presbytery of Toronto joined it with Knox, Oro to form a pastoral charge. It is not clear just where this congregation was located. They may have met in the school house located at the intersection of the old Gloucester Road and the 15-16 Side Road, approximately half a mile west of the present-day village of Moonstone. This may have been the forerunner to St. Andrew's, Hillsdale of the present day. More research is required.

In 1847 the Bowmore congregation appeared on the Presbytery Roll for the first time as Nottawasaga. However, as we have already seen, this congregation was in existence, although not formally erected, at least as early as March 1845. Regrettably the congregation was not destined the obtain the services of a settled minister until 1863, two years after the formation of the Canada Presbyterian Church. During the Free Church period its listing on the Presbytery Roll is hit and miss. It is not listed from 1848 to 1852 when it is shown as part of a three-point charge that included Osprey in Grey County and Sunnidale, the latter possibly being the congregation at Sunnidale Corners. In 1853 it is shown as "Nottawasaga &c," but only as Nottawasaga in 1854. It was not listed in 1855, but in 1856 was again listed with Sunnidale. Up to this point, the charge had simply been listed on the Presbytery Roll as "vacant." Commencing in 1858, the status was changed to "Mission Station" and it remained as such until 1863. In 1861 the congregation was shown as Bowmore as a Mission Station linked to Collingwood Harbour in the Home Mission Committee report, but was not listed as such on the Presbytery Roll.

Finally, we can take note that during 1847 the Free Church established a congregation in Mono Township. This concludes the story of the first twenty-five years of Presbyterianism in Simcoe County, Ontario.

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[64] Oro Township History Committee and Knox Church Trustees, *Knox Presbyterian Church 1845 – 1986: A History* (Oro: Township of Oro, 1986), pp. 4-6.

THE CANADIAN SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY

FINANCIAL REPORT -- September 2000

Note: The opening balance, shown at 24 September 1999 as $1565.59 has had to be adjusted to $1553.64. The Bank was tardy in clearing up a U.S. cheque that Ms. Arnold had included in her income statement. The difference of $11.95 is included in this report, with the corporate subscriptions.

	Income:		Expenses:	
Balance Fwd.	1553.64			
Memberships 1999. (37)	555.00			
Memberships 2000. (6)	90.00			
Papers sold	60.00			
Corporate Subscriptions (10)	146.95			
Donation	50.00			
Bank Interest	11.60			
Total Income	$2467.19			
Debit by bank			15.00	
Postage			202.68	
Telephone			24.28	
Printing 1999 Papers			173.88	
Courier Charge			12.52	
Knox College Catering			61.50	
Stationary			67.16	
Mileage			34.17	
Total Expenses			$591.19	
Totals	$2467.19	-	$591.19	= $1876.00
Balance 28 September 2000	= $1876.00			

Michael Millar, FRPSC
Secretary Treasurer.