Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

Papers 2015

Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

Papers 2015

Edited by Kate Revington

Canadian Society of Presbyterian History: Papers 2015
Published by the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History
in Spring 2016
The papers featured in this publication were presented at Knox College, University of Toronto, on 26 September 2015.

Contents

About the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History

Dedicated to the Study of Presbyterian and Reformed History

The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History (CSPH) is a religion-centred Learned Society. It meets annually on the last Saturday of September. One hundred and seventy-two papers have been presented to the Society since it was founded in 1975. Thirty-five of these have been published on **csph.ca**. More are to follow.

Membership is open to individuals and institutions that share an interest in and a fascination for the study of Presbyterian and Reformed history.

Notes on the 2015 Presenters

Bob Anger has served as Assistant Archivist, Archives and Records Office, for the Presbyterian Church in Canada since 1999.

Jessica Kangeun Cho graduated from Knox College in May 2015. She is currently taking a year-long Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) residency at University Health Network in Toronto. She hopes to complete the program in August 2016.

Matthew Lingard is a Knox College candidate for convocation in 2016, soon to graduate with a master of divinity degree. He is seeking a call to ordained ministry and is excited to serve the Church in whatever way God sees fit. He grew up attending St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The rich heritage of his home congregation and the Niagara region as a whole helped to foster Matthew's passion for Canadian history, as well as for the Presbyterian Church's role within that history.

A. Donald MacLeod is Research Professor of Church History at Tyndale Theological Seminary, Toronto, and has served as president of the CSPH since 2008. Among his numerous published books and papers are the award-winning *W Stanford Reid: An Evangelical Calvinist in the Academy* and *A Kirk Disrupted: Charles Cowan MP and the Formation of the Free Church of Scotland.*

Ian Marnoch has been part of the Presbyterian Church in Canada since his birth in 1982 and a confessing member since 1998. Having completed studies at Knox College, Toronto, Ian is currently serving as Minister of Word and Sacrament for the Moore Pastoral Charge, in the Presbytery of Lambton-West Middlesex.

Struggles to Achieve: The Reverend James Nisbet and the Foreign Missions Committee of the Canada Presbyterian Church

Bob Anger

In 1861, the Reverend James Nisbet was asked by the Foreign Missions Committee (FMC) of the Canada Presbyterian Church (CPC) if he would serve as a missionary to the Red River Settlement in what is today Manitoba. The mission had two purposes: (1) to assist the Reverend John Black in ministering to the local Presbyterian settlers, and (2) to plan and establish a mission to the First Nations people in the area. It would be the first mission by the CPC to a non-Christian population, and hence, it was placed under the FMC umbrella. Nisbet was uncertain and took his time to consider it, but with a sense of duty, he accepted.[1]

During his first year at the Red River Settlement, Nisbet earned the respect of the local settlers. He worked well with John Black, and the two together laid the groundwork for a mission. At his own expense, Nisbet made the trek back to Toronto in June 1863 to place the needs of this venture before the Synod. He addressed the gathered members twice but seems to have moved them little. After discussion, the Synod made the following judgment: that "while desiring, so soon as circumstances will permit, to fulfill their obligations to the Indians, yet, taking into account the state of the Foreign Missions Fund, and the existing demands upon it, would not deem it advisable, for the present, to incur any new liabilities for this purpose." One can imagine the disappointment Nisbet must have felt.

Nevertheless, Nisbet and Black continued to develop and refine their plans, and in 1865 the Synod finally gave its approval. In June 1866, after much preparation, Nisbet, his wife, and baby daughter set off on a 900 km journey through the wilderness, eventually settling at what is today Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Over the next eight years he and his wife Mary put enormous effort into their work — struggling through exhaustion, disease, isolation, and criticism. By 1874 both were dead, worn out in body and mind.

Much has been written on James Nisbet over the past 140 years. Most writings come to the same conclusions: they give praise to his personal dedication and hard work; they give credit to him for founding the town of Prince Albert; and they note the many trials and difficulties he faced. Most, however, also view the mission as having had only partial success. This has been attributed to several causes, some more worthy than others.[2] However, in the book *A Goodly Heritage*, the authors identify what seems to have been a pivotal reason: a distinct lack of support given to Nisbet by the Foreign Missions Committee.

As satisfying as this is, lifting the blame off Nisbet's shoulders and onto a central committee, it still begs the question *why?* Why did the FMC not support him further? By looking

---

1 James Nisbet to Robert F. Burns, 12 September 1861. Nisbet Papers, The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives (PCC Archives).

2 One valid reason noted by many authors (Marnoch 1994; McBeth 1912; McKellar 1924; McNab 1933; Smiley 1993) was the increasing immigration into the area, combined with a westward migration of the buffalo herds, both of which caused the local First Nations people to move away from the vicinity. A second but less valid reason given is a lack of imagination and drive on Nisbet's part, which was raised by Gary Abrams (1966). Robert Dunning (1966) and the History Committee of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Prince Albert (2006), however, noted the sheer quantity of work required of Nisbet as a defining cause, coupled with the fact that the wider Church was late in sending him assistance, a reason further expanded upon by Rudy Platiel and Helen Goggin in *A Goodly Heritage* (1984).

more closely at Nisbet's life and work within this wider context of the work of the FMC, the following paper will hope to answer this question. It will begin with a brief biography of James Nisbet up to the year he left for the Red River Settlement. This will be followed by a summary of the origins and development of the FMC up to the same year. The third, and largest, section will then look at Nisbet and the FMC in tandem from 1861 to 1874, with the goal of better understanding James Nisbet, his work, the criticism he faced, and perhaps most important, the lack of support he received from the Foreign Missions Committee.

Brief Biography of James Nisbet

James Nisbet was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1823. His father, Thomas, being a carpenter and shipbuilder, passed these manual skills on to Nisbet who would use them throughout his life.[3] His faith, too, must have been developed from an early age: as a young teenager he served as superintendent of the local Sabbath School and at 18 he walked with his older brother Henry all the way to London with hopes of joining the London Missionary Society. Henry was accepted, but on account of his age, James was not.[4] It must have been a devastating blow to a young man's dreams. Just a few years later, however, he and his father and two sisters left Scotland and immigrated to Canada, settling in Oakville.

At this time, there was a certain level of religious upheaval in Scotland. In 1843, a large number of ministers and elders walked away from the established Church of Scotland to form the new Free Church of Scotland, thereby causing the Great Disruption. Sympathy for this cause in Canada led to a similar split here, and in 1844, a new "Free Church" in Canada was formed.[5] One of the first acts of this new Church was to establish its own theological college, Knox College, in Toronto. James Nisbet, newly arrived from Scotland, enrolled in the first class and attended from 1844 until 1849.

Some of Nisbet's fellow students at the college would go on to have a major impact on his life. John Black was in the same class as Nisbet but five years his senior: he would become Nisbet's close friend and colleague in the Red River Settlement. Robert F. Burns, three years younger, would serve as convener of the FMC at the time when Nisbet first went to the Red River. William MacLaren, also three years younger, would become convener after Burns, and a source of great frustration to Nisbet later on.[6]

In 1850 Nisbet was called to Knox Presbyterian Church, Oakville, where he served for the following 12 years. During these years he was an active member of the Presbytery and served for a number of years as convener of its Home Missions Committee. With his carpentry skills and mindset, his background in teaching children, and his service in home missions, Nisbet likely would have gone on to a successful ministry growing the Church in Canada. Instead, in the late summer of 1861, his old college mate Robert F. Burns asked if he would serve as a missionary to the settlers and Aboriginal people of the Red River Settlement. Nisbet noted that if it was up to him he would decline, but if it was a true call, he would accept.

---

3 Bill Smiley, "The Most Good to the Indians: The Rev. James Nisbet and the Prince Albert Mission," *Saskatchewan History* 46, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 34.

4 John McNab, *They Went Forth* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1933): 80.

5 The official name of the new church was "The Presbyterian Church of Canada," but it was commonly referred to as the "Free Church" in Canada.

6 T. G. M. Bryan, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Knox College Graduates* (Toronto: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1985): 18, 29, 135.

Origins and Development of the Foreign Missions Committee (FMC)

Like Nisbet, the Foreign Missions Committee (FMC) has an interesting history up to this point as well. The committee's story begins in 1844, the same year Nisbet arrived in Canada and the same year the "Free Church" in Canada was formed. Right from the start, the new church had a missionary spirit. At its second meeting, in October 1844, the Synod recognized "the privilege as well as the duty of aiding in extending the kingdom of the Redeemer throughout the world."[7] It realized it was too young, however, to carry out mission work of its own, so instead recommended that financial support be given to the foreign mission work of its parent, the Free Church of Scotland.

Of the various mission efforts of the Free Church of Scotland, the one that seems to have captured the hearts of most Canadian Presbyterians was its work in India, especially the efforts of the renowned missionary Dr. Alexander Duff. In 1853, Duff was invited to Canada in order to speak to gathered groups about his missionary work, not just to inform but to "awaken a greater degree of evangelical zeal throughout the church."[8] He accepted, and his missionary tour did, indeed, awaken the zeal of the wider membership. Just over a month after his visit, the "Free Church" of Canada formed its own Foreign Missions Committee. Rather than simply supporting the parent church's efforts, the young (perhaps adolescent) Canadian Church was going to embark on foreign mission work of its own. In this, however, it would struggle.

Likely as a result of Duff's influence the FMC chose India as its field of choice, and after a year of challenges found a Scottish minister, the Reverend George Stevenson, who was willing to go. Stevenson arrived in Calcutta on 1 February 1857 and to him goes the credit of being the first foreign missionary sent out by the "Free Church" of Canada.[9]

His mission, however, was short-lived, and this first attempt by the Canadian Church at foreign mission work ended in some embarrassment. Stevenson opened a mission school about 190 km (120 miles) from Calcutta, but cholera swept through the area and his school was closed. Shortly thereafter, the Sepoy Rebellion broke out, and the country became unsafe. Stevenson returned to Calcutta, but after a short stay decided "it was improper to expend missionary funds when unable to do missionary duty"[10] and was back in Scotland by early 1858. Although the FMC indicated surprise at Stevenson's decision, it was probably a blessing in disguise: givings to the foreign mission fund in 1857 were less than hoped for. Once a foreign mission effort was announced, it was assumed that there would be "an increased liberality on the part of the people," but that did not happen. Only £620, just slightly more than the previous year, was raised.[11] Although the committee said it had the funds, it really did not. This is notable because this lack of "liberality" on the part of the wider Church would continue through the years when Nisbet was conducting his mission and would be one of the reasons why the FMC held back its support.

When the India mission failed, a deflated FMC debated what it should do next. They looked at three possibilities: (1) to follow up on requests they had received over the previous two

---

7 Synod minutes, October 1844, Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada records, PCC Archives.

8 Presbytery of London minutes, 12 May 1853, Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada records, PCC Archives.

9 George Stevenson letter, May 1857, *Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record of the Presbyterian Church of Canada* 8, no. 7 (May 1857), PCC Archives: 107.

10 Minutes — Report of Foreign Missions Committee, 1858, Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada records, PCC Archives: 34.

11 Minutes — Report on Statistics, 1857, Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada records, PCC Archives: 48.

years from the Presbytery of Toronto to form a mission to the First Nations people near the Red River; (2) to establish mission efforts on Vancouver Island, which was just opening up to settlement; and (3) to engage in another overseas venture, this time to what they called "the Danubian Principalities" of Europe. This third option was almost certainly put in simply for appearance sake. Although a mission to First Nations people was the only one of the three that had been previously raised in any detail, the FMC and Synod chose instead Vancouver Island. This is significant for two reasons: (1) it shows a certain lack of interest, or at best a hesitancy, on the part of the Synod in conducting a mission to Aboriginal people; and (2) the decision to go to British Columbia would prove to be a costly one, taking up a large portion of the Foreign Mission Committee's budget in the years ahead. Both of these factors would, in turn, have an adverse impact on the level of support offered to James Nisbet and his mission.

And so, we come to 1861. It was a momentous year in the life of most Presbyterians in the provinces of Canada East (now Quebec) and Canada West (now Ontario). The "Free Church" in Canada, which Nisbet was part of, merged with the smaller United Presbyterian Church to form a new body under the name the "Canada Presbyterian Church." At the inaugural Synod of the new Church, the grassroots nature of decision making within a Presbyterian form of government shone through. Although the Free Church had agreed in 1859 to undertake mission work in British Columbia, it did not actually do so as no ministers could be found willing to go. In 1861, therefore, the new Church had a clean slate. Rev. Robert F. Burns, who had been convener of the Free Church's FMC and would soon hold the same office in the new Church, made a motion calling on the Church to once again select British Columbia and Vancouver Island as its field of choice.[12]

After much deliberation, several amendments, and special devotions on the topic, the Synod finally agreed that yes, a missionary should be sent to British Columbia, but in addition, it was decided that one should also be sent to the Red River Settlement to assist the Reverend John Black and to start a mission to First Nations people in the area.[13] As noted, James Nisbet was approached by the FMC and after much consideration, accepted the job.

The Red River Years, 1861–1866

After several months of preparations, Nisbet left for the Red River on 24 June 24 1862 arriving via Minnesota, on 19 July, 25 days later.[14] The length of time highlights how difficult it was to reach the Red River from Central Canada at that time. The fact that Nisbet's eventual mission at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, was a further 900 km journey away still, helps place in context just how isolated his future mission would be.

At first, however, Nisbet's work was at the Red River. Although he was appointed to the dual role of assisting John Black and establishing a mission to Aboriginal people, it quickly became apparent that this was not possible. First, the settlement was by this time large enough to fill the time of both Black and Nisbet; and second, the First Nations people in the local neighbourhood were already being served by the Anglican Church. Great distances, therefore, would have to be travelled if a mission to other First Nations people were to be started, and that would require someone wholly dedicated to the cause.

---

12 Synod Minutes, 1861, Canada Presbyterian Church records, PCC Archives: 40.

13 Ibid., 46.

14 James Nisbet to Robert F. Burns, 19 July 1862, *Home and Foreign Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church* 1, no. 11 (September 1862), PCC Archives: 289.

As a result, Nisbet, with Black's assistance, set to work on gathering information and developing plans for a dedicated missionary. Due to a lack of funds it would be three years before the Synod finally approved the idea. By this time, Nisbet was newly married and well ensconced in his Red River work. There was no expectation that he would be the one chosen for the mission.

The FMC advertised the position widely and raised it with the students at Knox College. Months passed, and unfortunately, no one came forward. Not wanting the work to fall by the wayside, James Nisbet agreed to go. As noted by John Black, "it says little for the state of the church . . . that none of the younger men could be found willing and qualified for the work."[15] This development is significant for three reasons: (1) it highlights Nisbet's personal sense of devotion and dedication to go where needed, rather than to go where he wanted; (2) it highlights the difficulty that the FMC had in finding ministers or students willing to serve in a foreign field; and (3) it set in motion a form of mission that would, in essence, be different from the one the FMC and the larger Synod expected, and which would, in time, lead some to be critical of it.

The FMC, Nisbet, and Black all agreed that the mission should be largely of an "itinerant and experimental kind" whereby the missionary would have a base of operations from which he would then travel the plains, visiting with the First Nations people as they migrated from camp to camp.[16] To this end, they also agreed that a young, unmarried minister would be most suitable. Nisbet, on the other hand, was into his forties, married, and about to become a new father. By no means was he unqualified for the work, nor did he lack the drive, but in appointing him to the task, the FMC should have recognized that either the style of mission would have to be adjusted or that a second missionary would need to be sent to assist Nisbet as soon as possible. Much to the frustration of Nisbet, they did neither. It must be said that Nisbet himself complicated matters by giving assurances early on to the FMC that the original plan of an itinerant mission could still be achieved. The reality of the situation over the years, however, would constantly force Nisbet away from that goal, and for that he would be criticized.

It is significant, too, that, in addition to sending a missionary to the First Nations people, the FMC was at this time also asking the Synod to send a missionary overseas to assist Rev. John Geddie of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia in his work in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu). A subcommittee of Synod was formed to deliberate on the issue, and it decided that, indeed, both missions should be undertaken. What's more, instead of just one missionary for the First Nations people, they recommended two. The additional cost, however, caused some discussion. An amendment made by Rev. John McTavish kept the two missionaries for the First Nations mission and instead replaced the suggested missionary to the New Hebrides with a simple (and less costly) financial contribution.[17] The making of a second amendment, however, kept the missionary for the New Hebrides and reduced the First Nations mission to just one missionary and an interpreter, which, in truth, would have been needed anyway. Although 10 ministers formally recorded their dissent, this second motion carried the day.[18] This, too, is

---

15 John Black to Robert F. Burns, 25 July 1865, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

16 James Nisbet to Robert F. Burns, 20 February 1866, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

17 McTavish was also the minister who first raised the idea of a mission to Aboriginal people. He did so at a meeting of the Presbytery of Toronto in March 1856. The Presbytery then brought it before the Synod which approved the idea in principle but asked for more information. The Presbytery decided to send McTavish out to the Red River to investigate and consult with Rev. John Black on the matter. He was unable to go that first year, however, but did go the following year, and the results were presented to the Synod.

18 Synod Minutes, 1865, Canada Presbyterian Church records, PCC Archives: 272, 289, 295.

significant in that it highlights the fact that Nisbet's mission had support within the wider Church, but it was often a minority position and not enough to sway the agenda.

It is also interesting to note that the mover of the winning motion, which effectively removed a helpmate for Nisbet, was the Reverend William MacLaren, future FMC convener. MacLaren's obvious preference for "overseas" missions would become a source of frustration to Nisbet in the years to come. It is interesting to note as well that, like the effort to go to India in 1857, this second attempt to send a missionary overseas failed. No minister was found willing to go, and so the plan died. As John Black noted to Burns, "your attempted missions to India and the South Seas seem failures while those to the West and Northwest are successful. Does not providence say plainly to our church Here is your corner of the field — go in and occupy it with all your might?"[19] Yet with MacLaren at the head of the FMC, the preference for overseas work would only magnify.

