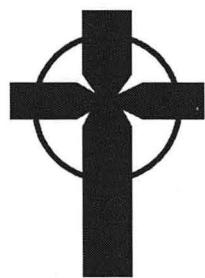




**The  
Canadian  
Society of  
Presbyterian History**

**Papers 2014**



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**Edited by Elizabeth J. Millar**



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## **The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History**

The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History (CSPH) was founded in 1975 during the centennial of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The CSPH is a religion-centred Learned Society, meeting annually on the last Saturday of September. Membership is open to all individuals and institutions who share an interest and fascination in the study of Presbyterian and Reformed history. More information about the Society is on our web site at: [www.csph.ca](http://www.csph.ca).

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## Biographical Notes on Contributors

**Duff Crerar** was raised in the Osgoode Presbyterian Church in the Ottawa Valley. He grew up in contact with military chaplains, which prompted his graduate research into padres in Canadian history at Western and Queen's Universities. In 1995 his monograph, *Padres in No Man's Land: Canadian Chaplains and Great War*, was published by McGill-Queen's University Press. While teaching at Grande Prairie Regional College he has published articles on Canadian Chaplaincy, and since 2000 has served as a Subject Matter Expert with the Department of National Defence, Royal Canadian Chaplain Service, through their Chaplain School and Centre.

**Stuart Macdonald** is Professor of Church and Society at Knox College. He publishes on a variety of topics related to Canadian Church history and Scottish history. His interest in the Great War goes back over thirty years and has been rekindled over the last five years.



## **Institutions and Ideas: The Challenge of the Great War for Canadian Presbyterians**

Stuart Macdonald

In the over fifteen years that I have been teaching the history of The Presbyterian Church in Canada at Knox College, there is one quote that I have used which, more than any other, has disturbed students. It doesn't matter whether they are younger or older; it doesn't matter where they would place themselves on the theological spectrum (whether they would consider themselves liberal or evangelical or conservative or mainstream, or have no label); it doesn't matter what their ethnic heritage is—the majority find it disturbing. It comes from a prominent Presbyterian minister, and was part of a sermon preached here in Toronto in 1917 in the midst of the Great War. As part of his sermon on the beatitudes, the preacher proclaimed:

hence we say to those who contend with all the engines of warfare against the most hellish spirit of all time—Blessed are ye armed, booted, equipped for slaughter, we say it because we must, blessed are ye peacemakers.<sup>1</sup>

Many of those who have heard this quotation cannot imagine a minister saying these words. It does not fit with our understanding of Christian faith. It would be easy—too easy—to dismiss it as extreme, over the top, or in some other way unrepresentative. It was not. This quote was extremely representative of how the conflict that erupted in Europe in August 1914 came to be understood as a war in which those fighting in the Empire's cause were fighting on the side of God, and the preacher, the Rev. Thomas Eakin, then minister of St. Andrew's, King Street, was reflecting that attitude. Others had expressed similar attitudes from the beginning of the conflict, defining the Great War (what we now commonly refer to as the First World War) as one in which God was actively engaged on the side of Britain and its Empire and her allies, and in which Christians were called to fight. Sometimes the language of "crusade" was invoked, while at other times the justice and righteousness of the Empire's cause were evoked but the idea was clear—God willed Christians to fight in this conflict. To cite one further example, this from Ephraim Scott, the editor of the *Presbyterian Record*, in October 1914:

War is never wrong when it is war against wrong. . . . war in defence of weakness against strength, a war for truth and plighted pledge, for freedom against oppression, is God's war wherever waged, and with whatever weapons, whether tongue or pen or sword.<sup>2</sup>

But, that is not necessarily our attitude today.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Eakin sermon, February 1917, Knox College collection, 207/0707, The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives and Records Office, Toronto (PCCARO).

<sup>2</sup> *Presbyterian Record*, October 1914, 433.

Attitudes to war, inside the church and in the broader culture, changed over the course of the twentieth century. The place of the church within that society also changed significantly. The church in 1914 had a central role in society that it no longer has. Canada could not have fought the war it did in 1914 without the support of the churches, including The Presbyterian Church in Canada that was one of the three dominant Protestant denominations (the others being the Anglicans and the Methodists) and all of whom were of equivalent size. More recently Canada has gone to war and that war has been opposed by all of the Christian churches in Canada, and most Canadians (including those in churches) did not notice. These two themes, attitudes to Christian faith and warfare, and the realization that the place of Christianity within Canadian society has changed dramatically, have shaped and coloured how we have studied the war. The recent publication of a collection of essays edited by Gordon Heath focusing on Canadian churches and the First World War has provided an opportunity to reconsider these themes.<sup>3</sup> In terms of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the chapter “For Empire and God” attempted to summarize our understanding of the war.<sup>4</sup> Placed alongside the other essays in that volume, we now have a much clearer picture of how Canadian churches as a whole responded to the war. Support, rather than opposition to the war, is one of the main findings. With the explosion of other writings on the First World War or Great War,<sup>5</sup> this is a time where new themes are emerging, and a time to consider other aspects of the experience of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in this conflict. This paper will begin by restating a few of the main themes that have clearly emerged before moving on to consider two new subjects: first, the effect of the war on the denominational Colleges, among the most significant institutions within the church at the time; and, second, the ideas about the war that we see in pamphlets published by the denomination. In both institutions and ideas we see continuity with the pre-war church. As much as the Great War affected the church—and profoundly so—it was not a watershed in terms of either attitudes to war or in the overall relationship between church and culture.

The Presbyterian Church offered complete and total support for the Empire and Canada’s participation in the Great War. Canadian Presbyterians were not unique in this; indeed, what the other literature shows was that this was the dominant response in Canada.<sup>6</sup> The churches supported the war with great vigour. The war was defined as a sacrifice in the service of others and as a new way of achieving God’s purposes on earth. The denomination continued unwavering in that support to the end, even as the casualties mounted. The church showed this in

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon L. Heath, ed., *Canadian Churches and the First World War* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Macdonald, “For Empire and God: Canadian Presbyterians and the Great War,” in *Canadian Churches*, ed. Heath, 133-52.

<sup>5</sup> With the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War there has been considerable publication in this area, including re-visiting debates on the origins of the war, as well as a number of other fascinating studies. Jay Winter has edited a three-volume academic series, *The Cambridge History of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Adrian Gregory’s “Beliefs and religion” in volume 3, 418-44, explores this topic but assumes that Europe had already largely secularized by the time of the outbreak of war. A very different assessment is offered in Philip Jenkins’ *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (New York: HarperOne, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> This is a major theme throughout Heath’s book and can be seen specifically in these sections: Mark G. McGowan, “‘We are all involved in the same issue’: Canada’s English-Speaking Catholics and the Great War,” 34-74; David B. Marshall, “‘Khaki Has Become a Sacred Colour’: The Methodist Church and the Sanctification of World War One,” 102-32; Macdonald, “For Empire and God,” 133-51; Melissa Davidson, “The Anglican Church and the Great War,” 152-69; and, Michael A. G. Haykin and Ian Hugh Clary, “‘O God of Battles’: The Canadian Baptist Experience of the Great War,” 170-96.

its support for conscription. It showed it in the provision of chaplains. We see it in the service of individual Presbyterians during the war and what they wrote about their experience. We see it in sermons, and in the editorials and other features of the denominational magazines. For example, the *Presbyterian Witness* on August 10, 1918 argued against any thought of negotiation at this stage in the war:

This is why we say there must be no compromise now, in this final stage of the war, when the enemy is drawing near the end of his resources and the prospect of defeat faces him on every side, and when the fruit of our unspeakable sacrifices is coming daily nearer within our reach. This is why we need to stiffen our resolution, to forget our war-weariness and to reinforce our faith and our fortitude to endure unto the end. We have no misgivings as to the justice of our cause.<sup>7</sup>

Victory was required in order to fulfil the justice of the great cause for which so many had sacrificed so much.

It is this unwavering support, and some of the strident language that was used, that has been a challenge for historians. The response in the historiography has been to try to balance this and to try to find other voices or more moderate comments.<sup>8</sup> This is understandable. But this may also have led us to see more change, and thus the war as a greater watershed, than may actually have been the case. These voices supporting the war as a crusade or arguing against a negotiated end are so foreign to our conceptions today, that one wants to find more moderate voices. One can find those, or, in some cases one can read comments in such a way that makes them more moderate than may actually have been the case; however, the dominant voice was one of unwavering support for the Empire. We see this theme reinforced when we consider how the war affected theological Colleges and how they participated in the war, and the ideas about the war expressed through a variety of pamphlets produced by the denomination near the end of the war.

### **Theological Colleges and Other Institutions**

What was the impact of the Great War on the institutions of The Presbyterian Church in Canada? The most common institution in 1914 would have been the individual congregations. To try to assess that impact across the entire denomination would involve a massive research project. One wonders about the survival of sources as well as the variety of sources that would be available to answer our questions. Would we have enough sermons, worship services, minutes or other kinds of information to give us an accurate picture? Perhaps a more feasible project might be to consider how the war was memorialized through the various plaques, books of remembrance and memorial gifts created during the war or in the years immediately following. These would vary from the standard Rolls of Honour that many congregations have and still display to extremely large gifts such as memorial organs. (I was raised in a congregation with a massive organ that was a memorial to those who had died in the Great War.) As noted, this would be a major project

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<sup>7</sup> Michelle Fowler, "Keeping the Faith: the Presbyterian Press in Peace and War, 1913-1919" (master's thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2005), 84. The original quotation is from the *Presbyterian Witness*, August 10, 1918.

<sup>8</sup> The historiography of Canadian Presbyterians and the Great War is explored in Stuart Macdonald "Myth Meets Reality: Canadian Presbyterians and the Great War," *Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History* (2012): 103-20. <http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/historicalpapers/article/viewPDFInterstitial/39113/35476>.

because the war affected so many congregations and villages across Canada. Of particular interest might be the kind of inscriptions and the language chosen for these inscriptions in Presbyterian congregations, a subject that has been pioneered by Jonathan Vance.<sup>9</sup> Other institutions would have been affected as well. Mission Boards would have struggled to serve mission fields, both in Canada and overseas, given the challenges of conflict (this was a world war so that travel was difficult and some regions were involved in fighting), decreased finances, and obtaining adequate personnel. Women's organizations, in particular the Women's Missionary Society, would also have had their activities in this period altered by the conflict.