Through late 1865 and early 1866, Nisbet prepared for the mission, pulling together the resources and people needed. George Flett, brother-in-law to Mrs. Black, was hired as interpreter. Flett worked as a trader for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) but agreed to leave their employment to join the mission. John Mckay, brother-in-law of Mrs. Nisbet, was also fluent in the Cree language and was hired to manage the mission's building and farming operations. Two additional men, Alex Polson and William McBeath, were hired for one year to help construct the mission buildings and establish the mission farm. According to John Black, Nisbet had "secured four of the best men that the country affords."[20]

The Prince Albert Years, 1866–1874

Nisbet and his party left the Red River Settlement on 6 June 1866. They arrived at Fort Carlton, an HBC trading post on the North Saskatchewan River, on 17 July (41 days later).[21] George Flett, who had been scouting the area, met them at the fort. With his assistance a location for the mission was identified (at what is today Prince Albert, Saskatchewan), and the goodwill of the local Cree, in allowing them to settle in their territory, was received. The first Sunday Nisbet held a service at which a number of people attended. Gifts of food were exchanged, and Nisbet provided some basic medical assistance.[22]

In a letter to his sister dated 29 November 1866, Nisbet talks about the mission's beginnings. He comments at length on the manual work of building and establishing the physical presence of the mission. With the carpentry training he received from his father, Nisbet was skilled in this work, and his joy and pride in it are evident. He also began holding two services each Sunday, both requiring translation into Cree, and established a school which began with 13 pupils, including 5 First Nations children.[23]

In this early letter to his sister, Nisbet details the difficulties of being in such an isolated spot. In November Mrs. Mckay had a baby daughter. He noted that both mother and child were doing well, but his own wife, Mary, had worked herself too hard and taken ill. As he said, "it is

---

19 John Black to Robert F. Burns, 9 October 1866, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

20 John Black to James Black, 16 April 1866, Black Papers, United Church of Canada Manitoba and North-West Conference Archives.

21 James Nisbet to Robert F. Burns, 18 June 1866, *Home and Foreign Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church* 6, no. 1, PCC Archives: 12.

22 James Nisbet to his sister, 29 November 1866, Nisbet Papers (microfilm collection), PCC Archives.

23 James Nisbet to Sabbath School Children, 18 January 1867, *Home and Foreign Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church*, PCC Archives: 229.

no pleasant thing to be 600 miles from a physician in such circumstances — but it leads us to look all the more trustingly to the 'Great Physician.'"[24]

During 1867 the work of establishing the mission continued. In terms of the physical work, the farm was begun, and construction of the main mission house was started. Nisbet held two services each Sunday at the mission as well as occasional services at Fort Carleton. Interest in the school grew as well, especially among the HBC officers in the region, so much so that some were willing to pay for their children to board at the mission in order to attend. With the number of paid boarders sufficient to cover a salary, a teacher was secured from the Red River Settlement. Adam McBeath, Mrs. Nisbet's older brother, was hired and arrived at the mission in mid-summer.[25]

Nisbet's interactions with the First Nations people, tentative at first, were also showing promise. Those that were sick or needed medical attention, as well as families that were struggling to provide for their children, arrived at the mission throughout winter and spring; a number of these expressed interest in leaving their children at the mission to be schooled. For Nisbet, these were positive signs about how the mission should progress. As he noted to his sister, "There seems to be a door opening before us we had little thought and it will be sad indeed if we are not allowed to take advantage of it."[26]

Although teaching First Nations children seems to have been part of the mission plan from the start, boarding them was not. Throughout 1867 Nisbet sent letters to the FMC asking for guidance. He never heard back. In fact, by October 1867 — 17 months after he had left the Red River Settlement — he had received just one official letter from the FMC.[27] Why such silence?

The convener, Robert F. Burns, had accepted a call to the Presbyterian Church in Chicago in early 1867, and it seems likely that his mind was on other matters. His lack of correspondence with Nisbet, therefore, can at least be understood if not justified. However, in June 1867, William MacLaren, who had been a regular member of the committee and therefore well familiar with its activities, was appointed convener. It is less easy to understand why a new convener, both from an administrative as well as pastoral point of view, would not have been in immediate touch with one of his charges.

Nor was it simply encouragement that Nisbet was in need of. The issue of whether he should take in and board First Nations children — essentially the starting of a residential school — was no small matter. On top of this, he was also dealing with a significant personnel issue in the resignation of George Flett, his interpreter, and one of the key members of his mission staff.

In spite of this lack of communication and guidance, Nisbet soldiered on. His letters at this time are, in fact, quite positive. The mission buildings and farm were progressing well, attendance at both the school and the Sabbath services was good, and his interactions with the First Nations people visiting the mission were both friendly and positive.

With progress being made, Nisbet was hopeful that a second missionary would soon be sent. In almost every letter he wrote to the FMC he noted the value and benefit this would provide. With a second minister, one of them could remain at the mission while the other travelled the plains, doing the itinerating work that the FMC so wanted. The idea was entirely logical, and it was not just Nisbet who pushed it but John Black as well.

---

24 James Nisbet to his sister, 29 November 1866, Nisbet Papers (microfilm collection), PCC Archives.

25 James Nisbet to William Reid, 18 July 1867, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

26 James Nisbet to his sister, 17 September 1867, Nisbet Papers (microfilm collection), PCC Archives.

27 James Nisbet to William Reid, 1 October 1867, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

In his first report as convener, however, MacLaren does not even mention the idea. In his second report, in 1869, he does. Unfortunately, of the four recommendations he placed before the Synod, none involved help for Nisbet. Why? The FMC was once again looking overseas. Since the failed attempts to go to India in 1857 and the New Hebrides in 1866, the desire to serve outside Canada had not gone away. The FMC was, at this time, actually involved in three different mission fields: British Columbia, the Red River Settlement, and Nisbet's. The mission in British Columbia had expanded to two missionaries in 1864, while the Red River mission, begun with Nisbet's arrival in 1861, had now grown to two, as well. Nisbet, on the other hand, was still alone. All three fields, however, were in need of further assistance, the work far exceeding the capacity of the few missionaries in each location. At the same time, givings to the FMC were a concern. Although revenues were increasing, the expenses were routinely greater. Yet still the FMC was hoping to go overseas.

In order to do this, the FMC was hoping that the Synod would transfer responsibility for both the B.C. and Red River fields to the Home Missions Committee (HMC), the argument being that, although both were remote, the work was to a largely Christian population and therefore not really "foreign" in nature. This, in turn, would free up revenue. Both Nisbet and Black, however, were concerned. In a letter to MacLaren, Black noted that

> the native tribes whose country we occupy have the first claim upon us and until that claim is to some adequate degree met we should not be doing our duty to cast our eyes and our offerings far away on tribes and natives with which we have little more connection than that they are of the human race . . . You say you are satisfied that we will not do less for the Red Indians for having a missionary in China or India — it may be so but the question is are you not doing far too little for the Red Indians now?[28]

In the end, the Synod approved the idea of transferring the B.C. and Red River work, but moved cautiously, asking the FMC and HMC to work out the details between them. As to how the eventual savings would be used, the Synod again hesitated and left it in the hands of the FMC. During the following year, however, the FMC and HMC were unable to come to an agreement and so expenses were once again higher than givings. As a result, neither MacLaren's overseas mission nor a second missionary for Nisbet waspossible.

In addition to a request for a second missionary, there was a personal item about which Nisbet wished to hear from the FMC. His brother Henry, the missionary in Polynesia, was going to be visiting Oakville in 1868, and Nisbet wanted to be there. Given the locations of their respective missions, it was a rare, if not unique, opportunity. To the credit of the FMC the request was granted, and Nisbet and his family made the 3000 km journey from Prince Albert to Oakville in spring 1868. From a pastoral perspective, it was a wonderful gesture; from an operational perspective, however, there were difficulties at the mission that might not have happened if Nisbet, as leader, had been there.

For one, the Nisbets' servant, a young widowed woman who remained at the mission, became pregnant. This was kept secret from the Nisbets until later on and was a cause for grief and pain to both Nisbet and his wife. In addition to this, however, relations with some of the First Nations people around the mission became strained. When Nisbet and his family returned in late September and heard of these developments, he was concerned about how it would affect the relationships he had been building with the local First Nations people. A few days later, they called for a meeting, which Nisbet recounted in some detail:

---

28 John Black to William MacLaren, 1 November 1870, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

> Today, the general counsel (or what shall I call it?) was held. The Indians (men) came in force about noon and as that is our dinner time business was commenced by giving dinner to all who came — pemmican, potatoes, bread, butter and tea . . . Dinner discussed and the pipe of peace lighted I said to them that I had been told that there were some among them who wished to speak to us about some things connected to the mission . . . For five long hours we were listening to Indian speeches of more or less merit . . . I made a general reply to all that was said . . . I trust and pray that good will come of this conference — some predicted trouble, but I do not apprehend any. I found a great deal more of the conciliatory spirit than I expected, and more appreciation of our work than I thought existed, and thank God for it.[29]

Nisbet hoped and prayed that good would come from the counsel, and to some degree it did. The next two years saw a number of positive developments in the work of the mission. With little snow and poor hunting, the winter of 1868/69 was a difficult one for the local First Nations people. The mission's farm, therefore, proved to be especially valuable. As Nisbet noted in a letter to MacLaren of 23 March 1869, "it is no uncommon thing from ten to fifteen (sometimes as many as twenty) Indians to eat in our kitchen daily"[30] and again on 29 April, "we have done a great deal towards keeping the Indians from starvation by the produce of our fields."[31] Nor was it just the First Nations that suffered. The scarcity caused by the winter was a hardship for the local settlers and HBC families as well. Nisbet supplied food to some and in a move to reduce the mission expenses sold it to those who could pay. He noted to the FMC that if payment was not possible by either the settlers or the First Nations people, then he would — if feasible — have them do some work around the mission in return. One criticism that would in time be levelled at the mission was that it was more of a trading post than a mission, and one can see how situations such as this could lead to that conclusion.

Nisbet was also pleased with the attendance at the Sabbath services, and had baptized a number of individuals over the course of the summer. In a very early letter to the FMC Nisbet asked for guidance on the issue of baptism. He recognized that he himself was strict in his expectations of both religious knowledge and demonstrated commitment and wondered if he (like other missionaries he saw) should be more relaxed.[32] He never received a reply on the issue, and so continued in his own way. There are many instances throughout his letters where baptism is, in fact, requested, but Nisbet declines.

In hindsight, this strictness would be detrimental to his cause. In early 1870, MacLaren sent a letter to Nisbet which was obviously critical of the small number of conversions at the mission. It was a frustrating letter for Nisbet, and this frustration shows through in his reply:

> You say that "When greater spiritual results have been achieved the church will no doubt be prepared to go forward if necessary to new expenditure . . ." Surely the church does not expect results without using the means to obtain them! and I cannot allow myself to believe that the measure of liberality on the part of the church will be regulated by the amount of spiritual results at any given time. I always thought that it was a maxim with Christians "Duty is ours, results are God's.[33]

An extraordinary quotation, it sheds light on just how MacLaren, the FMC, and, indeed, the majority in the wider Church, viewed success in a mission. The mission was only into its third

---

29 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 29 September 1868, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.
30 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 23 March 1869, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.
31 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 29 April 1869, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.
32 James Nisbet to Robert F. Burns, 3 June 1867, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.
33 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 5 March 1870, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

year, but already some positive achievements had been made: they had secured the goodwill of the First Nations people in the area (a feat that Nisbet would later comment was not an easy thing to do, even for George Flett[34]); they had constructed a number of buildings to support the mission's operations; they had established a school and had begun farming on a scale sufficient enough to help support the mission staff as well as to act charitably towards the First Nations people; they had begun assisting interested First Nations families in plowing and seeding plots of land for themselves and provided a secure place for them to store their provisions through the winter; Nisbet also provided two services each Sabbath — one in English, one in Cree — and he walked 64 km (40 miles) to Fort Carleton each month in order to hold services for the HBC employees and others settled in the vicinity. For MacLaren and the FMC, however, these achievements were of less concern. They wanted results.

MacLaren was not the only person who was critical of Nisbet and his mission. As isolated as the mission was, it was not immune to gossip and hearsay. HBC men, gold prospectors, free traders, and others would pass through the mission and, as one can imagine, then spread news coloured by their own perspectives. Nisbet also hired occasional workers from the Red River Settlement to assist at times in construction and farm work, some of whom he would fire, and these would then return home with their own biases. Nor should one be naive. In the face of many challenges the mission was showing positive achievements, but, of course, not everyone attached to it was perfect.

John Black, being in the Red River Settlement, was intermediary between Nisbet and the FMC, all letters going through him. He and Nisbet had a solid relationship, but in reality he never visited the mission, and throughout 1869 and most of 1870, he seems to have been swayed by the impressions and rumours he heard swirling around the community. His letters to MacLaren, therefore, are tainted with them, as well.

Generally speaking, there were three "unfavourable impressions" that Black shared with MacLaren. The first was that the mission was a sort of "family compact" because Nisbet had hired only his relations. The second was that the mission expenses were too high. Finally, the third was that too much time was being spent on building and farming and not enough on mission work: that more itinerating needed to be done. By the end of 1869, Nisbet became worried that it was not just some of the Red River settlers who viewed the mission unfavourably but also people in Canada. As a result, he decided to write a lengthy article detailing the work of the mission which he asked to be printed in the Church's monthly periodical. The article was called "Three and a Half Years of an Indian Mission."

On the complaint that the mission was a family compact, Nisbet himself never really commented, but it is easy to see where the perception could arise. John Mckay, his Cree interpreter, and Adam McBeath, the school teacher and later farm manager, were indeed his brothers-in-law. As for Mckay, John Black once told MacLaren, "I do not know of another man in all of Rupert's land that could fill his place."[35] Mckay was fluent in Cree but was also deeply religious and assisted Nisbet greatly in the mission work; he would go on to have a successful missionary career in his own right. In truth, he was essential. McBeath, on the other hand, had originally been brought out to the mission to teach the English school for the children of the local HBC officers, his salary being paid not by the FMC but by the parents. When the school closed for lack of students, Nisbet hired him on to manage the farm and to help with construction of the mission buildings. John Mckay, in fact, had originally been hired in this capacity but when

34 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 6 July 1869, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

35 John Black to William MacLaren, 1 November 1870, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

George Flett resigned as interpreter, Mckay took over that role, and McBeath was given the general manager position.

Although Nisbet's support of McBeath never wavered, others do seem to have had issues with him. One critic was Lawrence Clarke, the chief HBC trader at Carleton House, and relations between him and the mission soured in 1868 and 1869. Nisbet, however, reveals the likely heart of the matter in a letter to MacLaren, noting:

> I believe Mr. Clarke's opposition to the mission and his efforts to injure it came out distinctly in a conversation I had with an old Indian lately who asked me if the master at Carleton had ever told me or wrote to me that I was harbouring the Indians — supplying them with provisions and keeping them from hunting . . . I counselled peace and told the old man that both he and his friends know that I have never induced them to keep from hunting; that they have all got meals at the mission when they came hungry to us, and they have got provisions for their families when they were starving, but I have never done anything, nor do I wish to do anything to keep them from hunting. My humble belief is that Mr. C. is annoyed that we are not contented to proceed on the do nothing principle at this mission, but are determined to initiate such a movement as may tend ultimately to induce the Indians to become settlers and in his shortsightedness he imagines that that will injure the fur trade.[36]

Clarke was, in fact, disliked by many and would go on to be a flashpoint in relations with the Métis.[37] It is also interesting to note that in 1868 and again in early 1869, the very time when Clarke began criticizing the mission, McBeath, in particular, was assisting some of the First Nations families around the mission with plowing and sowing fields of their own.

John Black, too, had doubts in late 1868 as to the importance of McBeath to the work, but would go on to change his mind, noting that "from all accounts he has proved a most efficient farmer and general manager." He also noted McBeath's own frustration with the criticisms, saying, "In addition to an almost constant pain in the chest which has troubled him for more than a year he and all of them are discouraged and hurt by the manner in which they have been treated and spoken of here and in Canada."[38]

Regarding the second charge — that the mission's expenses were too high — Nisbet was aware that he was likely spending more than the Synod wanted, but until 1870 he was conducting the mission in a financial vacuum. Early on he had asked the FMC what the expenditures should be but never received an answer. Now he was being criticized for spending too much, and one can imagine how frustrating this must have been. Although the salary costs alone for the three staff — Nisbet, Mckay, and McBeath — totalled $1,850, the FMC capped the mission expenses at just $2,400 a year.[39] In truth, the average expenditure on the mission by the FMC during the first two years was just $2,504,[40] hardly an overwhelming amount for a mission that had to start from scratch and very much in line with the FMC's yearly expenditure on the mission in British Columbia.

Why all of a sudden did the FMC get so concerned? In 1869 the expenditure ballooned to $4,321. Nisbet had originally purchased supplies for the mission through John Black, who, in

---

36 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 21 April 1869, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

37 Stanley Gordon, "Clarke, Lawrence," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, *1881–1890* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1982), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/clarke_lawrence_11E.html.

38 John Black to William MacLaren, 1 November 1870, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

39 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 14 December 1870, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

40 Synod Minutes, 1867, 1868, Canada Presbyterian Church records, PCC Archives. Note: Expenses were recorded as $2,234 (for the year ending April 1867, page lxv, Minutes for 1867) and $2,774 (for the year ending April 1868, page lxviii, Minutes for 1868).

turn, imported goods from England (this being cheaper than ordering from Canada). In an attempt to save money, he switched to ordering supplies on account through the Hudson's Bay Company. However, the supplies turned out to be much more expensive than expected and so he decided to switch back to ordering through John Black. As a result, he had to close out the account and pay the balance in full, requiring a larger than usual payment up front.[41] The mission expenses would drop down to just over $3,000 for the next few years: over the new budget, but more in line with the B.C. mission. To a FMC that was desperate to embark on an overseas mission to China or India, however, anything above $2,400 seems to have been too much.