Theological Colleges were significant institutions in the Presbyterian Church in 1914. These institutions offer us an interesting lens into the impact of the war on the denomination. The Presbyterian Church in Canada had eight theological Colleges in 1914 spread across the nation: Presbyterian College in Halifax; Presbyterian College in Montreal; Queen's in Kingston; Knox College in Toronto; Manitoba College in Winnipeg; Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon; Robertson College in Edmonton; and Westminster Hall in Vancouver. They varied considerably in size, in how established they were, in the programs they offered, and their particular challenges. Just prior to the outbreak of war Presbyterian College, Halifax, completed its 94th session, while Manitoba College had completed its 42nd session. In contrast, Westminster Hall presented only its sixth annual report to the General Assembly, while Presbyterian Theological College, Saskatoon, and Robertson College in Edmonton were even newer institutions.<sup>10</sup> For the latter institutions, the challenges they faced in 1914 were to establish faculty, solidify funding, and construct buildings. The established Colleges also faced challenges. Manitoba College joined with Wesley College in the 1913-1914 academic year in anticipation of church union. The following year (1915) saw Manitoba College report that undergraduate education had been largely transferred to the University, as a result of changes in the structure of provincial education.<sup>11</sup> Westminster Hall faced the failure of Dominion Trust that affected its finances.<sup>12</sup> Knox College was in the process of building a new building and residence, with those structures not yet completed.<sup>13</sup> The Colleges were very different from each other on the eve of war. This is reflected not only in the content of their reports, but also the way in which they reported. There was no standard format laid down by the General Assembly, and while there was similar information each College reported there was also information that varied considerably across the Colleges. We have a great deal of information but cross-College comparisons remain challenging. Student enrolment does not always seem to add up even within a College's own report, let alone from one College to another. One thing that is clear is that each College considered their communities to include not only those in the specific theology classes, but also undergraduate students and those at other stages of preparation for ministry. The Great War had a dramatic impact on all of them.

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<sup>9</sup> Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> *The Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*, (the A&P), contain the minutes of the Assembly as well as reports to the Assembly. Most of the information on the Colleges was reported to the Assembly, but without debate. To avoid confusion, the reports section of *The Acts and Proceedings* will be referenced as A&P reports. The College Reports for 1914 are found in the reports, 155-200.

<sup>11</sup> A&P reports (1914): 184; A&P reports (1915): 182.

<sup>12</sup> A&P reports (1915): 198.

<sup>13</sup> A&P reports (1915): 172.

Decline in enrolment was one of the first effects that the outbreak of war had on the Colleges. Not all of the Colleges reported a loss of enrolment in their 1915 reports to the General Assembly (the first reports after the outbreak of war) but reference was made to this by all of the Colleges in subsequent reports. Lower enrolment affected the income and finances of the Colleges, something that was of concern. Presbyterian College in Halifax had reported 45 students in the 1913-14 academic session. In the 1918 report to the General Assembly, only 12 students are noted as being in attendance.<sup>14</sup> That same year (1918), Presbyterian College, Montreal noted 20 students in attendance, a significant decrease from the 80 students reported in 1914. (These numbers included all students, not just in theology, but also in Arts and in the "Matriculation Class.")<sup>15</sup> A more accurate indicator of enrolment in theology classes themselves might be the 1917 report where the College reported that there were 27 students enrolled: "an exact equivalent of the number that has gone overseas."<sup>16</sup> Whichever number we choose, one sees a dramatic impact on enrolment at Presbyterian College, Montreal. Similar problems were faced by the other theological Colleges. In 1918 Queen's reported that its enrolment had decreased throughout the war, with each year being fifty percent of the previous year. Twelve students were present for the 1917-1918 academic session, down from 32 immediately prior to the war.<sup>17</sup> The Knox College Senate chose to focus on the number of graduates to illustrate the same point. The 1918 graduates numbered nine, down from 15 in 1917, and 23 in 1916, and the Senate anticipated five or six graduates in 1919.<sup>18</sup> Manitoba College noted in 1918 "Our theological classes numbered only eleven, of whom not one was liable to be called up—all the men belonging to Class 1 have already gone to the front."<sup>19</sup> It is more challenging to determine the impact on the younger Colleges. In 1918 Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon reported eight Arts and 12 theology students. No classes had been held in 1913-1914 as the College was just being established.<sup>20</sup> Robertson College listed 38 students in total (11 in Theology), up from 37 in 1914 (seven of whom were in theology).<sup>21</sup> That same year Westminster Hall reported seven students registered for the next session, while two more had "signified their intention of attending unless called for Military service."<sup>22</sup>

Each theological College chose different ways to acknowledge or report on the considerable numbers of its students who enlisted. Presbyterian College, Halifax began a roll of honour in its 1915 report noting all who had enlisted, and the military branch or unit in which they served. The 1915 report noted 28 students, which increased to 39 by 1916, and by the end of the war stood at 43 students and two faculty.<sup>23</sup> The yearly reports also noted those who were

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<sup>14</sup> A&P reports (1918): 149.

<sup>15</sup> A&P reports (1914): 161; A&P reports (1918): 154.

<sup>16</sup> A&P reports (1917): 138.

<sup>17</sup> A&P reports (1914): 167; A&P reports (1918): 158.

<sup>18</sup> A&P reports (1918): 164.

<sup>19</sup> A&P reports (1918): 173.

<sup>20</sup> A&P reports (1914): 188; A&P reports (1918): 178.

<sup>21</sup> A&P reports (1914): 191; A&P reports (1918): 182.

<sup>22</sup> A&P reports (1918): 184-85.

<sup>23</sup> A&P reports (1915): 159; A&P reports (1916): 163; A&P reports (1920): 166. The roll of honour one year after the war (1919), lists 42 students having served (A&P reports (1919): 153). That was an increase of two over the previous year (A&P reports (1918): 150).

killed in the conflict (a subject to which we will turn in a moment). Presbyterian College, Montreal saw 46 students enlist in the course of the war, while Knox College recorded 70 enlisted.<sup>24</sup> The reports of Queen's in Kingston throughout the war provide the least information on the war's impact on the College. No total for enlistments was given, but the 1917 report did describe the challenges of enrolment, and the reality that students were leaving to join "the King's Colours," both those in Arts and those entering theological studies, and during theological studies. Queen's also noted that one of its instructors, Professor Dall, had received a commission in the Highland Light Infantry and was serving in Asia.<sup>25</sup> The information from Manitoba College in Winnipeg is also fragmentary, but we do know that by 1916 Dr. Macmillan and 15 candidates for ministry had "heeded the Call of the Empire" and joined the military.<sup>26</sup> The College encouraged this: "The College has adopted a resolution encouraging the young men under its care to enlist and has promised to treat as special cases those who join the colours during the term." The report continued that all of those who had enlisted during the current academic year had been given credit for completing that year.<sup>27</sup> Given this, it is surprising that the College does not update this information in subsequent reports. Recruitment was also active at Presbyterian Theological College, Saskatoon, which saw 14 students and the Principal in service in 1916, with four more students entering service by 1917.<sup>28</sup> Robertson College in Edmonton listed 39 students on its honour roll in 1918, while Westminster Hall, Vancouver reported at the conclusion of the war that 60 members of the College community had served.<sup>29</sup> It is worth reminding ourselves that in each case Colleges included a variety of individuals in these numbers, not only those actively taking theological classes, but also those preparing for theological classes or recent graduates. Each College saw its students (however defined), and in some cases faculty, actively engaged in the war effort.

This participation came at a cost. At least sixty students (including recent graduates) and one faculty member died in military service. The best statistics indicate the following deaths from the Colleges that provided this information (the number known to be in service is given in brackets): Presbyterian College, Halifax: 7 dead (42 in service); Presbyterian College, Montreal: 10 (46); Knox College, Toronto: 16 (70); Presbyterian Theological College, Saskatoon: 5 (ca. 18); Robertson College, Edmonton: 5 (ca. 39); and, Westminster Hall, Vancouver: 13 (60).<sup>30</sup> We have no clear numbers from either Queen's in Kingston or Manitoba College in Winnipeg. In the case of Queens we do know students were killed during the war. In its 1917 report, the

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<sup>24</sup> Total enlistment figures are challenging, as not all Colleges gave them for the complete war. The Presbyterian College figure was given in 1919 at the close of the war (A&P reports (1919): 155). Knox College's last report of enlistment was given in its 1918 report, before the end of the war (A&P reports (1918): 165).

<sup>25</sup> A&P reports (1917): 143.

<sup>26</sup> As with so many of the statements in these reports, it is challenging to arrive at precise numbers. The actual quotation would suggest that it may have been at least fifteen: "In addition to Dr. Macmillan who is now serving with the colours at Halifax, *and in addition to the men who enlisted before the beginning of the session*, 15 of the young men in Manitoba College, who are candidates for ministry, are now on active service" (A&P reports (1916): 188; italics added).

<sup>27</sup> A&P reports (1916): 188.

<sup>28</sup> A&P reports (1916): 192-93; A&P reports (1917): 165.

<sup>29</sup> A&P reports (1919): 188.

<sup>30</sup> A&P reports (1919): 151, 153, 155, 178, 188; A&P reports (1918): 183 for Robertson College; A&P reports (1920): 185 for Knox College.

College noted that two students, P. C. Caverhill and E. F. Corkill, students “of great promise who, had they been spared would have been graduated this year,” both died in France: “They were beautiful in their lives and in their death they were not divided. We hold them in highest honour and in grateful remembrance for their unselfish devotion to duty and because they fell in defence of the sacred principles of our Christian civilization.”<sup>31</sup> Two other student deaths were noted in the 1918 report, as was the death in 1918 of Professor Dall in India.<sup>32</sup>

Deaths occurred throughout the war. Presbyterian College, Montreal, reported one student dead in its 1916 report, five dead by its 1917 report, eight dead by 1918, and 10 dead by the conclusion of the war.<sup>33</sup> The last year of war was hard on Knox College, as the number of dead increased from the seven noted in the 1918 report, to reach 13 by the end of the war (with 16 names on the memorial plaque).<sup>34</sup> As previously mentioned, Presbyterian College, Halifax included in its report each year the honour roll of those serving, and as the war progressed noted those who had been killed (three by 1917; four, and one missing, by 1918; seven in the 1919 report at the conclusion of the war.)<sup>35</sup> Some of the tributes to those killed are very moving. In its 1918 report, Presbyterian College, Saskatoon noted they had mentioned the previous year the deaths of three students, then noted the death of another, James Donald Graham: “Donald was a splendid type of man, and one of the cleverest students in our College. He possessed the art of making himself beloved by all.” The report went on to note that Graham, and two other students, had been awarded “the military medal for bravery.”<sup>36</sup> The Report of Robertson College that same year named five who had died, one not a candidate for ministry, while noting that the other four had “rendered excellent service on Alberta mission fields and were young men of much promise.”<sup>37</sup> Casualties experienced during the war would have extended far beyond those who died, to those who were wounded, prisoners, or otherwise affected. Westminster Hall was the only College to report this kind of information, noting in addition to the 13 dead, two who had been prisoners and serving as chaplains to other prisoners, and two who been permanently disabled.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the end of the war saw the flu pandemic reach Canada, with classes postponed, the death of one graduating student at Knox, and two students at Manitoba College.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the dramatic impacts of enlisted students and those who did not return, and the financial challenge of lowered enrolment, the Colleges also found themselves dealing with the reality of College buildings being needed, and thus requisitioned by military authorities. Presbyterian College, Halifax, had its residence taken over in 1917 in order for it to serve as a convalescence home. Alternate arrangements had to be made for accommodation of the students

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<sup>31</sup> A&P reports (1917): 143.

<sup>32</sup> A&P reports (1918): 158 notes the student deaths. Professor Dall’s death is noted the next year, A&P reports (1919): 159.

<sup>33</sup> A&P reports (1916): 167; A&P reports (1917): 139; A&P reports (1918): 153; A&P reports (1919): 155.

<sup>34</sup> A&P reports (1918): 165; A&P reports (1920): 185. There are sixteen names listed on the memorial plaque in the Knox College chapel. At the time of writing, the reasons for this discrepancy (sixteen names not thirteen) are unclear.

<sup>35</sup> A&P reports (1917): 135-36; A&P reports (1918): 150; A&P reports (1919): 153.

<sup>36</sup> A&P reports (1918): 178.

<sup>37</sup> A&P reports (1918): 183. One suspects the other student was a resident.

<sup>38</sup> A&P reports (1919): 188.

<sup>39</sup> A&P reports (1919): 167, 174.

studying for ministry and to provide funding for that accommodation.<sup>40</sup> Presbyterian College, Montreal, also had its building used as a military hospital, beginning in 1918 and this continued for the next two years. The residence was returned in April of 1919.<sup>41</sup> Knox College retained its new building (the old Knox was used by the military), but found itself sharing the building with St. Andrew's College.<sup>42</sup> Manitoba College had its building requisitioned at the very end of the war and used as a "vocational school for partially disabled soldiers." The challenge here was not simply finding residence and teaching space, but the fact the College was also unable to use its library.<sup>43</sup> In the course of the war, the Assembly was asked to consider how to consolidate the work of the Colleges, given all of the challenges they faced. The 1918 Assembly (which would not have anticipated the war ending later that year) called for a better sharing of resources (in particular faculty) but did not support the closing of any of the Colleges and suggested that each College should continue in its affiliations at the present time.<sup>44</sup>

College reports tended to deal with specifics, not only throughout the war, but in years before and after. One is not surprised to find that the Colleges did not use their reports as opportunities to reflect on the meaning of what they were experiencing during the conflict. We thus need to be cautious in how we read these reports if we wish to use them to conclude how those in the Colleges viewed the war. At the same time, what is clear is that the Colleges supported the war. We see this in terms of their willingness to have their students enlist, the encouragement we sometimes see for these students to join the military, and the pride they expressed in what their students, and in some cases faculty, were doing. The language used was muted. Not surprisingly given the nature of the source, we do not find strong crusading language used. What we do find is a consistent emphasis on service to Empire and King, and that this sacrifice was noble. It was sacrifice in a worthy cause. Occasionally a College went further and tried to give expression to what it felt was involved in the conflict. The Queen's College report in 1917 spoke of the war as one fought for Christian civilization. The next year Queen's noted the death of two students: "By their devotion unto death in the defence of the freedom of the Empire and the sanctities of civilization they have shed a glory on their Alma Mater which will be an inspiration to future generations of students." After expressing their sympathies to the families of these students, the report noted "they laid down their lives for the sacred cause of justice and truth and honour."<sup>45</sup> A more extensive reflection on the meaning of the war can be found in the report of the Knox College Senate in 1918 as that body considered the world after the war and what would be needed, particularly from those too young to have gone to war:

In these days of appeal to the heroic, the Church must bring home to these boys the unparalleled need there is now and will be after the war for volunteers who will enlist under the banner of King Jesus and give themselves up to His campaign of world redemption with the same abandonment, the same courage, the same

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<sup>40</sup> A&P reports (1917): 133-34.

<sup>41</sup> A&P reports (1918): 152; A&P reports (1919): 154.

<sup>42</sup> A&P reports (1919): 167.

<sup>43</sup> A&P reports (1919): 173.

<sup>44</sup> *The Acts & Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (1918): 75-77, 82-83.

<sup>45</sup> A&P reports (1918): 158.

readiness, if need be, to suffer and die for a great cause as has characterized their fathers and older brothers in Flanders and in France. Unless the Church can appeal to the spirit of heroism and adventure in our young Christians with something of the same response which has met the call of the nation, the cause for which the Church stands is doomed to failure. This appeal the Church will make and already there are indications that in the years following the war young men will flow to our Church Colleges as never before.<sup>46</sup>

The names of the seven dead from Knox to that point in the conflict follow immediately below this statement. It is worth noting that there is no sense in this comment that those who had died had done so in vain. They were exemplary Christian soldiers. They had fought on a physical battlefield, but the expressed belief was that the fight to redeem the world must continue with the same zeal after the war in other battlefields. The war was not in vain; instead, the war had given a model to follow. We see no break from the past in this quotation, only a call to carry on the mission in new ways.

Did individuals who fought in the Great War have their faith shattered by the experience? Was there a crisis of faith among students for ministry who served, one that led them to leave the church? If so, what was the nature of the crisis? Was it a loss in faith in God, or a loss of faith in the effectiveness of the church or the ethical values the church proclaimed? These are extremely difficult questions to answer. College reports may not be the most useful source to use in determining a definitive answer to this question. At the same time, this has been a major theme in the literature on Canadian churches in World War I, first articulated by David Marshall in his 1985 article "Methodism Embattled: A reconsideration and World War I" and restated (though in a much more cautious form) in his recent chapter on Methodists in World War I.<sup>47</sup> The argument is that what students (those serving as chaplains or those serving as soldiers) saw in the war challenged their faith: "Belief that the Great War was a noble Christian crusade was quickly shattered in the disillusionment of the battlefield."<sup>48</sup> Marshall stressed the differences between the experiences and resultant attitudes to war between those who were on the front-lines and those clergy who stayed at home, and suggested that we get a different, and far more realistic, portrait of the war by considering sources created by those who served as soldiers. One poignant example Marshall cites is the complaint of C. T. Watterson, who had been at Wesley College (Winnipeg) prior to the war, that the efforts of the church had completely failed to reach the soldiers and many would now "have done with the Church."<sup>49</sup> Marshall also provided as evidence for this the loss of, or challenge to, faith that thirty-nine of the ministers and probationers who served overseas resigned, and "113 clergy and theology students were never

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<sup>46</sup> A&P reports (1918): 165.

<sup>47</sup> David B. Marshall, "Methodism Embattled: A Reconsideration of the Methodist Church and World War I," *Canadian Historical Review* 66 (1985): 48-64. In his chapter in *Canadian Churches and the First World War*, Marshall stresses that it was a difference on ethics, rather than a loss of faith itself, that distanced the soldiers from the Methodist church in Canada which they left: "The impact of the war on the Methodist Church of Canada was neither revival nor a shattering loss of faith, but a drift away from the church" (Marshall, "Khaki has become a sacred colour": The Methodist Church and the Sanctification of World War One," 104).

<sup>48</sup> Marshall, "Methodism Embattled," 48.

<sup>49</sup> Marshall, "Methodism Embattled," 58.

heard from by the Methodist church after they returned.”<sup>50</sup> The conclusion that the war challenged the faith of many who saw combat seems clear; however, there are a few clues we can glean from these reports that would suggest caution in extending this argument to Presbyterian theological students. All of the theological Colleges recovered in the post-War period. Enrolment was not a major concern expressed by any of these Colleges after the war. This stands in sharp contrast to their concerns during the war itself.<sup>51</sup> Indeed the Colleges were generally pleased to have returned to normal and were optimistic about their futures.

Two Colleges did directly address the issue of students returning from the war. Presbyterian College, Halifax, after giving the summary of those who had served, noted in 1920 that “all but seven have returned to resume their studies for ministry.”<sup>52</sup> It is tempting to imagine that these seven may have left theological studies due to a crisis of faith; however, there is a clue in the Knox College report of the same year which should give us pause before we jump to that conclusion. The Knox report stated that the war had taken its toll with 13 members of the College community dead, then continued: “Some others have been too much broken in health to return to their studies, but of our thirty-five students in Theology this past winter, eighteen are men who have returned from the front; and of the fifty men registered in Arts a good proportion are returned men.”<sup>53</sup> Returned soldiers did return to theological studies. Of those who did not, it is unclear how many suffered a crisis of faith and how many failed to continue for other reasons, including as a result of injuries. What is fascinating is how little attention was paid in the College reports to those who were injured. While those who died were honoured in a variety of ways, the wounded were rarely mentioned. Tim Cook has suggested that the dead from the Great War amounted to 9.5 to 10 million soldiers across the world, with another 15 to 20 million wounded. He suggests that it is likely that 60,932 Canadians (as well as 1,305 Newfoundlanders) died as a result of combat, disease or injury. What needs to be added to this are the over 173,000 who were injured.<sup>54</sup> We have already noted that the wounded were not, with one exception, mentioned in the College reports. Extrapolating from the general number of wounded in the war, we would assume that this would be a considerable number. We should be careful not to move too quickly to assume that those who did not return from combat to theological studies did so as a result of a faith crisis caused by the war. There may be other explanatory factors. And those who did return did not seem to bring altered attitudes with them. After the war, the Colleges seemed more concerned with moving forward than with reflecting upon the issues raised by the conflict.

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<sup>50</sup> Marshall, “Methodism Embattled,” 59. No reference to where these numbers were derived is offered in the article. This makes it challenging to determine if this were a crisis of faith or the result of some other factors. The impression in the article clearly is that these were men who in some sense lost their faith as a result of the conflict—be that faith in God, or, more likely, faith in the church.

<sup>51</sup> Enrolment statistics were down from what they had been previously, but this was not a major concern of the Colleges. The Western Colleges seem to have done better after the war, but it needs to be remembered that these Colleges were just being or had only recently been established. The more established Colleges seem to have seen lower enrolments; to cite Knox as an example: 44 theological students in 1924 as opposed to 55 in 1914, but, as noted in the text this did not seem to raise serious concerns in the College report itself (A&P reports (1925): 161; A&P reports (1914): 155-98). The 1920 Knox College report discusses this (A&P reports (1920): 185).