One way that Nisbet tried to reduce expenditure was to do a lot of the building and construction work around the mission himself. His training in carpentry served him well in this respect. Unfortunately, it also led to the charge that he was doing too much "manual" labour at the expense of "missionary" labour. To this Nisbet retorted: "it is not manual but Missionary labour that is expected of me. I know that; and if anyone can truthfully say that I am neglecting missionary labor for the sake of manual labor I shall freely confess that I am guilty of a grievous error: that is not the case."[42] To the FMC, it seems that missionary labour, in turn, meant itinerancy — travelling the plains and meeting with the First Nations people in their tents. Certainly, it was an important means, and Nisbet himself notes many times that if a second missionary were sent, this aspect would be enhanced. From Nisbet's letters, however, one can see that the First Nations people, from a very early date, began visiting the mission regularly, thus allowing considerable interaction even without the itinerating, a fact that the FMC never seems to have understood.

Along with this, the FMC never seemed to recognize the domestic nature of the mission. From 3000 km away the ideal was a small base of operations from which the itinerating would be done. If, in 1866, they had sent an unmarried man, with an unmarried interpreter, out into the field, this might have been a possibility. In Nisbet and Mckay, however, they had two men with wives and growing numbers of children: the Nisbets would have four and the Mckays, five. In addition to their own children, the mission had taken in a number of First Nations children — a total of 14 over the years from 1866 to 1869. At the end of 1869, the mission consisted of 28 people, not including the varying numbers of First Nations people living nearby in tents. It was in truth a bustling centre of operations, which, in turn, needed proper facilities. Nisbet recognized this even if the FMC did not. Knowing that expenses were an issue, he therefore did as much of the manual work as he could. Rather than being praised, he was criticized.

Were there things that Nisbet could or should have done differently? Almost certainly, but it is only with hindsight that these become clearer. At the same time, Nisbet regularly requested feedback and guidance from the FMC but often never received the information he was seeking, and so continued on his own. To then receive criticism for the way he managed the mission must have been greatly frustrating to him. With hindsight, the criticism itself also becomes somewhat clearer. Nisbet's mission farm, which seems to have been the focal point for a lot of the criticism, began producing large and successful harvests almost immediately, which Nisbet was not shy to announce. At the same time the Red River began experiencing both drought and grasshopper plagues. Nisbet was also receiving financial assistance from the FMC that allowed him to purchase farm equipment, supplies, and provisions, items that the people in the Red River, almost as remote as Nisbet's mission, would have to pay for themselves. It is not

41 John Black to William MacLaren, 12 November 1868, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

42 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 7 January 1870, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

hard, therefore, to see how jealousy, especially among families not connected to the mission, could arise.

By the end of 1870, roughly two years after the unfavourable impressions first began to surface, John Black had a significant change of opinion. He began to see the complaints largely for what they were —jealousies — and he comes clean with MacLaren in a letter, saying:

> I for my part am exceeding sorry that influenced by the views of parties here [the Red River] and there [in Canada] and not always fully informed as to facts, tho' my confidence in the mission remained unshaken, I have sometimes written in such a way as to have given [Mr. Nisbet] pain. The most brotherly feeling however has never ceased to exist between Mr. N. and myself.[43]

He goes on to castigate MacLaren, saying:

> there has on the one hand been a constant cry of expense and of a "family compact" and of little work done and what not and on the other hand they have been left without encouragement or even notice by your committee for some nine or ten months — and for men laboring hard as they were unquestionably doing and isolated and lonely you need not wonder if they should lose heart. Even good and patient Mr. Nisbet is giving way and the whole thing has been within a hair's breadth of being broken up. . . . as for yourself so far as I have seen or heard Mr. N has no reason to complain of unkind treatment positively — your sins have rather been those of Omission than of Commission . . . now let us all amend these things and miss no opportunity to cheer the hearts and encourage the hands of those who are jeopardizing their lives within high places of the field.[44]

The lack of letters from MacLaren, and the lack of definitive information within the letters that did arrive, was perhaps the greatest frustration for Nisbet. What's more, even with Black's cry for change, the pattern would continue and, indeed, get worse in the years to come.

In addition to facing the jealousies of some and a lack of encouragement from the committee, Nisbet would find 1870 challenging in other respects, as well. Both Mrs. Mckay and Mrs. McBeath became increasingly sick and had to return to the Red River, Mrs. Mckay's health being serious enough that John Mckay was unsure if he could continue with the mission. Nisbet sympathized but was worried about how he could proceed without his interpreter. By September, Adam McBeath, too, was ailing and was forced to leave, which meant that Nisbet and his wife, Mary, who had given birth to a boy in June, were left to carry on the work of the mission alone.

As challenging as the year 1870 had been for the Nisbets, it was a much more difficult year for the First Nations people: a smallpox epidemic swept across the plains, killing hundreds. Sometime in 1869, however, Nisbet had secured one or two scabs, and at the first sign of the disease used them to vaccinate more than 150 Aboriginal people around the mission and then several hundred more around Fort Carleton.[45] John Black would report to MacLaren late in 1870 that, of the 500 or so vaccinated, not one person seemed to have caught the infection. It was to Black, "one of the best proofs of the utility of vaccinations that I have ever heard of."[46]

---

43 John Black to William MacLaren, 1 November 1870, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

44 Ibid.

45 James Nisbet to the editor, 19 January 1871, *Home and Foreign Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church* 10, no. 4 (April 1871), PCC Archives.

46 John Black to William MacLaren, 1 November 1870, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

In addition to the fear of smallpox, the First Nations people around the mission were also extremely worried about their future. In a letter dated 15 September 1869, Nisbet wrote about the fear they had over the impending transfer of the vast HBC territory to the Canadian government:

> For a month past we have had sixteen tents of Indians beside us (over 100 persons). On the 30th of August they asked to have a talk with me about the opening up of the country that they have been hearing so much about of late. They greatly fear the coming of *foreigners* to drive them out of their country . . . I told them all that I knew about the transfer of the territory to the care of the Canadian Government, and I said that in my letters to people in Canada I had frequently said that if *that* Government should get the charge of the territory I hope the interests of the Indians will be attended to.[47]

As a result of this fear and uncertainty, as well as the smallpox epidemic, fewer First Nations people visited the mission during the winter. However, the ones that did arrive were in terrible need. One man whose wife had died asked the Nisbets to take in his two children, while another family who was, as Nisbet says, "in extreme want of provisions"[48] asked him to take their 11-year-old boy. Nisbet hesitated. With both the Mckays and the McBeaths away, the Nisbets were alone at the mission, but also desperately low on provisions themselves. No shipment of packages had arrived from Canada during the year, which left them very low on supplies. Nevertheless, he could not refuse to help. "To clothe the destitute around us," he noted to MacLaren, "we have been obliged to strip our own wardrobe and that of our children as bare as possible, some of the children attending school are literally in rags."[49] The Nisbets took in six children during the early spring of 1871; unfortunately, this extra work put too much strain on Nisbet's wife, Mary, and her health suffered for it.

At this very time Nisbet received word that the FMC was once again pushing for a new overseas mission. Nisbet quickly understood the ramifications. In a letter to MacLaren, he noted:

> From the last number of the Record that I received I observed in the proceedings of some of the presbyteries that a proposal for a mission to China or India is being considered. Of course no one could object to the establishment of such a mission if the funds admit of it; and for one I would rejoice to see such a mission in successful operation. But I would remind the Committee and the Church that when I undertook to organize this mission I fully expected that a second missionary would immediately follow.[50]

A young student named George Leslie Mackay had offered his services to the FMC. At the same time, an agreement had been reached and the work in the Red River Settlement was removed from the FMC's plate, thus giving them a slight budget surplus. With some money, and a willing body, the committee sent out a circular to presbyteries asking two questions: should they accept Mackay's offer and send him to a foreign field? If so, to what field? It is interesting to note that both Nisbet and Black suggested he be sent to Nisbet's mission. Unfortunately for Nisbet, not one of the presbyteries that responded shared this view; all suggested a new overseas field. The Church duly approved, and George Leslie Mackay left for Taiwan in October 1871. However, Nisbet's mission was not totally forgotten. In its final recommendation the FMC did ask for authorization to seek out a second missionary for it, and the Church approved.

---

47 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 15 September 1869, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.
48 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 14 April 1871, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.
49 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 14 December 1870, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.
50 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 18 March 1871, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

With the resources available and a willing candidate, however, help could have been sent to Nisbet immediately, but instead the FMC and the wider Church elected to first go overseas. In his report to the General Assembly, MacLaren sums up this preference clearly, saying:

> It has been felt that while all are deeply interested in Missionary effort among the Aborigines, some are by their sympathies and judgement more attracted towards evangelistic work among the great permanent races, such as inhabit India or China.[51]

It is an interesting and telling statement about how the FMC and the wider membership approached the idea of mission, based not necessarily on where there was need, but on where they preferred.

For his part, Nisbet showed a surprising degree of graciousness, saying to MacLaren: "I sincerely wish Mr. Mackay and the China Mission every success. There is no need for antagonism in the Lord's work, although I most decidedly say that the interests of this mission have not been considered by the church as they ought to have been."[52]

By the early autumn of 1871, both John Mckay (Nisbet's interpreter) and Adam McBeath (the farm manager) and their families had returned to the mission. For more than a year Nisbet had been alone, with no interpreter to assist him in the work; one can imagine how difficult and frustrating it must have been for him. With Mckay back, the work returned to normal. Sunday afternoon services in Cree were once again conducted, followed by a time of discussion. The school was reopened with 26 children in attendance, and lumber began to be gathered with the hope of finally constructing a church for the mission.[53]

On a personal note, James Nisbet had begun asking the FMC as early as 1869 if he could bring his daughters to Oakville in 1872, so that they could attend school. Frustratingly for Nisbet, he waited almost three years to hear if this would be allowed, finally getting approval in February 1872. On a happier note, the same letter of approval also brought word that a second missionary had been found for the mission. A young man attending Princeton Theological Seminary, Edward Vincent, had offered his services, and the FMC had accepted.

Vincent arrived with his wife at the end of August 1872 and so Nisbet and his wife and children were able to leave on their journey to Oakville at the beginning of September. Along with Vincent, however, another minister had arrived, but not to serve as a missionary; rather, he had been sent by the FMC to investigate mission activities.

In February 1872 an article had appeared in the *Western Advertiser*, a London, Ontario, newspaper, that raised anew the same old accusations against the mission that had circulated in 1869 and never went away.[54] Southwestern Ontario was a Presbyterian stronghold, and to have an article like this come out in a public newspaper was likely both embarrassing and damaging. At the General Assembly in June, therefore, the Church decided to send a deputy to the mission in order to "encourage the missionaries in their work, enquire into the method of its operations,

---

51 General Assembly Minutes — Report of the Foreign Mission Committee, 1871, Canada Presbyterian Church records, PCC Archives: xcv.

52 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 19 January 1872, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

53 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 16 October 1871, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives. Note: The mission had eight First Nations children under its responsibility, but one (Robert Burns) was studying at the school in Kildonan while another who was just three years old was staying with a family in the settlement.

54 Bell, "The C.P. Mission Scandal — An Expensive and Unproductive Station," *Western Advertiser*, 2 February 1872, University of Western Ontario Archives and Special Collections.

and make any suggestions which may be deemed advisable."[55] In other words, get to the bottom of things.

In a letter to MacLaren of 28 February 1872, John Black comments about the article and refutes the criticisms it gives of the mission, saying:

> I believed them, and still believe them, to have in a large measure engendered from family and personal jealousies which are the very plague of this settlement, and no doubt there have been some things in the arrangements and management of the mission which afford occasion for those who seek it. What institution is so perfect as not to afford sufficient material for envy and malice to construct a case out of? But if I am not utterly mistaken and out in all my views and opinions, a large part of what is said and now printed is utterly false and the rest grossly exaggerated.[56]

It is interesting, however, to note just where the article came from. The correspondent was a Mr. Bell, who had been a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in London, Ontario, but was at the time living in the Red River Settlement and working as a carpenter at the new Presbyterian College. He wrote the article based on reports he had heard and which were, in turn, confirmed by an unnamed "reverend gentleman" and by several former hired hands who had worked at the mission.

The reverend gentleman mentioned by Bell as a primary source was, in fact, not a reverend at all, but a Mr. Goldie. He arrived at the Red River Settlement about June of 1871 with a note of introduction written by none other than Rev. William MacLaren, convener of the FMC. In the note, MacLaren speaks of Goldie as a "friend" and a "gentleman of Christian worth" who has "for several years been engaged in missionary labor in different parts of Canada."[57] Black thought him a bit peculiar, but based on what he perceived as a recommendation from MacLaren engaged Goldie for a time in conducting home mission work in various settlements around the Red River. After three months, Goldie then travelled west to the Saskatchewan Valley. At the end of his time in the Red River Settlement, Black paid him $55, which he hoped the Home Mission Committee would approve.

MacLaren, in turn, took the news that Goldie had been hired badly and reproached Black for it. Black, in his reply to MacLaren, was not amused. Given the letter of introduction, he says:

> what could you expect but that we should in our sore lack of service get him into employment at once? (You) say nothing of his "natural peculiarities" or "erratic modes of operating" or even of his not being licensed or ordained. You left that for me to find out all by myself . . . Seeing you take me to task about the matter I have taken the liberty of presenting to you a view of it from my own stand point and perhaps have played too strongly on the key which you struck. If so excuse me.[58]

He goes on to say that regardless of the peculiarities, he did not regret hiring Goldie, as he did good work while in the settlement.

Goldie arrived at Prince Albert in mid-October. Nisbet wrote of the visit to MacLaren on 19 January 1872, saying, "He came at 10pm on the 19th Oct. and left the next morning about 8 so that he saw very little either of the place or the people, but he expressed himself as highly

---

55 Update on the Report of the Foreign Mission Committee to the General Assembly, *Home and Foreign Record of the Canada Presbyterian Church* 11, no. 7 (July 1872), PCC Archives: 207.

56 John Black to William MacLaren, 28 February 1872, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

57 John Black to William MacLaren, 10 October 1871, John Black Papers, PCC Archives.

58 Ibid.

pleased with what he did see."[59] Goldie was therefore at the mission for just one night: hardly a reliable informant.

The whole article was one of shoddy journalism and hearsay, and it is a sad comment that the FMC felt it necessary to send (and pay for) a representative to go all the way to Prince Albert to investigate. However, the man they did send, the Reverend William Moore, was by all accounts diligent, thorough, and fair: he had praise for Nisbet and the work he had been doing under very difficult conditions, and his report appears to have gone some way in healing the situation.

With this behind them, the Nisbets left their daughters in Oakville and set off for the long journey back to the mission. While they were away, Edward Vincent and his wife had continued the work. Some credit needs to be given to them for doing so with little training; nevertheless, Vincent seems to have struggled to find his calling, and a few months after the Nisbets returned, he tendered his resignation. This decision has led some to believe there was tension between the two, but that is not the case. The two families were not close, but there appears to have been no serious friction between them. In essence, Vincent's heart was not in the work. As Nisbet notes in a letter to his sister, "They have both longed for home ever since they came here."[60] Vincent also had a certain level of disillusionment with the work. With the Nisbets leaving just after he arrived, it meant that he and his wife were alone for almost a year and thus experienced the same challenges and difficulties that the Nisbets had. At the same time, Vincent had signed up to be a missionary to the First Nations people, but with the increasing numbers of English and English Métis settling in the vicinity of the mission, he found himself having to minister to a growing and diverse congregation.

Domestically, there were challenges as well. As much as Nisbet had been criticized for how much manual labour he was doing at the mission, he never received approval to construct a second dwelling, which he had hoped to use as accommodation for the First Nations children living at the mission but could have also been used for a second missionary.[61] As a result, there was just the one mission residence which was shared by the Nisbets, their children, the Vincents, and also the new schoolteacher and his family. At the same time, not long after the Nisbets arrived back, Mrs. Vincent gave birth to a baby daughter. Unfortunately, the baby was sick and lived only a few days, and one can imagine how such an event would call you back to family and a place of comfort.[62] Finally, Vincent also experienced the same lack of communication from the FMC that Nisbet had endured. During his year and a half at the mission, most of which was spent alone, Vincent received just two letters from MacLaren. Whether this was a factor in his decision to resign is unknown, but it certainly must have been a frustration.

In January 1874, Nisbet wrote a letter to MacLaren in which he commented on the changing nature of the mission. With the transfer of the territory to the Canadian government, large numbers of English and English Métis were now arriving and settling near the mission and at various locations around it. The demands of meeting the needs of the mission as well as ministering to this growing population were proving difficult. With Vincent leaving, the whole field was once again left to Nisbet, who was both worried and beginning to lose patience with MacLaren. Not one letter had arrived from him since Nisbet and his wife had left Oakville the previous year.

---

59 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 19 January 1872, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

60 James Nisbet to his sister, 3 March 1874, Nisbet Papers (microfilm collection), PCC Archives.

61 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 23 March 1869, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

62 James Nisbet to his sister, 7 October 1873, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

By this time, Nisbet had also been unwell for several weeks. His wife, too, had been suffering from sickness that would come and go but now seemed more permanent. By the beginning of May, she was no better, and Nisbet became worried. At the beginning of July he finally received a letter from MacLaren, "the only letter I have had from you since I left Ont. a year ago," he noted with rising frustration. To make matters worse, the letter brought nothing: no new missionary would be sent to replace Vincent. For a man now alone and ailing and hearing nothing from the committee for almost a year, the despair in his words is obvious.

The FMC knew that Vincent was leaving well before the General Assembly in June 1874, yet finding a replacement for him was not one of their recommendations. Instead, they asked the Synod to approve their selection of Dr. J. B. Fraser as second missionary to Taiwan and to allow the committee to select and send a third missionary to Taiwan as soon as possible. In his report to the General Assembly, MacLaren even states that this move was made possible, in part, by the savings created with Vincent's resignation. MacLaren had once told John Black that if a mission to China or India were begun, the FMC would not do less for Nisbet and the First Nations people than it would for that mission. Yet he and the FMC failed to honour that promise.