<sup>52</sup> A&P reports (1920): 166.

<sup>53</sup> A&P reports (1920): 185.

<sup>54</sup> Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918* (Toronto: Penguin, 2008), 611-12. Cook offers a very detailed and careful discussion of Great War casualties.

## Impact of the War on Ideas

What was the impact of the war on ideas, on the theological, ethical and other understandings of Canadian Presbyterians? This is a topic that has received some consideration to date, but mostly based upon one pamphlet attributed to T. B. Kilpatrick, *The War and the Christian Church* published by the General Assembly's Commission on War. This pamphlet has been used by John Moir and by Brian Fraser. Each suggests that war raised issues that challenged traditional theological understandings.<sup>55</sup> Yet, the other pamphlets issued by the Presbyterian Church during the war have received surprisingly little attention. What we see in these pamphlets are not that the war challenged and changed conventional attitudes, but that it merely reinforced what was already accepted. The war did not represent a watershed.

We see this strongly in Professor J. W. Falconer's pamphlet *Religion and the War*, which was "Prepared for the General Assembly's Commission on the War and the Spiritual Life of the Church" and issued in 1917.<sup>56</sup> Falconer was on the faculty at Presbyterian College, Halifax. The pamphlet offers us great insight into his ideas about religion, but the war plays a minor role within the discussion, often serving as a springboard from which the author can re-state his understanding of the Christian message. The war had shown us evil, but the main focus was on traditional sins such as "selfishness" and "worldliness." No examples were given to explain how the current conflict gave particular evidence of these sins.<sup>57</sup> The war had given clearer evidence of what we should have already known, not only evil, but also "the capacities of endurance and sacrifice that lie dormant in human souls."<sup>58</sup> The war had shattered the ideas of human progress and made clear "Teutonic apostasy" (never defined or explored), but the response to these new clearer understandings seemed to be more of the same. Christians were to serve and sacrifice, with soldiers giving examples of what this meant.

The Christian disciple is to go out as a member of an army prepared to do battle with all the aggressors of evil. We must not plead the invincibility of sin, or the weakness of our forces. We must pull down the stronghold of vice and cruelty, and realize with clear knowledge that as long as we are in the world and desire to follow Jesus, we are in a state of war. "I came not to bring peace, but a sword."<sup>59</sup>

War offered an example that affirmed traditional Christian ideas. Looking to the future, Falconer suggested that the war called for "a more ardent intellectual struggle" using the best resources

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<sup>55</sup> John S. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Burlington, ON: Eagle Press, 2004), 209-10; Brian J. Fraser, *Church, College and Clergy: A History of Theological Education at Knox College, Toronto, 1844-1994* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 118; Brian J. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), 162. Moir and Fraser would not necessarily agree on how the values of Presbyterians were challenged. The discussion on this pamphlet in Macdonald, "For Empire and God," 140-41, challenges this reading of the pamphlet as advocating a change in direction for the Canadian church.

<sup>56</sup> J. W. Falconer, *Religion and the War* (Toronto: Presbyterian Church in Canada, [1916?]). This pamphlet was difficult to locate. The copy used for this paper was located at the McLennan/Redpath Library, McGill University.

<sup>57</sup> Falconer, *Religion and the War*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. The "Teutonic apostasy" phrase, 3.

available from a variety of disciplines so that the gospel could be presented in a way that made sense to contemporaries.<sup>60</sup> The war called one “to leave behind . . . old prejudices, selfish denominational and party rivalries” wrote Falconer, using phrases that suggest more about his views on the on-going debate on church union, not what the experiences of the Great War might have suggested to others.<sup>61</sup> In this pamphlet we see the war being used to reaffirm existing values.

Issues raised by the war are addressed far more directly in the pamphlet *War and Divine Providence* authored by Professor J. M. Shaw.<sup>62</sup> Shaw began by stating the problem. Some, he noted, had argued that the war challenged traditional Christian ideas about God’s sovereignty and providence. The pamphlet was a carefully argued rebuttal to these statements, suggesting ways in which the war actually demonstrated God’s providence.<sup>63</sup> One of the ways that God’s sovereignty was being shown, he argued, was in the exposure of the evil in Germany. German evil was clearly stated, and its exposure revealed the true battle taking place.

In thus exposing the essentially barbaric character of Germany’s ideal, and exposing it in such a way as to lead the conscience of the world to condemn it, and to will, at any cost, the defeat and overthrow of it, have we not already the evidence of the working of an overruling Moral Sovereignty?<sup>64</sup>

The answer to this rhetorical question was, of course, “yes.” In an interesting twist, Shaw suggested to those who were arguing the war proved the failure of Christianity that the opposite was true. It was the “failure to apply Christianity and its ideals in national and international life” that was the issue, and this was something that Germany had clearly failed to do. There was also a call for all nations to do this in the future.<sup>65</sup> The war was a battle between good and evil, the innocent and the barbaric, with Germany clearly (and solely) named as the source of evil. Intriguingly, no reference was made to either the Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian empires.<sup>66</sup> In fighting against this evil, those involved were following the example of vicarious suffering exemplified by Jesus. Shaw wrote:

And in being called as individuals and as a nation with our Allies through suffering and sacrifice to vindicate the cause of freedom and righteousness, we are called into

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>62</sup> J. M. Shaw, *The War and Divine Providence* (Toronto: Presbyterian Church in Canada, [1917]). Call number D 525 .S42 P75 PAM, United Church of Canada Archives.

<sup>63</sup> Shaw, *The War and Divine Providence*, 3-4.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 7. “Through Germany’s wanton crime, Britain, Belgium, France, Serbia, Russia, Canada and the United States, and other countries are deluged with blood and tears.” The omission of Austria-Hungary is telling, given its role in the war in the East, in particular relating to Serbia. The omission of the Ottoman Empire is also noteworthy.

nothing less than a Divine partnership or fellowship for the redemption of the nations and the bringing in of a new and better era for mankind.<sup>67</sup>

In case anyone had missed his point, he concluded the paragraph with the simple sentence: “God is with us in the conflict.”<sup>68</sup> There was self-reflection and criticism in the pamphlet. Shaw wondered if the nation (one assumes he meant Canada but he might have meant the entire British Empire) was worthy of this high calling. He pointed to failings in the nation, the “war spirit in its own internal life,” as well as the “drink curse” that he described “as a root-source of military inefficiency and economic waste” both during the war and at other times.<sup>69</sup> Changes needed to be made, but they were not changes in what the church believed. Rather, they were society and those in the church applying the vision of Christianity proposed prior to the conflict. The conflict had not altered these values, only demonstrated clearly how important they were. God’s sovereignty had not been challenged by the war; rather God had used the war to warn of evil possibilities in modern society, and lead those who were willing to follow onto the correct paths.

One final pamphlet, *The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the War: Prayer, A Call from God for this Hour*, deserves consideration.<sup>70</sup> Unlike the others discussed, it was not produced by the Commission on the War, but was the product of the National Service Commission. This pamphlet called the church to intercessory prayer and gave examples of prayers which could be used. After a prayer written by a deceased British officer, the pamphlet noted that the country was now entering the fifth year of this “great and just war.”<sup>71</sup> Prayer, it was stressed, was key to victory, and while the Commission did not want to interfere with the forms of free prayer, it offered a set of themes for prayers each day of the week. It offered these themes, a model prayer at the end, and encouraged people to register with the “League of Intercession” in this important ministry. As well as these prayers and suggestions for prayers, the pamphlet included numerous quotations on the importance and value of prayer, including a comment attributed to the Commander of the Grand Fleet, Admiral Beatty: “Until a religious revival takes place at home, so long will the war continue.” This would indeed suggest to the reader that by doing her or his part in praying, they would be helping to win a victory and end the suffering. The themes for prayer focused directly on the war and those involved. The reader was encouraged several times to pray for those in military service, for prisoners of war, for the King and those involved in government, and for those who mourned those who had died. The reader was also encouraged at various points to pray for victory that would end the conflict, “that a speedy and conclusive victory may come, and that our brave lads may soon come home, and that we may be delivered from the spirit of hate towards our enemies.” This was the only reference to “the enemy” in the pamphlet. One was praying for an end to war, but thought for the enemy was limited. Those on active military service were prayed for in a variety of ways, but on Thursday and in the sample prayer offered at the end, the prayer took on a more moral tone: “That our soldiers and sailors and airmen be preserved chivalrous and pure, and saved from everything that would stain their honor [sic] or debase their souls.” In the model prayer, the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>70</sup> *Prayer: A Call from God for this Hour*, National Service Commission fonds, 1994-1022, PCCARO.

<sup>71</sup> *Prayer*. There is no pagination in this pamphlet. The reference to this being written in the fifth year of war would suggest it was written sometime around August 1918 or thereafter.

phrase is actually “the honor [sic] of their country or debase their souls.” Prayers were also offered for a better world at the end of the conflict, perhaps the most poignant being the concluding suggestion on Saturday, the final day of the cycle: “That out of so much death a new life may be born in the world.”<sup>72</sup>

We see in all of these pamphlets a commitment to the cause of victory and a similar understanding of the war as a fight against evil, personified by Germany, and a sense that in being involved in this conflict that one was being a faithful Christian. We see the war defined as sacrifice (however costly) in the interest of bringing God’s kingdom into this world. This was defined in very practical ways, and included labour relations, the fight against alcohol, as well as international relations. While there were moments when self-criticism was offered, the main exemplar of evil was Germany and elements within German society. What we do not see in these pamphlets is a real questioning of the war nor do we see new ideas. What the church needed after the war was what it needed before the war, only this time purer and better. These pamphlets, including the Kilpatrick pamphlet on *The War and the Christian Church*, do not call for a change of direction but rather for greater devotion in the same primary cause the church had articulated before the war.

## Conclusion

When the Empire went to war, Canadian Presbyterians went willingly. This was made easier in 1914, because of the violation of Belgian neutrality and because of the atrocities committed by the German army in the course of that invasion. They continued that support, unwavering to the end. The sources we have examined provide no evidence to suggest that the experience of the Great War created a crisis of faith among Canadian Presbyterians or changed their attitudes to war. Those who died in the war were seen as heroic individuals who had offered their lives as a sacrifice. Through that sacrifice, a better world would (it was hoped and believed and proclaimed) come into being. Their deaths were, to borrow David Reynolds’ important distinction, a sacrifice not a slaughter.<sup>73</sup> We see this in the College reports and in the pamphlets, and in the other sources such as periodicals and Assembly reports. If attitudes didn’t change at the end or shortly after the end of the Great War, the question then becomes, what was the turning point? And, even more appropriately, when did attitudes change to the point that theological students today have a very different attitude to war, and think Eakin’s comments and those like them are completely unchristian. When did that change? This is a question that needs to be considered carefully. At the same time, we need to use caution in assuming that the churches’ support for this war led individuals to leave the Christian faith. In what way was the Great War a turning point in Christendom? This is another question that deserves careful consideration. At the moment, the evidence would stress more of a continuity with the pre-War world than we have sometimes imagined.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> David Reynolds, *The Long Shadow: The Legacies of the Great War in the Twentieth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 401.

## Voices from the Front: Canada's Presbyterian Padres and the Great War

Duff Crerar

Canadian military chaplains, or padres, as they are called, preached a message of consolation and prophecy with an urgency born of pre-war convictions heightened by wartime experience. Most, though not all, found in the Great War's pain, sacrifice, grief, and ultimate victory, the vindication of their version of the Canadian "national gospel," and assiduously gathered and proclaimed the lessons they had learned overseas to their own denominations back home. Canadian Protestant padres, in the middle of 1918, under their Director, Colonel John Almond, pieced together the sum of their experiences in "The Chaplain's Message to the Canadian Churches." Presbyterians played a central role in gathering and compiling responses to the questionnaires sent out by Almond's Assistant Directors (see Appendix), and wrote several parts of the final version. Though the "Message" fell afoul of ecclesiastical conservatism and the reactionary climate of the nation in 1918-1919 (which also exposed the decay of chaplain wartime consensus), the individual responses which have come to light reveal a telling picture of how the war's darkest experiences nevertheless gave the padres an urgent sense of the reforms which would be needed, based on what their troops told them overseas, to give the church a chance with the returned men. Yet the result must have been a tremendous disappointment, for their clarion call to reform organization, culture, doctrine and traditions was ignored, suppressed or damned with faint praise, the latter perhaps being the dominant note among home-front Presbyterians. At the same time, the responses which have survived document the seeds of dissent and discord which compromised the one measure most padres had hoped would realize the main lesson of the war: Church Union.

Though Roman Catholics refused the invitation to join the 1918 survey, representatives of all the Protestant churches provided lengthy responses to the one-page survey of a dozen questions, which probed for answers to whether or not the church had failed its men before the war and asked how they could be won back afterwards. Harry Kent, Almond's Presbyterian adjutant, collected the responses from his denomination's chaplains, and passed them on to senior Presbyterian padres tasked with writing parts of the intended "Message." Kent took the responses back to Chaplain Headquarters, where they lingered until rediscovery in the 1980s in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) records in the National Archives of Canada.<sup>1</sup> George Kilpatrick, A. D. Cornett, and Clarence Mackinnon drafted the Introduction, Conclusion and several passages on theology, while Mackinnon composed the entire section on Education. Other Presbyterians, some with impeccable front-line service, such as A. M. Gordon, Senior

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<sup>1</sup> The story of these papers, religious documents found not in the Presbyterian Archives but in the military records of the CEF, is paralleled by the number of other times military information on chaplains has been found in religious archives and religious material found in military records. Not so in the case of the Presbyterians, however, who in an act of tragic providence (at least for historians) disposed of all their wartime records stored at Knox College in the 1920s. The entire story of "The Chaplains' Message" has been described in Duff Crerar, *Padres in No Man's Land*, 2nd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014) 201-8.

Chaplain of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division (by 1918 Kilpatrick was Senior Chaplain of the 3<sup>rd</sup>), joined in with their own conclusions, which they had been sharing with the home church for several years. Gordon had been hand-picked by Sam Hughes at Valcartier in 1914, mostly on the basis of his paternity, for Principal Daniel M. Gordon, of Queen's University, had played an active role as chaplain to the Winnipeg Rifles at Batoche in 1885. Alexander made a number of observations to both his father and George C. Pidgeon, summarized in September 1918, after a long conversation in Flanders with Edmund Oliver, a hospital chaplain, head of the Khaki University at the Canadian Corps, and Principal of the Presbyterian seminary at the University of Saskatchewan.<sup>2</sup>

Gordon echoed the widely publicized view of Donald Hankey, author of *A Student in Arms*, whose praise of the "unconscious Christianity" of the British fighting man offered an optimistic view of the possibilities of capturing these men for the post-war Church.<sup>3</sup> Gordon agreed with his view that, though the men were ignorant, even contemptuous of dogma, moralism, Sabbatarianism and denominationalism, still they showed compassion, tenderness, and sympathy for their comrades and civilians who were victims of war which exceeded the petty charities of the home front. Though fond of their liquor, cards and crude jokes, they lived and died like the militant martyrs of old. The only way Gordon could see churches getting these heroes back was to retrain ministers to be men of practical affairs, experienced apprentices of trades and industry and fully aware of the financial needs of working men and veterans. Gordon declared the legendary days of sending students as summer missionaries to prairie parishes obsolete, and called for churches to put their money and time into helping veterans cope with wounds, bereavement, sickness and hard times they and their families would face on demobilization. Although he agreed with Oliver that Church Union among Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians was one desirable way of mobilizing for this post-war campaign, he denied the value of organic, monolithic Union, as it would demand of too many Presbyterians the loss of traditions, doctrine and polity which had been their markers of identity. Far better, he argued, for a voluntary spirit and cooperative federation of the denominations (including Rome) such as he witnessed at the Front.<sup>4</sup>



Photo of Alexander M. Gordon courtesy Queen's University Archives, A. M. Gordon fonds.

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<sup>2</sup> Edmund Oliver to his wife Rita, 21 March 1918, E. H. Oliver papers, University of Saskatchewan Archives.

<sup>3</sup> The literature on the Canadian social gospel as the application of Christianity to life by the majority of Canadian churches is well covered by a wide variety of books since Richard Allen's seminal book, *The Social Passion* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971). The most recent study, edited by Gordon Heath and covering most Christian Churches in Canada in the Great War, is *Canadian Churches and the First World War* (Eugene OR: Pickwick, 2014). The British literature around the faith of the Great War soldier in the British Expeditionary Force and Dominion Armies is based on the work of Gordon Heath, Michael Snape and Linda Parker, to name the leading scholars of a generation of historical work beginning in the late 1990s. See Edward Madigan and Michael Snape, eds., *Clergy in Khaki: New Perspectives on British Army Chaplaincy in the First World War* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> A. M. Gordon to D. M. Gordon and G. C. Pidgeon, 22 May 1918, D. M. Gordon fonds, Box 2, "Correspondence 1918" file, Queen's University Archives, Kingston, ON.

Though not all would have agreed with the old salt Gordon, about how Church Union would best be accomplished, most of the twenty-seven other Presbyterians who responded to the questionnaire otherwise agreed with him.<sup>5</sup> All echoed his assessment of the heroic and admirable qualities of the soldier, though none were blind to his faults. The nation and its churches, they stated, owed a deep debt of obligation to the troops, who deserved better than pre-war churches had done for them. The soldiers and home-front laity were almost never blamed in these surveys for any of the problems they saw in the churches, despite their tendency to shirk regular attendance and pursue secular pleasures, especially on Sundays. Most of the Presbyterian padres expressed deep bonds with the men based on their own experience: ten of the twenty-seven had seen service in the line, three as stretcher-bearers before they were commissioned padres, and two more had served earlier in the war as combat officers.<sup>6</sup> The rest had months of service accumulated in hospitals and camps in Britain and France, with forestry, engineering, and railway units, and Casualty Clearing Stations. They had worked closely with dying men, and had witnessed them calling on their faith, and experienced their gratitude and devotion during the late nights and long hours in the wards.

For the twenty-seven who did reply, their response to the question of whether or not the church had failed the men of Canada was brutal, opening a floodgate of criticism and advice. Though four stoutly defended the church, the rest pointed out that while the churches might have encouraged the general altruism of some to volunteer for overseas service, the rest had little knowledge or interest in the pre-war churches' message, social life or reform agenda. While padre W. H. Muncaster wryly wrote, "God still uses mothers", twenty others saw their church as a failure in teaching Christian doctrine, evangelism, and knowledge of the Bible. They estimated that three out of every four soldiers were completely out of touch with church and clergy before they came overseas. While many agreed with J. O. Watts that soldiers viewed Jesus Christ with awe and respect, the men reported that church life fell far short of His teaching or example. Twenty-three of the Presbyterian chaplains declared the soldiers held to a Christian ethic of brotherhood and performed heroically unselfish and ethically Christian acts, but men who were willing to be loyal to Jesus were unmoved by the churches' patent inability to play a substantial lead in social issues of justice, poverty, education and family life. Many without hesitation endorsed the example of Jesus, but most equally and realistically stated that they were unable and unwilling to live the life of holiness and ethically pure standards that churches taught were based upon Christ's standards.<sup>7</sup>

Chaplain V. G. Rae went to the heart of the matter. What soldiers had against churches was the tedious, ritualistic and utterly censorious side of Canadian Christianity. The church offered little but boring Sunday services, and, as James Faulds agreed, almost every soldier despised the way that the darling of pre-war reformers, the Lord's Day Act, had ruined their fun

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<sup>5</sup> Chaplain Service Records, RG9IIIc15, Volume 4663, Questionnaire file, Library and Archives Canada, passim. One of the explanations for the relatively low number of Presbyterian responses came out of the large proportion still in service in the Canadian Corps: the remainder became so busy in the weeks before and during the battle of Amiens that they never completed or sent back their returns.

<sup>6</sup> Responses by F. G. Forster, J. H. White, J. J. McCaskill, George Pringle, A. J. MacDonald, V. G. Rae, J. O. Watts, A. D. Cornett, J. A. Petrie, and J. S. Miller. As privates in the Canadian Army Medical Corps see the responses of James Faulds, H. H. MacFarlane and A. M. McColl.