By early August, Nisbet was in poor shape while his wife was at the very edge. Nisbet later commented on her condition in a letter to his sister, saying:

> Mary was not able to raise herself from the pillow or to stand alone when up. She was reduced to the lowest stage of emaciation, and the question just forced itself on us — are we to keep her at Prince Albert to die by inches before our eyes, or shall we risk a journey? In the one case it seemed inevitable death, on the other there was just the slightest hope of reaching a doctor.[63]

With John Mckay as their guide and caretaker, the Nisbets decided to risk a journey. They left the mission in mid-August and amazingly arrived at the Red River Settlement 22 days later on 9 September.

Unfortunately, by this time both Nisbets were in poor condition. On 18 September, John Black commented on their desperate situation. In regard to Mary, he noted, "I left her bedside about an hour ago and I think it is very doubtful if ever she will rise from that bed again." As to James, he said: "his legs and feet are much swollen and black spotted with scurvy. The Dr. says his kidneys are affected. There is also something seriously wrong with the upper part of the chest but whether his lungs or the bronchial tubes I do not know. His breath is very short and yesterday morning he coughed three hours successively putting up a quantity of blood." Black goes on to note that "Mr. N. charges me to say that he would have written at once on arriving but that in addition to his general weakness his hands are so full of sores that he could not hold his pen."' It shows an extraordinary devotion to duty to the very end on Nisbet's part. Mary Nisbet would pass away the following day; James Nisbet would die 11 days later. They would leave four young children as orphans.

Conclusion

In both 1861, and again in 1865, James Nisbet accepted a role that no one else was willing to take. In his letter of acceptance he had one condition: that "the Church will bear with my infirmities, and sustain me by their prayers, and encourage me in carrying out such plans as may,

---

63 James Nisbet to his sister, 11 September 1874, Kildonan microfilm letters.

from time to time, be considered necessary for the success of the undertaking." In this, the FMC — and more specifically, its convener William MacLaren — would fail.

For eight years James Nisbet struggled through sickness, isolation, unfair criticism, and a lack of support. From the beginning he expected a second missionary would be sent to assist him. He would have to wait six long years before that would happen; then, that second missionary would, in turn, leave and in the last year of his life, Nisbet would be truly neglected.

For its part, the FMC, too, struggled to achieve. It had been born out of an interest in the overseas work of the Free Church of Scotland, and in its adolescent hopes, attempted to match the parent church's success, only to fail. It changed course and undertook work in the Red River Settlement, British Columbia, and eventually Saskatchewan, but it was a great age of missions, and the stories of exotic work being done by other churches in Asia were too tempting.

The mission to Taiwan, begun by the FMC in 1871 with the sending out of George Leslie Mackay, would go on to become perhaps the most successful of all the missions entered into by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. To this day, there is a strong bond between Taiwanese and Canadian Presbyterians. Would Nisbet's mission have been as successful if he had been given greater support? Perhaps not, but would he, and the First Nations people around his mission, not have benefited from a greater generosity on the part of the FMC and the wider Church?

Nisbet once stated that "a man is not always the best judge of where he may be the most useful, although he may have a preference for some particular field." He went on to say, "For my own part I never once thought of laboring among these Indians until I saw that *necessity was laid upon me*."[64] Perhaps he could have also said that "an FMC" or even "a Church" is not always the best judge of where it may be the most useful, even if it has a preference. By following its preference for a new overseas mission, rather than its duty to the mission already begun, the Foreign Missions Committee showed a surprising lack of compassion and care for both Nisbet and the First Nations people he served.

As Nisbet once said: "Duty is ours; results are God's."

---

64 James Nisbet to William MacLaren, 14 April 1871, Nisbet Papers, PCC Archives.

A Re-examination of Kathleen Stewart's Ear Infection Treatment at the Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School

Jessica Kangeun Cho[1]

On 8 August, Kathleen Stewart's work at Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, was interpreted by Jody Porter from CBC News. The headline and subheading of the news report read: "Ear experiments done on kids at Kenora residential school: 14 different drugs tried on children with ear infections, school nurse's report shows." Referring to Stewart's report, "Experimentation and Treatment of Ear Disease among 165 Pupils" in 1954, Porter wrote that "some of the children being treated became deaf." Then, citing a follow-up report by Stewart, she reported that "three of the children were 'almost deaf with no ear drums, six [had hearing in] one ear gone.'" She then stated: "Some of the case files reported the children to be in better health after having had a holiday at home."[2]

Along with comments on Stewart's report, the news report included the testimony of a former student, Richard Green. Green reported that while he was receiving ear infection treatments, he was not aware of what they were.

Then, after discussing the "ear experiments," the article addressed the government-funded nutrient experiment at residential schools, and the later "lacklustre" government response in the case of the experiments conducted in Canada. The news report ended by raising the issue of the lack of time left to expose the truth about residential schools, given aging residential school survivors.

Six days after CBC News broke the story about the ear treatments, Deborah Hastings of the *New York Daily News* featured the apology of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the survivors of the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School and noted the apology of the Canadian government for children who attended residential schools. Hastings also quoted Richard Green in the news: "We had thought that we'd somewhat come to peace with some issues. Then there's ongoing revelations of other events happening."[3] Stewart's "ear experiments" were briefly introduced right after this. Hastings mentioned that the children became deaf and that they were taught to pour hot water into their ears and to irrigate infected ear canals with Merthiolate, "a light-colored crystalline powder (trade name Merthiolate) used as a surgical antiseptic."[4]

Neither Jody Porter from CBC News nor Deborah Hastings from the *New York Daily News* claimed that the ear experiment took advantage of the vulnerable population for the interests of political authorities; however, Kathleen Stewart's work was linked in these stories to other government-funded experiments. The discussion of these unethical experiments in

---

1 I feel very honoured to present my paper to the CSPH. I thank Stuart Macdonald for inviting me in, and Kim Arnold and Bob Anger for helping me when I was totally lost in the Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives (PCC Archives). I came across Peter Bush's article, "Health and Nutrition at Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, 1946–1954" in *Presbyterian History*. The case of Kathleen Stewart in this article was particularly intriguing, so I decided to delve deeper into the point Bush made, but want to acknowledge his important article.

2 Jody Porter, "Ear Experiments Done on Kids at Kenora Residential School," CBC News, August 8, 2014, final edition. http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/ear-experiments-done-on-kids-at-kenora-residential-school-1.1343992.

3 Deborah Hastings, "Abused and Experimented on, Survivors of Canadian Indian School Receive Apology from Church," *NY Daily News*, August 16, 2013, final edition, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/church-abuse-dormitory-school-canada-article 1.1428958.

4 "Merthiolate," *The Free Dictionary*, http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Merthiolate.

conjunction with Stewart's work leads the reader to assume that this was another case of dehumanizing and abusive experimentation.

In this paper, I will argue that Kathleen Stewart's work for Aboriginal students should not be perceived as another dehumanizing racial experiment, but as a series of case studies that aimed to cure the ear infections at the school.[5] In order to do so, I will first challenge the interpretation of Stewart's ear experiment in the news. Stewart's written documents related to the ear experiment are reviewed and compared with the news media reports. In addition, I will discuss the financial difficulties of Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School. Finally, I will make a distinction between the ear experiment and the government-funded nutrient experiments.

First of all, the work of Kathleen Stewart has been falsely represented in the media. Both news reports selectively reported the students whose symptoms became aggravated after the treatment. From Stewart's report, Porter quoted "the children became deaf," and "three of these [the students who received Stewart's treatment] were almost deaf with no ear drums, 6 had one ear drum gone," while Hastings also quoted "the children became deaf."

These two reporters delivered correct information, but they neglected to report the positive outcomes of the treatment in their articles. In "Experimentation and Treatment of Ear Disease among 165 Pupils," Stewart reported both positive and negative outcomes. Along with the negative outcomes of her treatment, she also reported that the ears of 156 pupils were checked, and "wax was cleared and the ear drums of 17 pupils were found to be good; 126 were good and could be seen without clearing; 3 had small central perforations healing well."[6]

Of the 156 students checked after the treatments, 136 students had benefited from the treatment while the symptoms of 10 students remained; 10 students' symptoms became aggravated by the treatment. It is important to acknowledge the case of these 10 students; yet the news article's total omission of any positive outcome of the treatment does not fairly represent Stewart's work. It is clear that her treatment had, in fact, had a positive outcome on students suffering with ear infections.

In "Experimentation and Treatment of Ear Disease among 165 Pupils," there is a section titled, "The 10 Cases of Active Ear Disease Remaining at the End of the 1953–1954 Term at the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian School." In this section, Stewart specifically recorded the progress of 10 students' active ear infections. She reported that the health of one student had improved after the child spent holidays at home. Therefore, it was misleading for Porter to use "children" when there was only one case; she should have used "child" instead of "children" in her article.[7]

The statement "children [which should be corrected to be "child"] are in better health *after having had a holiday at home*"[8] leads readers to believe that the withdrawal of Kathleen Stewart's treatment improved the health of the Aboriginal students at Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School. As can be seen, this is not what was reported.

There are countless contributing factors to health, and what Stewart was treating was ear infections, not general health. One needs to note that one student's health was improved, but her deafness, which Stewart specifically treated, remained after spending holidays at home. As a

---

5 Peter Bush, "Health and Nutrition at Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, 1946–1954," *Presbyterian History* 58, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 1–3.

6 Kathleen Stewart, "Experimentation and Treatment of Ear Disease among 165 Pupils," 4 October 1954. PCC Archives [fond] 00413.

7 Jody Porter, "Ear Experiments Done on Kids at Kenora Residential School," CBC News, August 8, 2014, final edition, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/ear-experiments-done-on-kids-at-kenora-residential-school-1.1343992.

8 Ibid. [emphasis added].

result, it is difficult to make a cause-and-effect relationship between the removal of Stewart's treatment and the Aboriginal student's improved health.

The low budget at the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School meant that sufficient medical care could not be provided to the Aboriginal students. The federal government's motive for instituting the Indian residential schools was based on economics. John Milloy notes that neither the financial nor human resources were invested in Indian residential schools "to ensure that the system achieved its civilizing ends or that children were cared for properly."[9]

Stewart herself wrote, "[W]ith a minimum effort and cost of the Government, it has been difficult to carry out the work . . . [T]he building has accommodation for 115 children, but it usually takes in more than 150."[10] She also repeatedly expressed her wish for more nurses and medical supplies to the executive director of National Missions.[11] Stewart was the only medical staff responsible for the health of staff and 165 students at the school.

In order to compensate for the low budget of the school, students spent half of the day in kitchens, barns, fields, or workshops. Already-malnourished children with inadequate medical services and cares could not bear the physical labour. Many students as well as staff became sick.[12] In the first three months of 1954, Stewart handled 2,733 visits of students and staff.[13]

In September 1953, Stewart had noticed "the offensive odour of the children's breath, discharging ears, lack of sustained attention, poor enunciation when speaking, and loud talking."[14] To Stewart, these symptoms indicated ear infection. Because she was the only medical staff in the school, a quick and easy way to relieve these children from pain was needed: "Wash[ing] out the discharging ears with two quarts of water at 110 degrees, using an irrigation can" was the convenient and fast way. This method was particularly useful because students could use this equipment themselves whenever they became uncomfortable.

Beginning in October 1953, Dr. Ling made a weekly visit to the school and approved the irrigation method for treating these ear infections. In the correspondence between Stewart and the executive director of National Missions, Stewart wrote that after earwax was cleared, "we usually find a good eardrum and the child hears clearly for the first time, perhaps for years. Children are really grateful."[15] "Most of them cleared up in a few days and have not repeated."[16] In the *New York Daily News*, Hastings presented Stewart's irrigation method in sensationalistic and negative terms: "pouring hot water into the infected ears and irrigating infected ear canals with Merthiolate." However, this intervention was the best that Stewart could provide in the given situation and, most important, the majority of children benefited from this treatment.

Although many students' ears were healed, there were some students who could not be relieved by the irrigation method. Stewart expressed both frustration and confusion in her letter to the executive director of National Missions regarding the chronically recurring ear infections of these students. Both Dr. Ling and Stewart had decided to resolve this case; in her letter to the

---

9 John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System*, 1879 to 1986 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), xv.

10 Kathleen Stewart, "Educating Indians" (a term paper for the University of Western University) March 1954, 13. PCC Archives [fond].

11 Kathleen Stewart to Matthew Frieda, 1 June 1951. PCC Archives [fond].

12 30th Annual Report of the Women's Missionary Society (1943): 59. PCC Archives [fond].

13 Peter Bush, "The Presbyterian Church in Canada and Native Residential Schools, 1925–1969," *Canadian Society of Church History* (1993): 3.

14 Kathleen Stewart, "Experimentation and Treatment of Ear Disease among 165 Pupils."

15 Kathleen Stewart to Matthew Frieda, 20 January 1954. PCC Archives [fond].

16 Ibid.

executive director of National Missions, Stewart wrote, "we can do something about the deafness of young Indians."

In order to find a way to treat this complex case, Stewart, with the help of the local doctor, used various drugs. The persistent underfunding of the school made the acquisition of drugs and medical equipment very difficult. Stewart had to try 14 different drugs because the symptoms at first seemed cured, but later recurred. Only the recommended drugs and "very latest proven drugs"[17] sent by Dr. Ling were administered; these administered drugs were not randomly selected in order to meet Stewart's academic interest. The treatment was intended to offer comfort to those experiencing chronic ear infections.

Given the publicity that has been accorded to nutrition experiments, which were recently explored by Ian Mosby, it is important to explore the differences between these experiments and what Kathleen Stewart was doing.

In May 2013, Mosby published an article, "Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Biomedical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools." This article revealed shocking findings that Aboriginal students at the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School and five other institutions were used as "experimental materials" for the benefit of bureaucrats, scientists, and other experts.

The nutrition experiments received considerable financial and human resource investment, and were led by some of Canada's leading nutrition experts in cooperation with Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Services Branch of the Department of National Health and Welfare. In addition, different experts, such as doctors and nurses, dentists, photographers, and lab technicians, were involved to investigate the health conditions of the Aboriginal students. Due to the abundant financial resources, they were able to administer or withdraw anything deemed to be necessary or undesirable for the purposes of the experiments. For example, the Aboriginal students received expensive medical examinations, such as X-rays, blood tests, dental care, and intelligence and aptitude tests. After the thorough medical examinations, dental care in the schools was removed for five years: it was considered to be interfering with the results of the study. Additionally, researchers selected one control group among six chosen schools and did not provide any intervention to the control group. Researchers were fully aware that students were "being fed poor quality, unappetizing food that provided inadequate intakes of vitamin A, B, and C as well as iron and iodine."[18] As a result, the students in the control group continued to suffer malnutrition and illnesses. The nutrition experiments were performed to offer "novel solutions to 'Indian Problems' of susceptibility to disease and economic dependency."[19]

As previously noted, the government's motive for instituting the Indian residential schools was based on economics. The schools were under increasing financial pressure, yet the government wanted to cut more of their funding. Given this, it is puzzling that the government would provide such enormous resources for Aboriginal people. One cannot help but wonder at the Canadian government's real reason for its generous funding of these experiments.

In his article, Mosby suggests a hidden motive of the government and of the leading researchers. Even as late as the 1940s, most experts knew little about the function of vitamins and minerals in humans: "much of their understanding of human nutrition was based upon animal studies and had not been put to the test on human subject in any rigorous or controlled

---

17 Ibid.

18 Ian Mosby, "Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Bioethical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942–1952." *Histoire sociale/Social history* 46, no. 91 (May 2013): 162.

19 Ibid., 148.

manner."[20] Therefore, experts were eager to test the functioning of vitamins and minerals using actual human subjects. The already malnourished and institutionalized Aboriginal students became the perfect human subject while the Indian residential schools provided the perfect "laboratories" for these experts to fulfill their career ambitions. To the government, the nutrient experiments could potentially bring financial benefits. If the experiments could offer "a base of scientific knowledge on which to build successful programs for Indian integration,"[21] the government could successfully make integrated Aboriginal people. The more that Aboriginal people assimilated into the Canadian population, the more that the federal government's financial obligations under various treaties would be reduced. In addition, if the nutrient study could discover whether the physical manifestation of disease could be treated using vitamin supplements alone, the government could further reduce its expenditures on food. While this experiment satisfied the interests of bureaucrats and scientists, it had few long-term positive effects on the lives of those being studied.

In contrast, it is clear that Stewart's ear infection treatments benefited neither the government nor the medical professionals: she did not receive significant support from them. Furthermore, she did not manipulate the healing process of the students. As already mentioned, Stewart administered only recommended and proven drugs. Anything that brought positive results was not withdrawn from the students. Notably, there was no control group in her experiment; all students with ear infection were treated. In the correspondence between Stewart and the executive director of National Missions, Stewart mentioned her work in relation to the well-being of the students. She also expressed her happiness when the cared-for students showed some progress. Most important, the ear infection experiment benefited the suffering students; Stewart successfully found the cause of the ear infection and the treatment.

Stewart's report "Experimentation and Treatment of Ear Disease among 165 Pupils" was sent to the Department of National Health and Welfare in order to acquire an auriscope, an instrument used for examining the external ear. In 1953, Stewart was able to borrow an auriscope from a local practitioner so that she could examine students' ears, but by 1954, this was no longer available to her. In the first page of this report, the principal of the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School explained the necessity of Stewart's work and asked for an auriscope so that "she [Stewart] may carry on with this work on the children's ear." Given all of the evidence that a close investigation of the report and its circumstances has unearthed, it is hard to see the report as evidence of another case of exploitative experimentation on schoolchildren.