<sup>7</sup> R. M. Campbell, James Faulds, D. W. Christie, G. G. D. Kilpatrick, J. Whillans. See also D. W. Christie, in *Presbyterian and Westminster*, 27 June 1918, and Faulds, *The Presbyterian*, 7 September 1916; also Whillans *Presbyterian and Westminster*, 6 September 1917.

on Sundays. They detested the Women's Christian Temperance Union and its refusal to send cigarettes or playing cards overseas. D. W. Christie noted that the men found their own lodges and clubs far more welcoming than church associations, and rejected the church for making most of their "non-sins sinful." George Pringle, after months with the 43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion at the front, wanted more frank sexual education to be done by the churches. While churchmen and women demanded holiness, ministers and elders seemed more devoted to keeping the class structure intact. Men felt alienated by a church which increasingly catered to women and children and blamed men for most of society's ills. Muncaster put it most bluntly: "The men are sick of liturgy and sick of Sankey," the composer whose songs characterized the evangelistic and revivalist work of home-front, often female, church-folk.<sup>8</sup> Many were disgusted by dreamy, effeminate clergy who were elitist, impractical, sentimental and preoccupied with old doctrinal and personal spats to the detriment of the needy and hurting. E. H. Oliver told of how a sergeant, recovering from an attack gone badly wrong, had gotten his men killed in a suicidal bombing attack which ended in savage bayonet fighting. His men were an entirely "rough lot," yet he prayed they were, despite their wicked lives and curses on their dying lips, in heaven, and he wanted to know if God wanted them there, too, for they were the best chums he had ever known. Oliver mused how the average minister would have handled that question back home, or could handle it in future. To that end, padres H. R. Pickup, D. W. Christie, J. H. White, E. H. Burgess, J. A. Beatty and several more demanded that every seminarian have one year of inner-city or slum parish work to offset their years with books, and see how the underclass lived.<sup>9</sup>

The padres were clear that many of the church's theological standards were beyond the ken and interest of most military men. J. O. Watts looked on the bright side: honest ignorance was easier to dispel than prejudices poisoned by bad dogma—for Presbyterians, this meant asking daring questions about the venerated Westminster Standards, the Long Catechism and quarterly communion season. While W. F. McConnell (later a bastion of Presbyterian loyalism during the post-war Church Union crisis) and S. J. M. Compton lamented the liberalizing theological drift before the war most, like V. G. Rae, were eager to rewrite and streamline the old creed in more modern terms.<sup>10</sup> E. H. Oliver wrote that he had, in six months of harrowing hospital work around the Passchendaele offensive, never had a soldier turn aside his



Photo of Edmund H. Oliver courtesy Saskatoon Public Library Local History Room [Photo ID: lh-1494].

offer of prayer, but never had a soldier been able to remember any passage of scripture that could give them hope and relief, either. The padres realized that, at the front there was little place for the modernist studies of the seminary: the troops had no interest in analyzing religious experience in academic terms, though many officers were agnostic or rank skeptics. Oliver, despite his advanced liberal and modernistic views insisted on a vital conversion experience, and strong faith in both the Incarnation of Christ

<sup>8</sup> W. H. Muncaster's response.

<sup>9</sup> H. R. Pickup's, D. W. Christie's, J. H. White's, E. H. Burgess's, S. J. Compton's, and J. A. Beattie's responses.

<sup>10</sup> The debate was summarized by R. B. Taylor, Principal of Queen's University and one of Hughes's appointments as chaplain overseas, see *Presbyterian and Westminster*, 5 July 1917, 11-12, 43-44.

and His Atonement as central to the regeneration of soldiers and their preparation for post-war church life. The future separation of modernistic studies and revivalism had not yet come for these padres, though the contrast in loyalties to ancient standards and beliefs which would split the churches in future were already lying inchoate in their opinions.

The men, though alienated by the home church and clergy, nevertheless had grown to respect and heed their padres, reported the chaplains. Most soldiers overseas, they said, could not comprehend how their spiritual experiences could ever be understood by those at home. J. O.



Rev. James Whillans at a Chaplain Service Coffee Stall, Hill 70, August 1917. Photo courtesy Library and Archives Canada [Photo ID: PA-003085].

Watts asked how men who faced death overseas could ever have any sympathy with what distressed and worried church folk back home. Most had little time for denominational differences and rivalries. While one padre railed against Roman and Anglican exclusivity, almost all the rest declared that denominational differences had created no difficulties between padres at work, even though the Roman Catholic Church flatly rejected any talk of cooperative worship or church union.<sup>11</sup> Before the dark face of battle even these divides broke down, as Protestants offered prayer with dying Catholics and Catholics offered compassion and blessing to dying Christians of other communions. One chaplain gave the example of western towns with six churches and

no hospital, or communion refused to visitors from other denominations, which created a stumbling block to the troops even before they got to the front. Fortunately, noted A. D. Cornett, the troops overseas simply ignored the divisions, even as hide-bound officers (which to some padres were a greater curse than the war itself) insisted on separate parades.

The best chaplains in the world, they declared, could not get men back to church or keep them in them without radical changes back home. Most wanted more lay participation in worship and some type of liturgy (the troops had not been averse to basic liturgical practices, such as responses, and other practices which Presbyterians associated with Anglicanism or Catholicism).<sup>12</sup> Quarterly communion, said sixteen chaplains, had to give way to monthly, and the unspoken or even overt proclamation that communicants needed to be morally perfect defeated the purpose of the ordinance. Four added that superstition about communion needed to be countered by better teaching. In this the padres may have been facing the fundamental challenge of all soldiers overseas: how to approach communion with blood on their hands. Soldiers of all the Allied nations struggled with the demands to fight and kill, or intend to kill, and the exhortations of their chaplains to come to communion. The more articulate and skeptical soldiers had often challenged the padres with the ethics of Christian military service and the ease with which the padres had condoned their men's military obligations, even in a war depicted as a crusade.<sup>13</sup> Combined with the prejudice of soldiers against hypocrisy, even chaplains who had

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<sup>11</sup> A. H. Denoon's response.

<sup>12</sup> See responses by James Faulds, J. H. White and H. H. MacFarlane.

<sup>13</sup> The fundamental contradiction between Christian love and repeated killing on demand remained the greatest objection soldiers offered to their chaplains in all British and Dominion armies. Most chaplains, however they tried to link the just war criteria and the British Empire's role in the war, were unable to persuade the atheistic, agnostic, or alternately the scrupulous Christian in the ranks. See Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier; Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (London: Routledge, 2005).

been at the front, unless they could overcome the general view of the soldiers that to take communion and kill again was permissible, if the communicant were repentant, were baffled at the tiny proportions of men who came to services who came forward to take the bread and wine. Among those soldiers who became writers, this charge would be made to haunt the chaplains as a whole.

Connecting the war with the mission of the church remained a task which most Presbyterians could achieve, men, officers and padres; too, so long as the consensus persisted that the war was just. Even when utterly appalled at the way the war was conducted, few chaplains and their men disowned the war. Judging by the padres in this instance, most kept their messages to the men (in contrast to some of their Methodist and Anglican colleagues) on that theme low-key. Though most were post-millennial in their eschatology, the Presbyterians at the front focused more on the practical preaching for the task at hand: comradeship, courage, honesty and perseverance. Towards the rear, in camps and some more cloistered hospitals in England, though, most padres preached crusading sermons about the war for the Kingdom of God, and linked it with the upcoming war for the Kingdom of God in Canada when they got back. Their war, to them, was an Armageddon presaging the triumph of the Gospel which by work of the Church would achieve the Kingdom of God on Earth, and in God's Providence, which was always good, must be fitting the soldiers for a front-line role in establishing the Kingdom at home. Like many Christians back home, Canadian padres observed with great interest and excitement the entry of General Allenby's army into Jerusalem in 1917, returning the Holy City to Christian hands. How important it was, to them, to have the men who had overcome the most vicious and demoralizing conditions overseas face down the selfish triviality of the home front, could be seen in the urgency with which they directed their criticisms back to their denomination. How chagrined they could be with other eschatologies found in the ranks, such as the dispensationalist views and timetables cross-referencing the Books of Revelation and Daniel with the news of the war, could be divined from the bemused or chagrined comments of padres, though, as post-war controversies grew, more and more Presbyterians found the proto-fundamentalist theories more appealing than liberal post-millennialism.

Inevitably, the Presbyterian critique led to the quality of the clergy, both in training and spiritual formation. With their emphasis on a highly educated clergy, the padres homed in on seminary training and academics. All the padres except J. A. Petrie raised a chorus of discontent with seminary subjects which were overemphasized at the expense of practical experience. All called for the churches to make provisions for their seminary students in the ranks, who now questioned the point of completing their studies when they came home. F. G. Forster believed that most theological students overseas would not come back to the church, must less the ministry, unless experienced chaplains visited or even became permanent staff in the seminaries, as well as speaking to the returned men to consider the ministry as a post-war vocation. Most demanded that their education include practicums in settlements, urban centres and fewer courses in dead languages and Mesopotamian archaeology and more in sociology and political science. Athletic training had to supplant dogmatics, and preaching over systematic theology. Theological students needed apprenticeships in trade and labour chaplaincies in lumber and mining camps. Wealthy patronage with its strings attached to student ministers had to be eradicated, as well as devoting time to personal holiness instead of honest work.<sup>14</sup> Oliver, while objecting to the demotion of Hebrew and Greek, found the "professional voice" of ministers leading worship repellent, declaring the "manly" tones of the front the new standard for

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<sup>14</sup> See responses by Rae, Watts, McColl, McGillivray and Faulds.

preachers. S. J. Compton stated that future ministers had to be “wise in the Book of Human Nature”, and F. G. Forster added that the veterans and home churches needed to know that the ministry was not for the effete, but was indeed “a man’s job.”<sup>15</sup>

The ministers turned to the laymen of the kirks at home. J. J. McCaskill used the metaphor of the vine: the churches kept trying to keep the vine in the garden, but it kept growing out of bounds, where the men were, and most needed it to be found.<sup>16</sup> Churches needed to be social as well as worship centres, with elders and managers coming from every class and social station. J. S. Miller, now with the 38<sup>th</sup> Battalion preparing for the summer offensive, said his men saw the eldership as the preserve of callous bosses and managers chosen primarily because they did not smoke or drink. A. H. Denoon said the church was seen as a club for the rich, while ministers were either owned or silenced on social issues. H. R. Pickup wanted a military-style Parliamentary chaplaincy, with Presbyterian ministers running for public office. Some called for direct links with the Y.M.C.A.<sup>17</sup> One Hospital commander told J. H. White that Paul’s opinions about women in leadership were simply his own, not God’s, and should be thrown out immediately. Oliver wondered how a thousand men had thirty officers while a church of 500 had only one or two ministers. He also proposed a complete reorganization of The Presbyterian Church in Canada along the lines of a Canadian Division, with four branches of staff officers corresponding to church finances, education, missions and administration. Oliver’s vision of the effectiveness of the Corps being transferred to the home Church, however, remained a paper dream resting in the Chaplain Service files of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Ottawa.<sup>18</sup>

If there were one general topic of debate among Presbyterians before, during and after the war, it was Church Union. What began earlier in the century as a general theory thrown out by Principal William Patrick (Manitoba College) had grown to be the most divisive (or progressive) movement in Canadian Protestant church history. Though Methodist and Congregational leaders had achieved consensus on Union before the war, Presbyterians remained divided, often between senior leadership and the elders and ministers in the local Presbyteries, who were unwilling to give up their constitution, Confession, culture and identity without a fight.<sup>19</sup> The divisions were not merely between those for or against, but also between those who wanted a federative union, with each denomination keeping its separate identity, more or less like confederation, while others insisted on the complete fusion of all into one organic union, with a common theology, polity, missions and property. When advocates on all sides claimed the war supported their agenda, the debate was so bitter at home that the Church declared a moratorium on discussing Union until after the war. Most chaplains reported that the men did not care much about denominationalism, and cheerfully endorsed Union.