Stewart's work has been reported and interpreted in various news stories as shameful experimentation on vulnerable subjects; however, the use of 14 different drugs was due to the low budget of the residential schools. Stewart's intervention successfully healed many ill students despite the school lacking adequate medical staff and supplies and without use of any control group or manipulation of the healing progress. As noted earlier, Stewart's efforts to address ear infections should be perceived as a series of case studies intended to heal the sick.

The enormous damage Indian residential schools had on Aboriginal students should never be trivialized or dismissed. What happened in the past cannot be undone, but we still can learn from it and ensure that those dark chapters are not to be repeated. We should be determined to unearth the truth in order to admit the wrongs of the past and restore justice. At the same time, the commitment to the truth should also include a more thorough and accurate depiction of the work of non-Aboriginal participants.

---

20 Ibid., 152.

21 Ibid., 154.

Appendix 1

Ear experiments done on kids at Kenora residential school

14 different drugs tried on children with ear infections, school nurse's report shows

By Jody Porter, CBC News. Posted 8 August 2013, 11:40 a.m. ET; last updated 8 August 2013, 7:53 p.m. ET

A local doctor and a school nurse experimented with 14 different drugs to treat "ear troubles" in children at Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, according to a 1954 report obtained by CBC News.

The report, from the Indian and Northern Health Services archive, said that some of the children being treated became deaf.

School nurse Kathleen Stewart wrote the report, entitled "Record of Ear Treatments and Investigation."

"The most conspicuous evidence of ear trouble at Cecilia Jeffrey School has been the offensive odour of the children's breath, discharging ears, lack of sustained attention, poor enunciation when speaking and loud talking," she wrote.

Students at the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora were the subject of nutritional experiments and exposed to experimental treatments for ear infections. Some became deaf. (The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives)

Stewart said the children were taught to irrigate their own ears, or the ears of younger children, with hot water. A doctor visited the school on a weekly basis looking out for ear infections "and the recommended medicine was used when possible," Stewart wrote.

Damaged ear drums

Former student Richard Green said he remembers the nose drops used to treat what Stewart described as "mouth breathing."

"All these things . . . we had nose drops, there were some different kinds of pills that we took for nutrition, I don't know what they were, I still don't know what they are," Green said.

In a follow-up report, entitled "Experimentation and Treatment of Ear Disease among 165 Pupils," Stewart noted three of the children "were almost deaf with no ear drums, six had [hearing in] one ear gone."

Some of the case files reported the children to be in better health after having had a holiday at home. A handwritten note at the bottom of one file read: "returned to school well, but obviously deaf."

"Lacklustre" government response

"The new information that's coming out now, it's been very troubling for the students who went there," Green added. "It's hard to process."

Green said it's especially frustrating since many former students have already completed their hearings as part of the residential school settlement agreement. He said the legal process placed an unfair burden on survivors to recall what happened when they were children, while the government withheld documents like the ones obtained by CBC News.

"People are done their healing, now new information comes out, you don't know what to do with it," Green said. "That aggravates a lot of things."

A University of Guelph food historian recently highlighted the nutritional experiments at residential schools, including Cecilia Jeffrey in Kenora. In an interview with CBC, Ian Mosby

said doctors and scientists around the world regularly used vulnerable populations and took a race-based approach to their work in the 1950s.

But other countries have unconditionally apologized and fully disclosed the details of those experiments, Mosby said.

"The response of the Canadian government in the case of the experiments conducted in Canada has been more lacklustre," he said. "It doesn't seem like there is a thorough attempt to get to the bottom of what was happening during this period and whether these were the only experiments."

Running out of time

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada had to go to court to gain access to more of the 3.5 million documents related to residential schools. Researchers with the commission began combing through them this week.

Murray Sinclair, the commission's chair, has said he is concerned there might not be enough time to get all the work done by June 2014, when the TRC's mandate is supposed to be complete.

Former student Green said survivors are also running out of time to come to terms with their painful history.

The 65-year-old's voice still breaks when he thinks about his younger siblings, whose residential school experiences he witnessed.

"The stuff you're seeing, you witnessed . . . I think it was just terror," he said. "We were terrified."

Survivors of Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School will gather for a commemorative event on Aug. 14 in Kenora.

Appendix 2

Abused and experimented on, survivors of Canadian Indian school receive apology from church

Placed on starvation-level diets, subjected to medical experiments, survivors of Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Ontario receive personal apology from Presbyterian Church.

By Deborah Hasting, *New York Daily News*, Friday, 16 August 2013, 2:18 p.m.

Survivors of an infamous dormitory school who were abused, subjected to medical experiments and put on starvation diets for several years after World War II, received a personal apology this week from the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

A recent study revealed that children at the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, and five other institutions, were unwitting subjects in medical and nutritional experiments.

In the 1940s and 1950s, researchers at Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, as well as five other dormitory schools, kept students on severely low diets, administering vitamins only to some to gauge the effectiveness of the supplements.

Vitamins and mineral supplements were new medical products at the time and scientists were keen to track their benefits to humans.

But the Canada experiments went beyond that. Children had their milk rations cut and were denied dental care so as not to interfere with the effects of being kept on a starvation-level diet.

The new report, conducted by Canadian food historian Ian Mosby, is the latest atrocity to come to light from the government program of taking aboriginal children from their families and installing them in dormitory schools across the country, where they were banned from speaking their native tongues, forced to attend Christian church services, and subjected to physical and sexual abuse by staff members including priests and nuns.

Several survivors gathered Wednesday on the grounds where the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School once stood in Ontario, holding a vigil for native Canadian children who were ripped from their families and forced into residential schools run by churches and funded by the government.

Some wept as church representative Peter Bush told them, "I want to acknowledge that at Cecilia Jeffrey, there was physical abuse and sexual abuse and emotional abuse. For that, I am profoundly and deeply sorry," he said, according to CBC News.

"We sinned, and I am sorry for that."

Established in the late 1800s, the last residential school closed in 1996.

In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology on behalf of the government. A reconciliation committee has been established as well as a $1.9 billion compensation package for tens of thousands of children who went through the schools.

"We had thought that we'd somewhat come to peace with some issues," Richard Green said at Wednesday's memorial in Kenora, Ontario. "Then there's ongoing revelations of other events happening," he said.

Another recent revelation concerned a 1954 report that showed a doctor and a nurse experimented with various means of treatment for chronic ear infections that plagued their young charges.

In some cases, the children became deaf. Treatments included teaching the children to pour hot water into their ears and irrigating infected ear canals with Merthiolate.

The PCC and Two World Wars: Shifting Attitudes and Responses towards Warfare

Matthew Lingard

The great conflicts that embroiled Canada and the world as a whole from 1914 to 1918 and again from 1939 to 1945 are two of the most important global events of the last century. Both world wars radically reshaped the character of Canadian society, and so naturally had an impact on the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) as well. Over the past few decades, significant efforts have been made by scholars to study the reaction of the Canadian churches in general, and the PCC in particular, to the First World War. In contrast to these efforts, far less historiographical ground has been covered on this topic for the Second World War.

Through this paper, I will endeavour to address and, in some small way, seek to remedy this imbalance. To this end, I will begin by giving a brief, yet accurate survey of the PCC's attitude towards the First World War. Thereafter, I will offer a more in-depth examination of the Church's official response to, and activity during, the Second World War. Although a comprehensive comparison of the two periods lies outside the scope of this paper, I will nevertheless endeavour to frame the context of the latter war in light of the Presbyterian Church's experience of the Great War, as well as consider the broader movements in Canadian society on the eve of the Second World War. By doing this I hope to underscore two primary differences between the two eras. The first is that, while the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada still supported Canada's declaration of war in 1939, it exhibited less zeal and utilized noticeably more tempered rhetoric than it had done from 1914 to 1918. The second is that the *Acts and Proceedings* (A&P) from 1940 to 1944 demonstrate that the smaller, post-Union Presbyterian Church in Canada had to contend with a number of significant operational challenges (e.g., limited resources and humanpower, as well as the loss of overseas mission fields) during the Second World War.

The PCC and the First World War

The forty-first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada convened in June 1915, 11 months after the inception of the Great War. As a mark of appreciation and respect, the whole Assembly rose to receive Principal Gordon as he approached the platform.[1] Looking out over those assembled, he gave the following address as a *Resolution upon the War*:

> In the great conflict in which our Empire is engaged, God is calling us to the confession of national sins, to humble reliance on Divine guidance and help, to the strenuous pursuit of the things of the Spirit and to more faithful endeavour to secure and maintain for ourselves and for others righteousness and liberty as the sure foundation of peace and goodwill among men.
>
> We consider that the provocation of this conflict has been a crime against humanity and that the force which is arrayed against us, in ruthless and savage warfare, threatens the progress of Christianity and the very existence of civilization.
>
> We appreciate the noble response already made by our Canadian people, in common with the rest of the Empire and with our Allies, to contend against this aggression upon the sacred

1 General Assembly Office, Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Acts and Proceedings of the Forty-First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (1915)*: 30. (*Acts and Proceedings* will be referred to as "A&P.")

> rights of nations. We gratefully recognize the heroism and self-sacrifice of our soldiers who have maintained in battle the best traditions of our race . . .
>
> We pray that the councils of the nations may be so directed and the movements of their armed forces may be so controlled that the cause of righteousness may be speedily triumphant . . . and that the nations now at war may become united for the peace and progress of the world.[2]

This speech was emblematic of the strong support shown by most Presbyterians and was congruent with the response of Canadian society towards the Great War. In his paper "For Empire and God," Stuart Macdonald points out that, despite ever-increasing casualties and a prolonging of the war (past three Christmases), Presbyterian backing for the righteous cause did not falter.[3] What is more, the PCC sought ways to show this strong conviction within the bounds of the Church, the broader society, and the Canadian military.

Although Canadian Presbyterians believe that Christ is the ultimate head of the Church and that "God [is] always above the monarch," during the years of the Great War the PCC nevertheless sought to reinforce the Church's fidelity to the British empire.[4] An *Address of Loyalty* was issued by the General Assembly from 1915 to 1918 as a special pledge of allegiance to the king, asserting that "the lives and material resources, the prayers of our people are, and will be, dedicated to the cause of righteousness in which Your Majesty and the Empire are engaged."[5] This practice would once again be adopted during the Second World War with loyalty to the "Government of Canada" being affirmed, as well.[6]

Further displaying its nationalistic zeal, the General Assembly in 1916 sought to exhort ministers and members to "aid to their utmost in securing recruits for the Canadian Expeditionary Forces" as well as glean "materials and money" for the war effort at home.[7] When the government passed the *Military Service Act* in 1917, the forty-third General Assembly voiced even stronger beliefs about the holy nature of the war, approving of "every legitimate effort to rouse the laggards among the youth of Canada to a consciousness of duty and to enrol those who are available as soldiers in a great crusade for the world's freedom."[8]

However, for all of the PCC's zeal and jingoistic rhetoric at the outset of the Great War, it seems that only a small initial effort was made to minister to the needs of Canadians on the war front.[9] Bob Anger notes that in the *Acts and Proceedings* of that same 1915 General Assembly, the chaplains overseas are barely mentioned. Only a brief resolution was passed during the fifteenth sederunt that recorded the Assembly's appreciation of the work of the chaplains.[10] By 1916, however, the chaplains sent greetings to the General Assembly with a request that they appoint a committee "empowered to suggest to the Minister of Militia the appointment or recall of Presbyterian chaplains."[11] This committee, known as the Military Service Board, was then

---

2 Ibid.

3 Stuart Macdonald, "For Empire and God: Canadian Presbyterians and the Great War," in *Canadian Churches and the First World War*, edited by Gordon L. Heath (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 136.

4 Ibid., 137.

5 A&P 1916, 55.

6 A&P 1940, 41.

7 A&P 1916, 36, 31.

8 A&P 1917, 37.

9 Bob Anger, "Presbyterian Chaplaincy during the First World War," *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers* (2002): 20.

10 Ibid.

11 A&P 1916, 72.

formed to "deal with all matters pertaining to chaplaincies."[12] While records of the Board's activities seem not to have survived, it still appears to have been a fairly significant body as it continued to exist with the moderator as chair up until the 1918 Assembly.[13] Indeed, of the 447 Canadian chaplains who eventually served overseas during the Great War, 98, or approximately 22 percent, were under the auspices of the PCC's Military Service Board.[14]

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, then, ultimately exhibited an unwavering fervour and belief in the righteousness of the Great War throughout the four long years of the conflict. Scholarship on this topic shows that the Church eagerly sought ways to contribute to the war effort both at home and overseas, and that it also contributed a dominant voice in public discourse that was consistent with other prominent political, social, and ecclesial actors in Canada. This picture of a strong, unified voice both within the PCC and Canadian society at large, however, would be significantly transformed as the world prepared to go to war once more in 1939.

The PCC and the Second World War

Upon the eve of the Second World War, Canada as a nation was thoroughly unprepared to wage war.[15] In his doctoral dissertation titled "Padres under Fire," Thomas Hamilton argues that the Canadian government and military "followed the appeasement rhetoric of the 1920s and 1930s" and so created policies that fostered a precarious illusion of peace.[16] He points out that at the outbreak of the war in 1939, the permanent force of the Canadian Army numbered "just over 4450 officers and men" with almost no modern equipment.[17] This logistical problem, however, could be considered minor in comparison to the wide fracture in civil support over the war. Although acknowledging parliamentary endorsement and English media approval, Hamilton notes that nationwide support was "anything but crystal clear," being blurred by "ethnicity and regionalism."[18] Among the 3.5 million French-speaking Canadians, for instance, memories of forced conscription in 1917 were still vivid and bitter, leading to only cautious approval of the war in "French Canadian dailies and the Roman Catholic press in Quebec."[19] Indeed, among Canada's English-speaking population, support for the war effort was hardly as universal as it was back in 1914. Professor Arthur Lower, a noted Canadian historian and professor of History at Queen's University, wrote that "people everywhere are apathetic or appalled; there is no enthusiasm [for war]."[20]

Even in Parliament there was no unanimity. The founder of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and an ex-Methodist minister, Rev. J. S. Woodsworth, gave what is considered to have been one of the most impassioned speeches during the outbreak of war. Yet, this speech was actually made *against* Canada's involvement in the conflict on the grounds of

---

12 Ibid.

13 A&P 1918, 2545.

14 Anger, "Presbyterian Chaplaincy during the First World War," 17.

15 Thomas James Hamilton, "Padres under Fire: A Study of Canadian Chaplain Services (Protestant and Catholic) in the Second World War" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1995), 40.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 43.

18 Ibid., 42.

19 Ibid.

20 John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Burlington, ON: Welch, 1988), 151.

pacifist principles.[21] Although Woodsworth admittedly stood alone in the House of Commons in his opposition to entering the war, he nevertheless felt confident that his position was "the belief of a growing number of Canadians."[22] Perhaps what is most remarkable is that such a position did not cause Woodsworth to be branded as a social or political pariah, as it might have done at the outbreak of the First World War. In fact, he was lauded for it by Mackenzie King, who said: "I admire him in my heart, because time and again he has had the courage to say what lays on his conscience, regardless of what the world might think of him. A man of that calibre is an ornament to any Parliament."[23] Therefore, although anti-war sentiment was far from the popular position in public and political discourse in 1939, it was, nevertheless, given some measure of sympathy and voice. In brief, then, the triumphalism and proclamations of holy war that characterized the context of Canadian society in the opening months of the First World War were not to be heard in 1939.

As the "institutions most identified with and embraced by Canadians,"[24] the Christian churches reflected society's multivalent attitudes and responses to the government's declaration of war. Among the Protestant denominations, the Presbyterian Church in Canada seemed to have been initially the most enthusiastic in its support of the war. Unlike the Baptists, Anglicans, and United Church, the PCC did not make anti-war statements during the 1930s and so had none to repudiate.[25] Indeed, Hamilton argues that almost all of the pacifist-minded Presbyterians left the denomination in the church union of 1925 and notes that these "declarations heralding the start of the war contradicted [the PCC's] previous practice of silence."[26] It appears, in fact, as though the PCC used Canada's declaration of war as an opportunity to reintroduce its voice into public discourse: a voice that had been effectively absent since 1925. The Presbyterian leadership jumped at the chance to be first among any of the Christian churches to offer Parliament their support. Most notably, a message from Dr. Stuart C. Parker, moderator of the PCC General Assembly, was delivered to Prime Minister King on 1 September six days *before* Canada officially declared war on Germany. In it, Dr. Parker stated, "In this day of crisis The Presbyterian Church in Canada assures His Majesty's Government in our Dominion of its sympathy and loyalty."[27]

Such an initiative was more than likely for pragmatic reasons. The nation was inevitably moving towards war, and so in order not to be outdone by the other denominations, the PCC Church Offices sought to show their support first. In spite of its "almost pathological fear of co-operation induced by the union experience,"[28] the PCC then later issued a rare joint statement on the war with the other major Protestant denominations, stating, "We believe that our cause is the cause of Christian civilization, and that Divine power and guidance will be given to us to win victory for it, however hard the road we must first travel."[29]

---

21 Thomas P. Socknat, *Witness against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 195.

22 Ibid., 197.

23 Ibid.

24 Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era*, 10.

25 Hamilton, "Padres under Fire," 57.

26 Ibid., 58.

27 "War," *The Presbyterian Record* (October 1939).

28 John S. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1987), 237.

29 Charles T. S. Faulkner, "For Christian Civilization: The Churches and Canada's War Effort, 1939–1942" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1977), 30.

The PCC's initial correspondence with the federal government and Canadian public, then, seems to have reflected a strong and wholehearted resolve to support Canada's participation in the Second World War. However, a more in-depth examination of General Assembly *Acts and Proceedings* throughout the war years reveals a decidedly more complex picture. First, the tone of the Church's initial "in-house" response to the outbreak of the Second World War was noticeably more moderate in relation to that of the First World War. In contrast to the passionate speech given by Principal Gordon at the forty-first General Assembly in 1915, the *Resolution upon the War* submitted at the sixty-sixth General Assembly in 1940 was in the form of a short written document.

Upon its initial submission, the *Resolution upon the War* described as "setting forth the position of the Church and of our people in the present crisis in the affairs of our Nation and Empire of the Christian Church and of the liberties of the whole world."[30] The document was then referred to the Committee on Loyal Addresses to be considered for approval. Upon review the committee recommended that the final draft of the resolution be changed to read as follows:

> In view of the more critical situation now developing in the prosecution of the War, the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada re-affirms the pledge of loyalty and whole-hearted support of the Church to the Government of Canada as expressed in the Loyal Address to His Majesty the King. The lives and material resources, the prayers of our people are, and will be, dedicated to the cause of righteousness in which Your Majesty and the Allied Nations are engaged.[31]

While this brief statement is couched in some similar terminology to that used in 1915, the language of "nobility . . . heroism and self-sacrifice"[32] employed by Principal Gordon is notably absent. In his history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada titled *Enduring Witness*, John Moir asserts that while the PCC showed a resolve for the war, it was tempered by realism and the experience of armed conflict. No matter how "horrifying the prospect" of a Second World War, the PCC still believed it was "necessary and justified . . . for the defence of the democracies."[33] Nevertheless, the fresh and unspeakable destruction wrought by the Great War only 21 years earlier had all but silenced the "blatant jingoism" that accompanied its outbreak in 1914.[34]

This tempered language could, perhaps, also reflect a sober appreciation for the operational challenges that would necessarily accompany the Church's involvement in the war. Indeed, while being the first to offer words of "sympathy and loyalty" to the federal government, the PCC was one of the last Protestant denominations to communicate with the Canadian military and organize itself around "the matter of chaplains."[35] In the end it took until 5 October, almost a full month *after* Canada's declaration of war, to form a committee to deal with chaplains.[36] Was this due to growing apprehension or simply disorganization within Presbyterian leadership? Whatever the case, the meeting came about only out of necessity. According to the minutes of the committee's initial meeting, the first item on the agenda called for a need to respond to the request from the United Church's Committee on Chaplaincy for "a common agreement among the Protestant Churches as to chaplains for Overseas Service, that any chaplain

---

30 A&P 1940, 37.
31 Ibid., 41.
32 A&P 1915, 30.
33 Moir, *Enduring Witness*, 241.
34 Ibid.
35 Hamilton, "Padres under Fire," 72.
36 Ibid., 73.

should be named by the Denomination they represent and careful selection should be made."[37] Furthermore, it is clear from the minutes of that meeting that the committee was scrambling to catch up to its Protestant counterparts. In particular, they recommended that "the Moderator co-opt several others as members . . . so as to conserve the interests of the different sections of the church."[38]

In the end, the outgoing moderator, Dr. Stuart C. Parker, was appointed as convener of the Presbyterian Committee on Chaplaincy Service and served in this capacity for the first three years of the war.[39] By the time the General Assembly met in 1940, the committee had already experienced such an influx of volunteers that Dr. Parker reported no appeal for chaplains was needed.[40] In fact, so many ministers came forward that the PCC urged the government to raise the age limit for chaplains.[41] In the following year, the committee reported 44 ministers serving and claimed that "the list of ministers volunteering for service [was] sufficient to meet the need," while including the cautious *caveat* that "it is expedient that the list should still be amplified, so that no demand should present difficulty."[42] By 1942, however, the demand would prove to be just that. While reporting that the list had risen to 71 chaplains, Dr. Parker also claimed that "the Committee is now facing an acute situation, due to the growing requirements of the Service, and the limited number of applications from our ministers now before us . . . the situation is [also] complicated by the present shortage of ministers, and the long list of vacant Congregations."[43] This language set the tone for committee reports right up to the end of the war with the number of chaplains slightly rising to 80 in 1943[44] and then finally 100 in 1944.[45]

The steadily growing demands of the Second World War not only put strain on the Committee on Chaplaincy Service, but also had a negative impact on many presbyteries in a way that was hitherto unseen during the years of the Great War. Overtures and committee reports made to the General Assembly between 1941 and 1944 underscore the primary challenge of resource management that the still recovering, post-Union Church was facing on the home front. In 1941, the Clerk of the Ottawa Presbytery, Hugh Cameron, decried the "large number of . . . ministers [that] have been accepted as Chaplains to the Canadian Forces" and overtured the General Assembly that it "take such action as will assure that the work of our Church at home be given more consideration by ministers applying for Chaplain Service, and that the personal desires of these men shall be considered secondary to the needs of our Church and Nation."[46] The Presbytery of Ottawa, then, solely situated the needs of the PCC and Canada as a whole in the work that was being done on the home front. What was more, it gave voice to a new, skeptical opinion that ministers might be entering into military chaplaincy primarily out of a sense of "personal desire" rather than out of a desire to serve the needs of the "Church and Nation." This attitude would have likely been reinforced, after hearing the General Board of

---

37 Minutes of the Committee on Chaplaincy Service, 5 October 1939, 1939 October–1946 November, Board Administration, Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, 1.

38 Ibid., 2.

39 Hamilton, "Padres under Fire," 73.

40 Moir, *Enduring Witness*, 241.

41 A&P 1940, 37.

42 A&P 1941, 155.

43 A&P 1942, 118.

44 A&P 1943, 103.

45 A&P 1944, 100.

46 A&P 1941, 152.

Missions report on how "students in training, and in at least one case, an ordained minister . . . joined the combatant forces" a year later.[47]

The Presbytery of Ottawa's 1941 overture also suggested it be ruled that any ministers accepting chaplaincy appointments would have to fully resign their pulpits, rather than secure the services of *locum tenens* (stated supply or interim ministry), in order to be "fair and just to congregations affected."[48] The motion was ultimately voted down by the General Assembly, but the issue would remain. Indeed, the following year the General Board of Missions also acknowledged the challenges faced by the Church in its report *The Work at Home*. In the report, it was stated that, at that point, "almost 60 pulpits have had to be filled by other ministers. This in turn has meant vacancies in other charges, and as a result the augmented charge and the aid-receiving mission field have in some cases found it almost impossible to secure ministers."[49] Yet, in the end the Board's sympathies lay with the war effort: it stated that all of these issues were but a "small fraction of the price that must be paid for the preservation of freedom for the world, and should be accepted without the slightest murmur."[50]

Murmurs, however, were still being made when an overture almost identical to the one made by the Presbytery of Ottawa two years previous was forwarded to the General Assembly in 1943. In this overture, the Presbytery of Cape Breton asserted that the "wartime developments touching the life of the Church have increased the difficulties of the Settlement System."[51] Like Ottawa, the Presbytery of Cape Breton argued that the failure of ministers to resign their congregations was raising problems for those congregations affected. They identified the primary issue as being that new Presbyterian ministers were "not desirous of seeking work in congregations that already have a minister."[52] By 1943, this would have been no small matter. In fact, the situation could have affected anywhere up to 80 congregations, since 80 Presbyterian ministers were then serving as chaplains. Despite this, the General Assembly took no action on the motion, and the issue was effectively put to rest.

Thus, the victory over the resource tug-of-war inevitably went to the Committee on Chaplaincy Service as the demands of the war increased. In its twelfth sederunt, the sixty-ninth General Assembly adopted a motion for the supply of chaplains for the forces that effectively ended all further discussion on the matter of chaplains:

> In view of the scarcity of ministers, this Assembly recommends that Presbyteries survey the whole work within their bounds with a view to possible plans, including the readjusting of certain fields, for enabling suitable men to be freed, if they are willing, for nomination as Chaplains in His Majesty's Forces, at the same time taking into account the interests of the Church at home.[53]

In the eyes of the General Assembly, then, the demands of the war effort unequivocally outweighed the needs of the home front. It may be possible that this neglect of aforementioned congregational concerns contributed to a small, but steady decrease in church membership throughout the war years: "from nearly 175,000 in 1940 to 172,000 in 1944."[54] Of course, a

---

47 A&P 1942, 3.
48 A&P 1941, 152.
49 A&P 1942, 3.
50 Ibid.
51 A&P 1943, 137.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 41.
54 Moir, *Enduring Witness*, 244.

direct correlation between these factors would be impossible to verify, and it is also unclear whether or not these statistics also account for the casualties suffered among Canadian Presbyterian military personal. Considering that Moir writes that there was a "disproportionately large number of lay Presbyterians serving in the army, navy and air force,"[55] I would venture a guess that casualties among them were not factored into this relatively small drop in numbers.

One final wartime challenge faced by the PCC that cannot be explored to its fullest extent here is the temporary loss of mission fields in Manchuria, Formosa, and among Koreans living in Japan. In 1941, the missionary George Gushue-Taylor reported to the General Assembly from abroad that "in the midst of this insane war and rumours of war, it was felt by our people at home that evacuation of British and American Nationals was essential." To that end, "all Protestant missionaries [had] left the Island before the end of the year."[56] By the time General Assembly met the following year, there was complete radio silence, with the report stating that "it has been impossible to have any communication whatever with our former fields in these lands [Manchuria, Formosa, and Japan] . . . [but that] everything that could be arranged for continuance of the various kinds of work was planned before our missionaries left."[57] No further reports were made about these mission fields in the *Acts and Proceedings* of 1943 and 1944.

Conclusion

The wartime experiences of the PCC from 1914 to 1918 and then again from 1939 to 1945 were vastly different. Although the Church supported the cause of war in both eras, the tenor of its response shifted dramatically from one of triumphalism to cautious resolve. Although I have attempted to voice some of the possible reasons for this shift, that was not the primary purpose of this paper; rather, my intent was to demonstrate, through the presentation of primary sources, that such a shift in the PCC's attitude did, in fact, take place and that it was accompanied by new operational challenges yet to have been faced by the Church during the First World War. Finally, the life and work of the PCC during the Second World War is a fascinating historiographical frontier that demands to be opened up further. Indeed, I wish to acknowledge that no limitations were placed on this paper due to lack of sources, but rather to lack of time. Such a subject deepens our understanding of, and appreciation for, the commitment and resolve of our Church at a pivotal period of Canadian (and indeed, global) history.

---

55 Ibid., 242.
56 A&P 1941, 51–52.
57 A&P 1942, 57.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Archives:
Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives (PCC Archives)
Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Knox College Collection (PCC Archives—KC)
Magazine:
The Presbyterian Record
Other:
Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly (A&P)

Secondary Sources

Anger, Bob. "Presbyterian Chaplaincy during the First World War." *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers* (2002): 15–31.

Faulkner, Charles T. S. "For Christian Civilization: The Churches and Canada's War Effort, 1939–1942." PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1977.

Grant, John Webster. *The Church in the Canadian Era.* Burlington, ON: Welch, 1988.

Hamilton, Thomas James. "Padres under Fire: A Study of Canadian Chaplain Services (Protestant and Catholic) in the Second World War." PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1995.

Macdonald, Stuart. "For Empire and God: Canadian Presbyterians and the Great War." In *Canadian Churches and the First World War*, edited by Gordon L. Heath, 133–51. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014.

———. "Myth Meets Reality: Canadian Presbyterians and the Great War." In *2012 Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History*, edited by Brian Gobbett, Bruce L. Guenther, and Todd Webb, 103–20. Calgary, AB: Canadian Society of Church History, 2012. Accessed 28 February 2015. http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/historicalpapers/article/viewFile/39113/35476.

Moir, John S. *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada*, 3rd ed. Don Mills, ON: Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2004.

Socknat, Thomas P. *Witness against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900–1945*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

"Your Ringing Testimony to the Cause of Truth": Machen and the PCC's Andrew Grant in a 1925 Partnership to Save "True Evangelical Christianity"

A. Donald MacLeod[1]

As the 90th anniversary of church union is celebrated by the United Church of Canada (UCC), we recall that, instead of commemoration and jubilation, Presbyterians have a different narrative. Ours is a story of disruption and heartbreak, accompanied by a sense of loss and sorrow. We were the spoilers of a grand vision. How are we to make sense of the complexities of events swirling around 10 June 1925? No one is better equipped to help us understand what happened then than Home Missions Secretary A. S. Grant. This paper seeks to understand a complex man, a Canadian icon, whose passion provides insight into what was going on. We shall look at his vision of the continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) lensed through his partnership with J. Gresham Machen, the doughty Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) contender of the faith.

For Andrew Shaw Grant, the summer of 1925 was like none other in his life. His time in the Klondike during the Gold Rush was nothing in comparison to the pressure he was under to continue a Presbyterian denomination that, it was thought, would be going into oblivion on 10 June, when some of its members merged with the Methodists and the Congregationalists. Ironically, the union ceremony that day was presided over by Charles William Gordon, whose best-selling novels appeared under the sobriquet Ralph Connor. Gordon had made A. S. Grant a household name for his exploits in the Yukon as a "sky pilot" a quarter of a century earlier, characterizing him as one of "these heroic missionaries to that remote and perilous field."[2] Now A. S. Grant was doing all in his power to challenge the work that was so dear to the heart of Ralph Connor.

A Knox College professor, the late Allan Farris, titled his seminal (but neglected) chapter on church union "The Fathers of 1925." A. S. Grant was definitely a father of 1925, unique among the senior PCC pre-Union leadership in his opposition to church union. He settled in Toronto after 10 years in the Yukon and, at the invitation of the General Assembly, served for seven years, first, as general superintendent for Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and then as well as chair of the Finance Committee of the denomination. He submitted his resignation at the 1914 Woodstock General Assembly. "I asked," he wrote to the *Toronto Star* 10 years later,[3] "to be relieved of all official positions as constructive plans for aggressive work were impossible owing to the divided opinion on the question of union."

Grant was a humble and self-effacing man. Always known as "Dr. Grant," he had never qualified as a medical practitioner in spite of taking medical courses while he was an undergraduate at the University of Toronto. He turned down the offer of two doctorates of divinity, one from his alma mater, Presbyterian College, Montreal; the other, from Queen's University, Kingston. He disarmed with a humorous aside the anticlericalism of some continuing

---

1 Thanks to Karla Fackler Grafton, archives and rare books librarian, Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, Pennsylvania; and Robert Anger, associate archivist, PCC Archives, Toronto, for their help in my research.

2 Charles W. Gordon, *The Life of James Robertson, D.D.* (Toronto: Westminster, 1909), 378.

3 "Organic Church Union," undated news clipping in the Grant Papers file (1973-5003-2-9), PCC Archives.

Presbyterian laity at the first post-Union General Assembly on 11 June 1925 by saying, "the fact that I may not be able to preach is not why I should be classified as a layman."[4] Grant left no *corpus* of his writing, none of his sermon manuscripts survive, and aside from a small archive deposited with the Presbyterian Church in Canada by his daughter in 1973, little survives from the decade after church union when he was such a vital participant in the rebirth of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is ironic that the largest collection of Grant correspondence from the immediate post-Union years survives in Philadelphia in the archives of Westminster Theological Seminary. A few documents, some undated press clippings, and photo albums, mostly of the Yukon, were presented to the PCC Archives by his daughter Caroline in 1973. There are also a few letters from the time he was home missions secretary in the 1907 to 19144 period in the United Church of Canada Archives.

Grant's final two decades were profoundly shaped by the 13 June 1916 death of his son, the Military Cross winner Captain Oswald Wetherald Grant, in the Ypres Salient. A machine gunner in the Canadian Infantry, First Battalion, Oswald was headed for Osgoode Hall Law School after a brilliant academic and sports career at the University of Toronto from which he graduated in 1914. In a letter to his mother, found on his corpse on the battlefield, he wrote: "Good-bye everybody, and know this, you should be as glad as I that I have gone this way. It is by far the best way, and I am trusting in God to see me through." It is significant that at the end of the war, Grant travelled to France and was involved in demobilization arrangements. Oswald's death gave him a pastoral edge, a softness in debate, a pastoral capability to deal with the student ministers who would come under his care. The muscular Grant of the Yukon had been metamorphosed into a gentle giant of a man, more formidable in debate as a result. And he and his opposite in the uniting Presbyterians, A. E. Armstrong, could work amicably together as they sorted out the tangles of votes, property, and related acrimony.

Grant's own attitude towards church union developed over two decades of negotiation. As he described his view:

> It appears to me that if the great majority of members in the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches were one mind in matters of doctrine and church policy and also one in spirit, that in the face of organized opposition within the Presbyterian Church, it might have been wise to seek some plans of cooperation in missionary and educational work so that, with the lapse of time by united efforts in the great field of missionary enterprise, these bodies would work together.
>
> However the majority has decided otherwise, and as majorities go over they acted regularly and with due deliberation and in the light of the future, it may be shown that the they acted wisely, but in the meantime we are face to face with a divided church. All things lawful may not always be expedient.

He concluded:

> Since there is still to be a Presbyterian Church and since the necessity has arisen for ministers to declare themselves, my decision is to remain with the Presbyterian Church. I am not connected with any organization, pro or con, and this statement carried with it no official authority.[5]

---

4 Quoted in Brian Fraser, *The Resistance to Church Union in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985), 193.

5 "Organic Church Union," undated clipping from the *Toronto Star*, circa summer 1924, PCC Archives.

On 19 July 1924 the *United Church of Canada Act* received royal assent, and the countdown to Union started. One week before Christmas massed rallies in 12 different non-concurring churches across the city were called for.

> Presbyterians in Toronto who love their church, who have pride in its great history and traditions, and who want to maintain its virility and independence. On this night loyal Presbyterians will rally throughout the City of Toronto and demonstrate by their numbers and enthusiasm this is already one of their convictions, the unabated combination of their fathers . . . These impressive gatherings will consolidate our forces and inspire new devotion to the cause. Their spontaneous enthusiasm will echo throughout Canada, giving assurance to Presbyterians in all parts of the Dominion that their Church will be preserved and kept as the active, potent influence it has always been in world-wide affairs. Let nothing prevent you being there.