Underneath this apparent consensus, however, was a deep skepticism about the ways and means to achieve the goal. Famous wartime chaplains such as C. W. Gordon, John Pringle, George Kilpatrick, E. H. Oliver, William Beattie, and a handful of others represented in the

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<sup>15</sup> Responses by Forster, Compton and George Pringle.

<sup>16</sup> McCaskill’s response.

<sup>17</sup> Faulds’ response; see also E. H. Burgess.

<sup>18</sup> Oliver’s response. His detailed recommendations would have resembled the staff model of a Canadian Division overseas, right down to military job titles for the new denomination. For similar sentiments see J. A. Beattie, H. R. Pickup, W. F. McConnell, R. Howie, J. M. McElhiney and A. H. Denoon.

<sup>19</sup> Barry Cahill, Laurence DeWolfe, Elizabeth Chard, Lois Yorke, *The Blue Banner* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008) 25, 29-31, 43.

survey were already known as outspoken organic Unionists.<sup>20</sup> They grew increasingly impatient, even dismissive of those who had reservations. Some respondents wanted a post-war Presbyterian chaplain fellowship to maintain the focus and unity of the padres.<sup>21</sup> Others called for the new church to create bureaus of veterans' resettlement, social research, and political policy and strategy. Most chaplains were less sanguine: some preferred federative over organic union, a view not well-represented by those speaking for the chaplains back home. J. A. Beattie, brother of William Beattie and equally committed to union, wondered if a church forced into union might be as flawed as a new garment with an old patch until the anti-unionists had been persuaded. But others, such as Oliver, would press hard for a quick and organic union as impatiently after the war as they had in the surveys.<sup>22</sup> The cautious federationists, half of those who returned the survey, including A. M. Gordon, H. R. Pickup, J. J. McCaskill, S. J. M. Compton, James Faulds and especially W. F. McConnell, alarmed that their old church would cease to exist one day, became convinced that a rushed Union would only lead to disaster. In 1925, it led to schism.

When the 1917 ban on discussion was lifted in the 1920s, the Presbyterian padres found their apparent consensus had evaporated.<sup>23</sup> Though Thurlow Fraser, a returned padre who had brokered the 1917 truce called for moderation, of the twenty-seven ministers, seven with service at the front joined the United Church of Canada, along with John and George Pringle, and William Beattie. Two others remained continuing Presbyterians, joined by A. M. Gordon, and, surprisingly to those who assumed he was an ally, E. D. MacLaren, now disillusioned and alienated from contentious unionists. McConnell founded the Presbyterian Church Association, the bastion of anti-Unionism across Canada, while Compton, J. M. McGillivray, Pickup and McCaskill turned their back on Union. When the year 1925 had ended, 93 Presbyterian chaplains had gone into Union. Thirty-six refused to let their old kirk die. Many were embittered when the United Church went to Parliament to ban the use of the old name, and claim both property and records. The unity of the chaplains in war was illusory: those radicalized and rendered impatient had tried to run roughshod over the moderates, and the result had been internecine war. G. A. Little, who had feared that the unity of the chaplains was based more on the wartime cause and proximity of death than any new consensus, turned out to be more prophetically astute than the Unionists.<sup>24</sup>

The unionist fracture was another symptom of the growing doubt in the 1920s about the wartime experiences of the chaplains and their lessons for the home church. Even as the war's last battles of 1918 took place overseas, a struggle over "The Chaplains' Message" was being waged at home. The Anglican Church simply suppressed the "Message", and forbade its distribution, while commentators who once had eagerly anticipated padre recommendations hinted that they settle down and get back to the regular work of the church. Methodists enthusiastically endorsed the message, even as church bureaucrats denounced radicalism in

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<sup>20</sup> See Pringle in *The Presbyterian*, 28 October 1915, also 1 June 1916.

<sup>21</sup> See also "A Chaplain," *Presbyterian and Westminster*, 5 September 1918.

<sup>22</sup> Responses by J. A. Beattie; also A. J. MacDonald, A. M. McColl, George Little, A. D. Cornett, R. M. Campbell, and A. H. Denoon.

<sup>23</sup> N. Keith Clifford, *The Resistance to Church Union in Canada, 1904-1939* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press), 131-54, 170-73.

<sup>24</sup> George A. Little's response.

labour relations and thundered against what they saw as the rising tide of Bolshevism in the country, especially fearful, it seemed, of the veteran. Baptists were divided, though Congregationalists were receptive. Presbyterians were ambivalent, and their leadership seemed confused over how to respond. While chaplains spoke to rapt audiences of their experiences overseas at General Assembly, and the Presbyterian press loyally supported their statements, the radical calls for reform seem to have been quietly shelved or put aside until the greater battle over Union was resolved.

Canadians were distracted, and frightened, by the reaction of the government to the Winnipeg strike and other manifestations of discontent, where veterans were portrayed as dangerous elements influenced by Bolsheviks and revolutionaries. Most chaplains voluntarily enlisted as agents speaking against radicalism, shunned the more populist Great War Veterans Association, and became founding members and local leaders of the moderate, sometimes reactionary, Canadian Legion. By the earliest days of 1921, as the Government reorganized the militia and regular forces (and returned the Chaplain Service to the non-Permanent Militia), most church organizations and leaders had left the chaplains' cause and its reforms far behind. The clarion call for reform was drowned out by the rush to normal, the arduous post-war economic situation, and its most idealistic proponents forced with re-establishing themselves in isolated parishes or generally ignored. As for the veterans, many were able to reconcile to some form of family and church life, though many more remained skeptical and distant from pew and pulpit. While many had affection and respect for their own padre overseas, and many more over the next two decades would meet them again in militia units and in times of crisis, the public discourse was soon dominated by disillusioned soldier writers, who portrayed most chaplains as hyper-patriotic buffoons or cowards. Padres were preachers, and talk counted for little to the men who picked up the pen and wrote about their experiences. Their dismissals and accusations would poison Canadian readers against the padres for three generations.

Looking back, the call of the Presbyterian chaplains for a new church seems remarkably prescient. On the other hand, many of the reforms in church life and education were realized only in the two decades after the Second World War. One of the great ironies of Canadian religious life in that later era was that while many veterans of the Second War flocked to churches during the Cold War, other veterans joined Pierre Berton in belaboring churches for their irrelevance, sometimes in the same terms that the Great War padres had prophesied against their churches. In our own time, the calls for reform of the Great War padres have been forgotten, while the calls for reform of the Cold War era have, almost, become the stuff of church history. Nevertheless, new generations of critics, drawn mostly from those which have known little of war, continue to call for relevance in terms strangely reminiscent, though specific remedies are often different. With each iteration of critique and remedy, the institutional church continues to decline in membership and establishment. Looking back, it is hard not to wonder how this pattern might have been different if the Great War padres had postponed the Union controversy until the rest of their agenda had been realized. Yet, ultimately, the war, with its bereavement, suffering and danger, was over. The unity of The Cause was far more fragile than many commentators, including the pastors and padres, could see. Though the padres had earned an audience, they could not keep its attention as the war faded into the recent past. At home, they were judged a risk to the peace of the church, and perhaps to Canadian society. Most Canadians would forget their dedication, sacrifices, wounds and demands for reforms, their message, like their careers, ignored and unvalued, in what may one day be seen as one of the greatest lost opportunities of modern Canadian church history.

Appendix: Chaplain Service Questionnaire<sup>25</sup>

1. Does our church appear to you in a measure to have failed to win and hold men? If so:
  - a) In what particular?
  - b) To what extent?
  - c) For what reason?
2. Have you found in your personal dealings with men that there has been a neglect of definite Christian instruction in the fundamentals of religion? If so, specify.
3. Do our men seem to believe that our Church has not dealt effectively and sympathetically with the problems of practical life?
4. To what extent have you found Denominational differences a hindrance in your work among men?
5. What are considered in the Army to be the chief sources of ineffectiveness:
  - a) In the Church?
  - b) In the Ministry?
6. In what way can our Churches develop a Christian Fellowship as vital and intimate as the present comradeship in arms?
7. Does your experience show that the Communion in our Church should receive greater emphasis than is the case at present?
8. Has your experience with the Church Parades and Sunday Services convinced you that our Church Service would be improved by giving the Congregation an opportunity more largely to participate in the public worship?
9. Has your experience as a Chaplain revealed any way in which the training of our Ministry can be improved? If so, particularize.
10. The energy, devotion and sacrifice which have been put into the War should be conserved and dedicated more definitely to the work of the Kingdom of God.
  - a) How can this best be brought home to the individual?
  - b) How can the church best magnify the calling of the Ministry and make the most effective appeal to suitable young men?
11. The war has revealed the necessity of large vision and wise direction for the attainment of great directives.
  - a) Has the Church caught a similar vision?
12. What suggestions in the way of constructive statesmanship have you to offer from your observations and experience which are not covered by the above questions?

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<sup>25</sup> Chaplain Service Records, RG9IIIc15, Volume 4663, Questionnaire file, Library and Archives Canada. See also Crerar, *Padres in No Man's Land*, 248-50.

**Minutes - Annual General Meeting**  
**Canadian Society of Presbyterian History**  
**September 27, 2014**  
**Held in Knox College, Toronto**

1. Roll and Regrets

Attendance: Phyllis Airhart, Robert Anderson, Olive Anstice, Gord Brown, Anna L. Burwash, Duff Crerar, Clyde Ervine, Lee Haughton, William Haughton, Gordon Heath, Jeff Johnston, Bill Klempa, Bernice Levitt, Stuart Macdonald (vice-president), Barry Mack, Ian Mason, David McIlveen, Donna McIlveen, Ian D. McKechnie, Linda Miller, Marilyn Repchuck, Kate Revington, Don Smith, Margaret L. Stephenson, Henry Sukhu, Jeremy Bellsmith (secretary) A. Donald MacLeod (president).