On the program there was a listing of names for a "Provisional Presbyterian Advisory Council for the Presbytery of Toronto." At the top there appeared the name of Andrew Grant. The Council was "to confer and advise on the many important problems that will face congregations after the taking of the [congregational] vote. Non-concurring congregations will then appoint representatives to Council."[6] Professor Thomas Eakin of Knox College was the only other minister included.

The "Presbyterian Advisory Council for the Presbytery of Toronto," as it was designated, consisted of 15 members with A. S. Grant as chairman and J. A. Milne as secretary-treasurer. Its task was a daunting one. With the majority of clergy going into church union, many non-concurring congregations were left without pastoral leadership. The possibility was always there that, without a minister, congregations might change their minds and drift into union and, if not as congregations, parishioners would, and Unionists would be vindicated and non-concurrents, humiliated. The need, particularly in the Maritimes, was acute. Though Prince Edward Island had stood firm, New Brunswick had been decimated by church union, as had the greater Halifax area. But Pictou Presbytery and the two Cape Breton presbyteries, where there had been almost open warfare, were in a perilous state before Grant stepped in to fill the gap. So he approached the American seminaries, specifically Princeton. There, Professor J. Gresham Machen was the defender of biblical orthodoxy and a favourite among the students at the seminary. Grant and Machen bonded over the next year.

The first letter from Grant to Machen now extant is dated 17 April 1925, though there must have been earlier communication. "We appreciate very much," Grant writes Machen, "the work you have done and the care you have taken in selecting the best type of men, and we have authorized them by telegraph and letter to make arrangements for securing and placing of these students on the terms set forth in your letter." He reassures Machen that the forthcoming (and first) General Assembly of the continuing church will honour the contracts for the 15 students involved. Then he identifies himself with Machen's theology:

> We appreciate very much what you have done and also to know that we have the sympathy and co-operation of our brethren across the line in this struggle for existence. You will be pleased to know that we are to be a strong active body and that in our pre-Assembly Congress that we are calling, we will have delegates from every part of our dominion representing the congregations that are remaining and also the minority groups that have lost their churches.

---

6 Scrapbook of clippings related to church union, PCC Archives.

He concludes by asking for the names of "outstanding men" who could speak at the pre-Assembly conference.

In this same letter Grant referred to Donald MacOdrum[7] as someone "acting with the full authority and knowledge of our Provisional Home Missions Board." MacOdrum had lost his pulpit when St. Andrew's Halifax had voted to go Union and was at the time the organizing pastor of the minority groups from the St. John's and Sharon churches in Stellarton, a mining town in Pictou County. MacOdrum was the temporary point person for the mostly rural churches in Pictou presbytery that had stayed out of Union and were without a minister. He soon went to Ontario, and his role was taken by Robert Johnson,[8] who followed him there shortly afterwards. Meanwhile, on 5 October 1925, Woodbridge O. Johnson,[9] a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS) and an MK ("missionary kid") from Korea, was inducted into the new First Church Stellarton, only to leave less than a year later. Several other so-called "Machen's men," such as McAllister Griffiths,[10] settled in Pictou County, but none stayed long.

In Cape Breton, Grant had the towering figure of 1891 PTS graduate William McCulloch Thomson,[11] who had returned from Trinidad and subsequent study at Yale and Columbia to gather the remnants of Presbyterianism in Sydney, where the three PCC congregations had all gone into Union. "This is today one of the strongest Presbyterian congregations in the eastern provinces," the *Continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada* broadsheet crowed in the summer of 1925. With 439 communicants at Easter Holy Communion, that was indisputable. But after McCulloch Thomson retired, the church ran through five ministers in just over a decade and a half so toxic did the mix of minorities prove.

Meanwhile, the communication between Grant, his three Maritime colleagues, and Machen continued that Spring of 1925. A telegram from Grant to Machen on 5 May[12] states that he is awaiting the final applications for students and that their ticket arrangements were on their way with instructions; it concludes with two words that summarized all the acrimony of the time: "no Methodists."[13] As the students were leaving Princeton, no detail escaped the professor that they loved so much and affectionately called "Das." To one student, a man by the name of Dyett who seems (from his lack of a subsequent consistent career) to have been unsure of his vocation, he wrote on 14 May:

---

7 Donald MacOdrum (1863–1938) served in Marion Bridge, Cape Breton, NS; Moncton, NB; Pembroke, ON; Halifax, NS; and Brockville, ON. He was moderator of the General Assembly the year of his death. He visited all the mission fields of the church in his lifetime and had three sons in ministry, one of whom (Max) founded Carleton University.

8 Robert Johnson (1876–1947), an Ulsterman, was called to St Andrew's, Halifax, where he ministered during the Explosion of 1917; next year he was called to the United Presbyterian Church (later Westminster) in New Glasgow; and subsequently, to Knox Ottawa in 1927. General Assembly Office, Presbyterian Church in Canada, *Acts and Proceedings, 1948*, recorded: "During the Church dispute no one stood more loyally by the church of his fathers and Robert Johnston did much to maintain the cause of Presbyterianism in the Maritimes."

9 Woodbridge Odlin Johnson (1900–1975), PTS 1925, cousin of Charles Woodbridge, PTS 1927, alternated between parish and teaching until settling into 19 years (1946–1965) as professor, Park College, Parkville, Missouri.

10 Hall McAllister Griffiths (1900–1957), PTS 1925[6], was ordained in 1925 by the Cape Breton Presbytery, supplied First Church, New Glasgow, 1926; was at West Branch, Pictou Presbytery, 1927-29; returned to Philadelphia; served as editor and pundit for *Christianity Today*; and in 1935 founded *Presbyterian Guardian*. He split with Machen the year after to establish the Bible Presbyterian Church but later parted from its founder, Carl McIntire. He died in New York City at the age of 57.

11 William McCulloch Thomson (1862–1957), born and died in Durham, West River, Pictou County, served Greyfriars Church, Port of Spain, Trinidad, 1908–1920; and in Sydney 1924–1932. See J. M. Cameron, *Enduring Trust: First Presbyterian Church, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, 1786–1986* (self-published, 1985), 103–7.

12 A. S. Grant to J. G. Machen, 5 May 1925. Machen Papers, WTS Archives.

13 There should have been more empathy because Grant was a strong teetotaller.

> if Mr. Grant (or Dr. Grant) will supply you with transportation direct from Buffalo [his home] to Stellarton, please return the present ticket before the expiration of its limit to him. As I have done in the case of the other men, I am enclosing $15 to cover your berth and meals on the way to Stellarton. This is my personal contribution to the cause.[14]

Although the patrician Machen was comfortably placed financially, that $15 in 1925, which he gave every student appointee was a significant investment, representing $203 in today's currency.

By 28 April there were 11 appointees, 6 from the Junior or first year and 5 Middlers.[15] Machen refused to single out any of them but indicated that the Middlers would have had more experience. He also stated that "[i]t has been a great handicap not to have knowledge of the individual fields." Board and room were provided with $15 salary and transportation included. As the summer wore on the inevitable question arose as to what the pastor-less churches would do come autumn and winter "and your people are led to fall out of the ranks and go into the United Church," as he wrote Grant on 3 August. Several were under pressure not to return to seminary as the need was so great.

Machen strongly demurred. "It is not merely that this plan of interrupting the study of theology seems to me to be a very bad one — but the situation at Princeton is such that I should be particularly sorry to have these men stay away. Last year there was a real and very much needed evangelical movement among our students; these men, some of them at least, took the lead in it." And he concluded apocalyptically: "The entire character of our institution is at stake, and unless the matter is settled rightly now, we shall in the future be able to help neither you nor anyone else." Four years later, as a result of the recommendation of a report of a commission appointed by that year's General Assembly, he was out of a job and Princeton Seminary was forever changed.

At its June 1925 meeting, the new Presbytery of Cape Breton passed a resolution of appreciation for Machen's services to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. In a response to McCulloch Thomson, dated 11 July 1925, Machen expressed forcibly his identification of his struggle within the Presbyterian Church (USA) with that of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

> The cause which your church represents is, I am convinced, the cause of true evangelical Christianity throughout the world. In the United States just as clearly as in Canada, the attack upon the Christian faith is coming through an ostensibly evangelical but really compromising and I'm really skeptical interdenominationalism: and in our battle we rejoice in the encouragement which your ringing testimony gives to the cause of truth.[16]

To what extent were Machen and Grant theological bedfellows? We know little about Grant's theology, but we can make some deductions. He studied under Donald Harvey MacVicar when Presbyterian College Montreal was called "the Princeton of the North." He went on to study for a year in Scotland, but we know little of his instructors or classes there. His work in the Yukon suggests a man with a heart for evangelism as he challenged the prospectors "to be a man and follow the Christ," but that muscular Christianity, popularized in the novels of Ralph

---

14 J. G. Machen to E. G. Dyett, 14 May 1925. Machen Papers, WTS Archives. Some uncertainty about whether it was "Dr. Grant" or "Mr. Grant" persists in the correspondence and remains today.

15 For details, see my "Theological Renewal and the Princeton Seminary Class of 1927/8" (paper presented at the Presbyterian (USA) Scholars Conference, Wheaton, IL, 22 May 2015), adonaldmacleod.com.

16 J. G. Machen to McCulloch Thomson, 11 July 1925. WTS Archives.

Connor, was very popular at the time. His opposition to church union does not appear to have been solely on theological grounds. A clipping from the Orillia papers of his sermons on the 82nd anniversary of the local church, two years before his death, is all we have to go on. "Stirring Messages of Faith at Presbyterian Anniversary" is the headline for an almost verbatim account[17] of his morning and evening sermons taken from his notes given the reporter.

Grant's text for that morning was Acts 1:8: "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Grant added: "The weakness of the Christian church to-day is that it does not realise and recognise that the promise and the power of the Holy Spirit is as available now as it was at Pentecost. Possessed with the power of the Holy Ghost the Church instead of being fearful, would have power to carry on and vigorously press the work of the Divine mission to preach the gospel to every creature." It was the year that Hitler came to power in Germany. He said: "We are living in a difficult age, and the forces of evil are strong against us. But our weapons of warfare are spiritual not carnal. Christ has opened up to us the way of access to God and His power."

His evening message was on faith healing, using as his text John 5:7: "'Sir,' the invalid replied, 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.'" "The great heart of God is manifested as Christ goes out in compassion to sick and sinful men, and Christ is in the world today working with more wonderful results than in the days of His flesh." The reporter noted with incredulity: "The speaker said he believed in Divine Healing and he believes in miracles." He admitted, however, that "[h]e is a forceful preacher, direct in his message and powerful in his appeal. He is always heard with great acceptance by the Orillia congregation."

So the summer of 1925 ended. "I think it is particularly important," Machen wrote Robert Johnson,[18] "that the men should be given facility for being back in Princeton on time at the opening of the term on September 29th. We in Princeton who represent the principle that your Church represents have a reputation to maintain and if we do not maintain it the fact will be used vigorously not only against us but against the cause."

The friendship between Grant and Machen developed. Machen was invited to 25 Cluny Drive, Grant's Rosedale mansion, when he spoke at the Knox Spadina anniversary in March 1926, but he was unable to accept the offer as hotel arrangements had already been made by his host congregation.[19] Machen, in turn, reciprocated with an offer of hospitality at his Princeton club as they went over the list of the 1926 appointees, but Grant did not travel out of Canada. As the summer, began one appointee was late and broke, but between Grant and Machen, Alexander MacLeod (PTS 1927) was sent off to Sussex, New Brunswick,[20] to general relief because he had served the Unionists in Saskatchewan the summer before. Enough was enough.

"Your ringing testimony to the cause of truth": Machen's early impressions of the continuing Presbyterian Church in Canada were coloured by what was going on in Princeton Theological Seminary at the time. After the summer of 1926, there were no further drafts of PTS students. Americans who accepted calls in Canada could easily become disillusioned, and PTS students and graduates found the culture of Atlantic Canada an adjustment. Faced with rancour

---

17 "Stirring Messages of Faith at Presbyterian Anniversary," undated news clipping from the *Orillia Packet and Times*, PCC Archives.

18 Machen to Johnston, 3 September 1925. WTS Archives.

19 See my "Knox College and Knox Church: Going Separate Ways after Church Union," in *The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers 2012*, edited by Elizabeth J. Millar, 35.

20 Machen to Grant, 18 June 1926. WTS Archives: "I wonder whether Mr. MacLeod was placed. I telegraphed about him when you were at the General Assembly, and do not know whether that first telegram got into your hands."

after narrow votes and regrouping minorities, Machen's acolytes would correspond and share the challenges of their first congregation and the shaky coalitions of the continuing church. But at their best "Machen's men" filled a real gap and ensured that the burning bush would never be consumed, at least in the summer of 1925.

Continuity and Discontinuity in the 1997 *Book of Praise*

Ian Marnoch

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has published a denominational hymnal titled *The Book of Praise* continuously for more than 100 years. The first three iterations of the hymnal (1897, 1918, and 1972) demonstrated much continuity and thus began to form a continuous tradition that has helped to shape and unify the identity of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC). I shall call this the *Book of Praise* tradition. In this paper I will examine the most recent edition of *The Book of Praise*, published in 1997. Although there are continuities between the 1997 hymnal and its predecessors, there are also many discontinuities. I will argue that this demonstrates a change in the identity and focus of the Presbyterian Church in Canada as it sought to compile a hymnal that would be useful for a 21st century context. In order to explore this thesis, I will consider the following questions:

1. Why was a new hymnal required?
2. What was the process for revising the hymnal, and what were the goals of the Task Force assigned to this endeavour?
3. Have the goals been met?

I will then try to draw a conclusion as to whether the 1997 *Book of Praise* stands in continuity or discontinuity with the *Book of Praise* tradition and also whether the current edition of the hymnal faithfully represents and informs the unity and identity of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

1. Why was a new hymnal required?

In 1878 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada realized that a common hymnody could help establish a denominational identity and maintain unity while serving as a resource for education and an aid to memorizing scripture.[1] And so, in 1897, *The Presbyterian Book of Praise* was published. A revision of the hymnal was published 21 years later in 1918, and a second revision was made in 1972. Each revision demonstrates strong continuity with the previous editions and thus forms a continuous literary tradition which has come to be an important part of the unity and identity of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. However, by the late 1980s, the 1972 hymnal seemed to be losing its relevance.

In 1989 the General Assembly received two overtures that pointed to a growing sense within the denomination that the 1972 hymnal no longer reflected the Church's identity and context. The first came from the Synod of Saskatchewan:

---

1 Hugh E. McKellar, "The *Books of Praise* of 1897 and 1997: Kith, Kin, or Kissing Cousins?" *Proceedings of the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History* (1999): 2.

> WHEREAS, the awareness of the Church is increasing towards the needs of, and ministry to, groups within society which have previously been peripheral to the status quo; including women, ethnic, and native peoples, and
> WHEREAS, the Church is striving to be more inclusive in its language and vision of ministry, and
> WHEREAS, the needs of youth and adults has always been a priority for the Church, and
> WHEREAS, the hymn book entitled "The Book of Praise" currently produced by The Presbyterian Church in Canada does not reflect either the language of ethnic origin, or the inter-generational diversity this new growth and awareness brings to the Church,
> THEREFORE, we, the Synod of Saskatchewan, humbly overture the Venerable, the 115th General Assembly, to appoint a commission to review the existing hymn book with the purpose of creating a new hymn book edition which reflects more honestly the Church's awareness of inclusive language, ethnic diversity and inter-generational ministry . . .[2]

From this overture I want to highlight several points that became important themes in the revision of *The Book of Praise*. First, the Synod of Saskatchewan recognized that the current hymnal (1972) did not reflect the growing awareness of the cultural context in which the PCC existed. The 1972 hymnal did not adequately reflect the diversity of the church (in terms of gender and ethnicity) nor did it reflect the drive by the denomination to adopt a more inclusive use of language. And so, it was argued, a revised hymnal was needed. In its effort to compile a hymnal that reflected the identity of the denomination, the Synod urged that the new hymnal use inclusive language and be sensitive to and incorporate the gender, ethnic, and generational diversity that was the reality of the Church.

A second overture in 1989, this time from the Presbytery of Montreal, again spoke of the ineffectiveness of the 1972 *Book of Praise.*

> WHEREAS, the Book of Praise has been a remarkably serviceable instrument of the Church's worship since its publication in 1972, and
> WHEREAS, in the last seventeen years significant changes have taken place in the English language, particularly with reference to the use of masculine pronouns for God and all of humanity, and
> WHEREAS, issues of concern to Christians in an era such as peacemaking, justice and stewardship of the environment are not sufficiently addressed by hymns in the current Book of Praise, and ...
> THEREFORE, the Presbytery of Montreal, Quebec humbly overtures the 115th General Assembly to instruct the Board of Congregational Life to undertake a revision of the Book of Praise . . .[3]

Although this overture recognized the value of the 1972 hymnal, the Presbytery of Montreal also highlighted the issues of inclusive language (". . . significant changes have taken place in the English language, particularly with reference to the use of masculine pronouns for God and all of humanity . . .") and drew attention to the growing need for a more outward focus for the piety of the church. As I will show when I compare the table of contents of the different editions, the previous three *Book of Praise* hymnals (1897, 1918, and 1972) focused the Christian life on personal salvation, prayer, and

---

2 General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in Canada, "Overture #12," *The Acts and Proceedings of the One Hundred and Fifteenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* 1989, 518. (*Acts and Proceedings* will be referred to as "A&P.")

3 "Overture #37," A&P 1989, 529.

individualized piety. However, this overture shows that the members of the denomination recognized the need for a musical library that focused people's attention on humanitarian and environmental needs (". . . issues of concern to Christians in an era such as peacemaking, justice and stewardship of the environment are not sufficiently addressed by hymns in the current Book of Praise . . ."). The 1972 hymnal no longer reflected the current context of the church and the culture in which the church existed.