Regrets: Bob Anger, J.S.S.Armour, Kim Arnold, Mark Boundy, Elizabeth Millar, Michael Millar, Malcom Muth, Marguerite Van Die, John Vaudry, Jack Whytock

2. Approval of agenda: moved by Jeremy Bellsmith, seconded Barry Mack. Carried

3. Approval of minutes: moved by Stuart Macdonald, seconded by Duff Crerar. Carried

4. No business arising from the Minutes

5. The President's Report:

President expressed belief for a continued need to describe where we have come from in order to understand where we are going, despite the state of the mainline church in Canada.

Called for suggestions or an emphasis for the 2015 annual meeting. Suggestions included:

- Armenian genocide or genocides in general
- Hay-day of Christendom in Canada (late 1950s, early 1960s)
- Macdonald: A series of themes, an open forum allowing for presenting current work that doesn't fit into existing conferences
- Johnston: Ethnicity and particularly what the approach towards other ethnicities has been in The PCC (i.e. assimilation?)
  - Ervine: why did the Dutch post-World-War-II immigrants not integrate into The PCC? Recommended *Christianity and Ethnicity*, Macdonald's chapter on CRC and PCC
  - Crerar: role of Ulster in The PCC (core anti-unionist group in Canada)

Agreed: Secretary to send intention to Knox College to hold September meeting there

The president expressed gratitude to secretary for work done

The president expressed gratitude to Elizabeth Millar in getting reports edited

William Haughton reported on health of Michael Millar: in hospital, recently diagnosed with rare form of cancer that is fully treatable

Society extends its sympathy and best wishes, asking Rev. Haughton to relay these on our behalf.

The president expressed thanks to Bob Anger for administrating website

#### 6. Editor's Report.

Motion to receive Editor's report and express gratitude from the Society for the excellent work. Moved by Duff Crerar. Carried

It was agreed to hold an email poll asking members currently online whether a .pdf file would be preferred. Discussion included how it is helpful to have papers on the website.

#### 7. Website Administrator's report.

Ian MacCreedy appointed as new website administrator

Motion to receive report and express gratitude from the Society to the former website administrator, Bob Anger. Moved by Stuart Macdonald, seconded by Clyde Ervine. Carried

#### 8. Secretary-Treasurer's Report.

Financial reports may be found attached. Missing report for interim period June 2013-September 2013 will be made available by post and online.

Moved by Olive Anstice, seconded by Duff Crerar to change editor honorarium to \$200. Carried

#### 9. New Business

Olive Anstice: an agenda is required for future meetings. The secretary will ensure this happens.

Thanks was expressed to Knox College for use of facility

On the Agenda for next year, the theme for 2017 as it is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's sparking of the Reformation. The UofT rare book room is planning events to commemorate

It was noted that 2017 also 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of confederation

Margaret Stephenson announced that it is the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training). She requested one-page stories about CGIT and proposed it as an idea for the 2015 papers.

#### 10. Election of officers

The existing officers were nominated.

President - A. Donald MacLeod;

Vice President - Stuart Macdonald;

Secretary/Treasurer - Jeremy Bellsmith.

No other nominations were made and it was moved by Jeff Johnston, seconded by Clyde Ervine, that nominations be closed. Carried. The slate of officers was thus elected.

#### 11. Adjournment

Jeff Johnston moved, seconded by Clyde Ervine to adjourn. Carried

The society's meeting closed with prayer for Michael Millar.

**Report of the President**  
**To the 2014 annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History**  
**27 September 2014**

This is my seventh report as President of the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History, entering its fortieth year. And this year the centenary of 1914 has evoked a whole spate of scholarship and reflections on how the First World War initiated whole series of events which impacted the rest of the Twentieth Century and still haunts us today. It has also brought history to the forefront of public discourse. Just witness the popularity of Ken Burns' PBS series on the Roosevelts and its ability to bring history to life.

We are approaching the ninetieth anniversary of Church Union, an event deeply significant in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Professor Phyllis Airhart's *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada* and Professor Kevin Flatt's *After Evangelicalism* both in the McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion released this year, have focussed our attention on the way in which the accelerating demise of Christendom in Canada since the 1960s has changed the face of mainline Protestantism. Dr. Airhart dedicated her book to N. K. Clifford, chronicler of the opposition to church union, and John Webster Grant, whose death in 2006 deprived our Society of a much loved supporter and friend. These two men, along with our founders Mel Bailey, John Johnston, and John Moir, contributed greatly to our understanding of Canadian Presbyterian history. Never has it been more important, as the mainline churches implode, for us to understand how we got to where we are in order to discover where the road ahead might lead us and to learn lessons from our past.

As your president I would like to pay tribute to Jeremy Bellsmith, minister of Burns Church, Ashburn, Ontario, who has made (as I predicted last year) his mark on CSPH and has been a great encouragement to me as president as he looks after many details and provides technological expertise as only a younger generation can. Bob Anger, PCC Assistant Archivist has resigned and Ian McCready, a member of the Ashburn Church, has agreed to take his place. I am sorry that Bob is not here to accept our appreciation but understandably his 7-year-old William's start-up in hockey today takes precedence. Thank you Bob for your services both to the Society and to all of us researchers. Thanks also to our Editor Elizabeth Millar of Mount Allison University Library for her years of faithful service.

The next annual meeting, to be held 26 September 2015, could have several themes, most obviously the centenary of the first church union vote but also the Armenian massacre in Turkey as a timely consideration of genocide in the Middle East. I would hope that we will get a response from the colleges for the Bailey bursary. It continues to be a disappointment that Mel's generous bequest is not being used.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Donald MacLeod

## **Canadian Society of Presbyterian History** **Editor's Report for the 2014 Annual General Meeting**

The 2013 *Papers* were printed earlier this month and will be distributed at the AGM and by mail to those members unable to attend the meeting. Three of the four papers from last year's conference appear in the 2013 edition as Dr. Crowley made the decision to publish his paper elsewhere. The author and title indexes are available on the Society's web site at: <http://csph.ca/SelectedPapers.html>.

The change in citation style from the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* to *The Chicago Manual of Style* that was agreed to at the 2013 meeting greatly improved the editing process this year. The style and other pertinent information are included in the submission guidelines that are given to each presenter.

With recent increases in printing and mailing costs, the question of whether or not to also distribute the *Papers* in electronic format has been raised. While print copies would still be available to those members who prefer to read a physical publication, there may be members who are interested in receiving their copies in portable document format (PDF) by email. If time at the AGM permits, it would be helpful if attendees could provide their views on whether this option should be considered further. Comments on this or any other matter concerning the *Papers* are always welcome, and may be sent to the Editor, Elizabeth Millar, at: [emillar@nb.sympatico.ca](mailto:emillar@nb.sympatico.ca) or c/o R. P. Bell Library, 49 York St., Sackville, NB, E4L 1C6.

The publication of the *Papers* reflects the hard work of the Society's executive and conference presenters. I would like to express my appreciation to them, as well as to the members of the Editorial Committee, Eldon Hay and Jack Whytock, for their dedication.

Report submitted by,

Elizabeth Millar  
Editor, *CSPH Papers*  
September 2014

## **CSPH Website Administrator Report 2014**

The internet host for the website is “Doteasy”, which continues to provide decent service. No problems or difficulties, or breaks in service, were encountered over the year.

The website (www.cspH.ca) currently consists of the following sections:

Home Page

About Us

Membership Information

Papers

Annual Meeting Information

Dr. Bailey Award

Contact Us

Links

There are 18 past papers available as PDF downloads, as well as “draft” versions of the 2010, 2011 and some of the 2012 and 2013 papers. An index (by author and by year) of all the papers up to and including 2012 is also available for viewing.

The website was originally created in 2006 by Mr. Ian MacCready. In 2007 the role of website administrator was transferred to me, and in early 2009 the website was fully re-designed and the current format was put in place. Now, after 7 years, the time seemed right to give the reins over to someone else, to put their own stamp of creativity and interest on the Society’s website. Somewhat by happenstance, the father of the CSPH website, Ian MacCready, is again available and has indicated his willingness to take the role back on, if the Society so wishes.

I wish to thank the CSPH for the honor of managing their website over the past few years. It has been a wonderful experience. I would like to thank two individuals in particular. First, the CSPH President, The Rev. Dr. A. Donald MacLeod, for his ongoing guidance, supportive words, and blessings, both in my role with the CSPH and in my work with the Presbyterian Church Archives; and Mr. Michael Millar, for his great assistance, kindness, historical knowledge, and attention to detail during the majority of my years as Website Administrator. Both of these individuals have been a great help to me over the years and I wish to thank them for this.

Respectfully submitted by:

Bob Anger  
CSPH Website Administrator  
September 27, 2014

# THE CANADIAN SOCIETY OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY:

## FINANCIAL REPORT - 15 September 2014:

<u>Item:</u>	<u>Income:</u>	<u>Expenses:</u>	<u>Balance:</u>
<b>Balance forward 19 September 2013:</b>			<b>3942.68</b>
Memberships 2013	120.00		
Memberships 2014	300.00		
Bank Interest - Sept. '13 to Sept '14	0.24		
G. I. C. 9078920 (11 October 2013)	2,000.00		
G. I. C. Interest	17.94		
Luncheon charges 2012 meeting - paid	180.00		
<b><u>Total Income.</u></b>	<b><u>2,618.18</u></b>		<b><u>2,618.18</u></b>
<b><u>Sub-total.</u></b>			<b><u>6,560.86</u></b>
Banking Service Charges		10	
Postage - Secretary-Treasurer		92.08	
Editor, honorarium 2014 Papers		150.00	
Printing - 2014 meeting brochures		89.27	
Office Supplies - President		317.46	
Website		214.46	
G. I. C. 2313-9078920 maturing 11 October 2013		2,000.00	
<b><u>Total Expenses.</u></b>		<b><u>2,873.27</u></b>	<b><u>2,873.27</u></b>
<b><u>Balance Forward 30 June 2013:</u></b>			<b><u>3,687.59</u></b>
<b><u>Assets</u></b> - G. I. C. @ 2000.00.			2,000.00
<b><u>Total - Balance Forward plus the G. I. C.</u></b>			<b>\$5,687.59</b>

Rev. Jeremy Bellsmith  
Secretary-Treasurer.