And so, in response to the two overtures noted above, the PCC Board of Congregational Life presented their report to the 1990 General Assembly:

> As a result of the study, the following recommendation is presented. . . . That:
> 1) the Board of Congregational Life be directed to establish a procedure to develop over a ten year period a revised edition of The Book of Praise for the beginning of the 21st Century;[4]

The 116th General Assembly deemed it necessary to revise the musical repertoire of the Presbyterian Church and begin the process of producing a new edition of *The Book of Praise* for the new century (it was intended that the new hymnal be released in the year 2000; however, it was completed ahead of schedule and published in 1997).

2. What was the process for revising the hymnal, and what were the goals of the Task Force assigned to this endeavour?

In 1990 the General Assembly recommended that a Task Force be set up to begin revising *The Book of Praise*. The Task Force was convened. As stated in their final report to General Assembly in 1996, they relied heavily on the PCC's Vision Statement for guidance throughout the process. Some elements of that vision statement are as follows:

> We will integrate evangelism, social action, and justice ministry. . . .
> We will be intentional about the ministry of youth and young adults, recognizing their value in the life and work of Christ's Church.
> We will use inclusive language as we learn to be inclusive.
> We will be effective communicators. We will use contemporary, inclusive language and learn to use metaphors sensitively. Our communication will convey our essential unity, vision, and sense of identity as we continually witness to the Lordship of Christ over all life.[5]

These elements reflect the expressed concerns in overtures #12 and #37 made in 1989 regarding inclusive language, the importance of youth and young adults in the life of the church, and the need for piety that reflects social action and justice concerns. By 1991 the Task Force on the Revision of the Book of Praise submitted a preliminary outline to guide it in selecting hymns for the new hymnal:

> Guidelines for hymn texts affirm that texts will be:
> 1. Faithful to the Scriptures.
> 2. Reflect the full range of the biblical imagery for God.
> 3. Be inclusive in relation to people showing sensitivity regarding age, ethnicity, gender, physical limitations.

---

4 "Report of the Board of Congregational Life," A&P 1990, 347.

5 A&P 1996, 316–17.

Guidelines for hymn music affirm that music will be:

1. The highest possible quality:
   - well-constructed
   - singable and playable
   - uplifting
   - durable.
2. Easily learned and remembered, while avoiding clichés.
3. Arranged so as to reflect its historical integrity.

Guidelines for the hymn book affirm that the book as a whole will:

1. Reflect the tradition of our reformed heritage while being informed by the richness of both the traditional and contemporary hymnody of the Church universal and the ethnic diversity of our denomination.
2. Reflect established marriages of tune and text; where two tunes are commonly used, both will be printed.
3. Include contributions from Canadians and Presbyterians.
4. Be printed in a usable format, including:
   - chord notations where appropriate
   - suggested alternative tunes
   - tempo markings for new hymns
   - descants
   - text between staves.
5. Provide hymns in a variety of lengths.
6. Reflect an appropriate balance between hymns using traditional and contemporary language.[6]

The Task Force then organized two initiatives to choose the hymns. The first involved two questionnaires circulated through the *Presbyterian Record* as well as through presbyteries to ministers and music directors across Canada. The goal of the questionnaires was to gain a sense of what Presbyterians were looking for in their hymnody. This assessment was needed in order "to inform the Task Force about the preferences of Presbyterians in their use of hymns and to inform Presbyterians about the work of the Task Force."[7] Although they did get a good number of responses, the responses did not represent the whole demographic spectrum: "Adults under age 40 are somewhat under-represented. Youth are especially under-represented in the survey responses."[8] Of the 1,618 returned questionnaires, "[r]espondents were mainly highly-involved Canadian Presbyterians aged 40 and over. Sixty-five percent were female, 35 percent male. Ninety-five percent were members of a Presbyterian congregation, 5 percent adherents."[9] Therefore, only those who were heavily involved in the operation of the church (and primarily female) would be represented in these data. (It is worth noting that although a goal of the Task Force was to make the hymnal more inclusive of youth and young adults, the data used to revise it came largely from a survey dominated by those more than 40 years old.)

The second initiative was a Hymn Testing Programme in which 100 congregations participated between March and August of 1994. "Participants organized

---

6 A&P 1991, 282.

7 Task Force on the Revision of the Book of Praise, "Report on the Hymn Book Questionnaires," *Task Force on the Revision of the Book of Praise, Minutes, Correspondence, Reports, etc.*, PCC Archives, Accession No. 2005-1019, 5.

8 Ibid., 7.

9 Ibid., 3.

committees, selected hymns from a package of about 50 items, used them in worship and in hymn-sings and discussion groups, and prepared detailed reports which they returned to the task force between September 1994 and February 1995."[10]

The responses to the surveys and questionnaires revealed that the call for change in hymnody focused on a desire for hymns that involved and were appropriate for children, included songs appropriate for adult baptism, integrated evangelism, and social justice, had lower key signatures (to allow for ease of singing), and used inclusive language. However, as seen from the discussion above, the responses from the questionnaires and surveys did not represent the complete diversity of the PCC's demographic. Therefore, although they did provide much valued and needed assistance, they were not enough in and of themselves to determine the criteria for the hymns in the revised hymnal. Furthermore, although the key issues were diversity, socially and environmentally minded piety and mission, and inclusive language, support across the denomination was not unanimous. Here are a few examples of comments the Task Force received on inclusive language:

- "Please, we pray, do not ruin the beautiful old hymns with inclusive language."[11]
- "Hopefully, there will not be any hymns with inclusive language [for God]. Reference should be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."[12]

And on the supportive side:

- "I hope the Task force is going to be adding hymns with inclusive God language . . . (as well as inclusive human language)."[13]

Based on their findings, the Task Force noted some trends. More than half of the hymns in the 1972 hymnal were in regular use, but the use of metrical psalms was in decline ("Fewer and fewer of the metrical psalms are being sung because of their awkward syntax . . ."). [14] Congregations were increasingly using other hymnals, and many complained that the key signatures of the hymns in the 1972 hymnal were too high. Many respondents expressed concern that the language of the current hymnal "addressed only part of the worshipping community and requested language which would include all worshippers."[15] The need to include music appropriate for children and young adults was a focus. Respondents also called for greater diversity in hymn styles to reflect the denomination's diverse ethnicity and for the hymnody to express "such themes as justice or personal faith in Christ."[16] There were also pragmatic concerns: "They looked for practical helps: a complete range of detailed indexes, tune cross-referencing, and helps and resources such as instrumental parts, percussion notation, descants and chord symbols."[17]

---

10 "Report on the Hymn Testing Programme," Summer 1995, PCC Archives, Accession No. 2005-1019, iii.
11 "Comments on Congregational Music," PCC Archives, Accession No. 2005-1019, #1491.
12 Ibid., #665.
13 Ibid., #653.
14 "Report of the Life and Mission Agency," A&P 1993, 275.
15 Donald Anderson and Andrew Donaldson, eds., *The Book of Praise* (Hudson, Quebec: Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1997), vii.
16 Ibid.
17 Preface to the 1997 *Book of Praise*, vii.

The Task Force considered hymns from both the 1972 *Book of Praise* as well as the 1918 edition. They also considered about 2,000 previously unpublished submissions (a competition was held with a cash reward for new submissions) and more than 100 collections of hymns from traditions other than that of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.[18]

There was support for the project from congregations across Canada: "The BOP '72 seemed too scholarly and proper to me"[19] and ". . . I don't envy you your task — it is monumental — but God is faithful. Be assured of our prayer support."[20] However, some of the comments made in response to the questionnaires were less than encouraging:

- "The following . . . hymns are not familiar to most congregations. Leave most of them out of the new book: . . ."[21] [A list of 260 hymns follows.]
- "It boggles my mind that you would even think about a new hymn book! In these economically poor times, how can you justify this needless expenditure of money and time and effort? Wake up, and listen to, and read about the starvation in the world. I sincerely hope that you really have prayerfully considered what you are doing."[22]
- "I am quite satisfied with the present, 1972, Book of Praise. I do not agree with the emphasis on inclusive language."[23]

The opposition to the revised *Book of Praise* went beyond comments made on the questionnaires. In an overture to the 1996 General Assembly there is evidence of strong concern regarding the new hymnbook:

> . . . WHEREAS, the said contents have not been submitted to the Committee on Church Doctrine for theological examination, and
> WHEREAS, John Calvin reminds us that "we should be very careful that our ears be not more attentive to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words" . . . (Institutes 3.20.32), and
> WHEREAS, the 1972 Book of Praise is regarded by numerous denominations as one of the finest Church hymnaries available in North America, and
> WHEREAS, the principle of publishing a new Hymn Book is one that has not been generally accepted by congregations at large, and . . .
> THEREFORE, the Presbytery of Vancouver Island humbly overtures the Venerable, the 122nd General Assembly, to ensure the continued availability of the 1972 Book of Praise for a period of not less than ten years following the publication of the Revised Book of Praise, or to do otherwise as the General Assembly, in its wisdom, may deem best.[24]

Nevertheless, in 1996, the Task Force on the Revision of the Book of Praise submitted to the 122nd General Assembly "That the revised Book of Praise (1996) be recommended for voluntary use in congregations" and "That the Task Force be discharged on publication of the book."[25] The new hymnal was published in 1997.

---

18 Diane Strickland, *Learning More about the Book of Psalms and the Book of Praise* (Toronto: Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1997). PCC Archives, Accession No. 2006-1058, 8.

19 "Comments on Congregational Music," #1137.

20 Ibid., #94.

21 Ibid., #1103.

22 Ibid., #1290.

23 Ibid., #1520.

24 A&P 1996, 482–83.

25 "Recommendations 7 and 8," A&P 1996, 321.

3. Have the goals been met?

Based on the discussion above and a survey of the existing literature and correspondence of the Task Force on the Revision of the Book of Praise, the goals for revising the hymnal were as follows: the hymns should (1) respect and reflect the PCC's heritage; (2) remain faithful to scripture; (3) reflect the PCC's vision of integrating evangelism, social action, and justice with mission and personal piety; (4) reflect the PCC's vision of inclusivity (gender, race, age); (5) reflect the PCC's vision of cooperating with other denominations; (6) reflect the PCC's vision of joyful, uplifting worship; and (7) reflect the PCC's vision of clearly communicating Christ's gospel.

In order to answer the question about whether the goals have been met, I will proceed by looking at how the revised hymnal sought to reflect the heritage of the Presbyterian Church in Canada by remaining in continuity with the tradition of the *Book of Praise* hymnals. I will then compare the table of contents of the 1997 hymnal with those of previous editions in order to reach a conclusion on the effectiveness of the hymnal in meeting the remaining goals described above and the degree to which the revised hymnal stands in continuity or discontinuity with the *Book of Praise* tradition.

Continuity or Discontinuity with *The Book of Praise* and Heritage of the PCC

In order for the new hymnal to be a unifying, identity-forming force in the contemporary Presbyterian Church in Canada, one of the guiding principles for the Task Force on the Revision of the Book of Praise was that the hymnal should faithfully represent the Canadian denomination's heritage. The first thing one sees when picking up the *Book of Praise* is the front cover and then the title page. The decision to maintain the name *The Book of Praise* indicates the desire to preserve the heritage of the PCC's musical tradition and shows continuity with the previous denominational hymnals. However, although the 1997 hymnal maintains the name, it is the first in the *Book of Praise* family to have neither the denominational name nor the denominational emblem (the burning bush) on the front cover or on the title page. In this simple yet highly visible way the 1997 hymnal represents discontinuity in the tradition of the *Book of Praise* hymnals.

Furthermore, the new emblem suggests a move away from the idea of a unifying denominationally specific hymnody that characterized the earlier editions. In referring to the new emblem (which contains a Celtic cross), however, Diane Strickland notes that the cross is central, but that "[i]t is a Celtic cross, which recognizes the Irish and Scottish roots of The Presbyterian Church in Canada."[26] It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the ethnic influences in the Presbyterian Church in Canada; however, I would suggest that this emblem provides a somewhat limiting understanding of the denomination's ethnic heritage and that the inclusion of this emblem promotes the misconception that the Church is solely Scottish and Irish. While there are undeniably prominent roots in Scotland and Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Canada has long been a denomination of diverse ethnicities. One of the goals of the Task Force was to

---

26 Strickland, *Learning More*, 15.

select hymns that reflect this diversity; I suggest that the emblem chosen for the hymnal limits the effectiveness of this goal. Nevertheless, while the Celtic cross that is featured in the emblem attempts to link the hymnal to the PCC's Scottish and Irish heritage, the lack of the burning bush marks a distinct discontinuity with the tradition of the *Book of Praise*.

The general structure of *The Book of Praise* has remained continuous since the first edition was published in 1897. Part of the PCC's heritage concerns the importance that the denomination has placed on the inclusion of psalms in corporate worship as well as in personal piety. As such, the first section of each edition within the *Book of Praise* literary tradition has always been dedicated to metrical psalms (although the number of psalms included varied from edition to edition). The Task Force on the Revision of the Book of Praise ensured that this aspect of the PCC heritage was reflected in the revised hymnal. The intentionality with which the Task Force approached the inclusion of metrical psalms in the 1997 *Book of Praise*, coupled with the separate Psalter, *Book of Psalms* (released in 1996) shows that, in this regard, the 1997 *Book of Praise* stands in continuity with the tradition and also in preserving the heritage of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The hymnal therefore helps to inform the identity and maintain unity within the denomination. However, the question needs to be asked whether or not congregations are using the psalm resources. The hymnal can inform the identity of the denomination only if the congregations use it. Do people outside of the academic sphere within the Presbyterian Church in Canada consider the psalms an important enough part of our heritage to merit so much attention in our musical canon? One complaint of the 1972 *Book of Praise* was that the metrical psalms were not being sung.[27] Has this changed since publishing the twin books in 1996 and 1997? This is an area that needs further research.

In the *Book of Praise* tradition, hymns have always followed the metrical psalms. In this regard the 1997 hymnal stands in continuity with the previous editions and thus tries to preserve some of the PCC heritage. The Task Force carefully chose which hymns would be retained, excluded, and added. Certain hymns have long held a favoured place in the hearts of Canadian Presbyterians, and the Task Force sought to preserve this heritage by retaining some of the more commonly sung hymns from both the 1972 hymnal as well as the 1918 hymnal (such as #11, "The Lord's my shepherd"; and #543, "Here, O My Lord"). In the case where it was deemed necessary to revise the words in order to achieve more inclusivity, the Task Force included the original words of certain favoured hymns as well (see, for example, #350, "To God be the glory").

By trying to maintain some of the PCC heritage through maintaining the general structure of the hymnal (two sections: metrical psalms followed by hymns), as well as by maintaining metrical psalms and some favoured hymns from previous editions, the Task Force successfully kept the 1997 *Book of Praise* in continuity with the tradition. In other ways, however, the 1997 *Book of Praise* broke tradition.

Comparison of the Table of Contents of the Book of Praise: 1897, 1918, 1972, 1997

Within the continuity of the general structure of the hymnal, there are some significant discontinuities that we see when we examine the table of contents of the 1997 hymnal.

---

27 "Report of the Life and Mission Agency," A&P 1993, 275.

The table of contents is one of the first points of encounter in a book. Because of this its subject headings communicate the priorities of the book and, therefore, the priorities of the book's author (or, in this case, of the denomination). In this section I will argue that, based on the headings in the table of contents, the 1997 hymnal stands in discontinuity with the *Book of Praise* tradition. However, before going further I need to state that even though a particular theme is not listed as a heading in the table of contents, it may still be represented in the body of hymns. The Task Force included 103 pages of indices at the back of the 1997 *Book of Praise*, indicating that many hymns could be categorized in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, I will proceed in light of my argument that the table of contents suggests the priorities of the book and its community.

All four iterations of *The Book of Praise* are divided into two sections: metrical psalms and the hymnal proper. If you were a long-time member of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1972, someone who had grown up with the 1918 *Book of Praise*, and you opened the new hymnal to look at the table of contents, you would likely feel some sense of reassurance. The table of contents of the 1972 hymnal was remarkably similar to that of the 1918 hymnal which, in turn, was remarkably similar to that of the 1897 hymnal. The first three iterations of the *Book of Praise* reflect the structure of the metrical psalms followed by hymns devoted to the praise of God. However, if you then considered the table of contents of the 1997 *Book of Praise*, you would quickly suspect that something within the denomination's self-understanding had changed. It is true that the new hymnal begins once again with a section devoted to metrical psalms. In this way the book is a continuation of the tradition of the *Book of Praise*.

However, after the psalms the table of contents breaks from tradition. Whereas in 1972 (as well as in 1918 and 1897) the first section within the hymnal proper was devoted to God (Trinity, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Scripture), in 1997 it is devoted to the Church Year. The liturgical year (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Baptism of Jesus, Transfiguration, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension/Reign of Christ, Day of Pentecost) did not even get explicit mention in the previous hymnals. This change suggests that the Task Force, as well as the Presbyterian Church in Canada at large, was responding to new ecumenical dialogue and renewed interest in liturgical traditions. This discontinuity suggests a marked change in the denomination's identity and priorities.

One category within the table of contents that deserves some mention is that of "Our Life in Christ" (in previous editions this category was called "The Christian Life"). In the earlier editions, the subheadings within this category were heavily focused on personal piety, repentance, and faith. Although the 1918 *Book of Praise* also lists the subheadings "Discipleship and Consecration" and "Brotherly Love and Service" and the 1897 *Book of Praise* includes a section on mission (as a subsection of "The Church"), the focus seems to be on personal holiness and personal salvation. In this matter, the 1997 hymnal again shows discontinuity with its predecessors. The subheadings of the category "Our Life in Christ" are as follows: Discipleship, Faith, Love, Justice, Peace, and Mission. This would suggest that the hymnal is satisfying the goal of integrating evangelism with social action and justice. Furthermore, this category reflects the current outward focus of the Presbyterian Church in Canada on faith *with* works (not as a salvation issue but as an application issue): "We worship *and work* as a part of the whole body of Christ *present in the world.*"[28]

---

[28] Preface to the 1997 *Book of Praise*, vi [emphasis added].

It is interesting to note that one goal of the new hymnal was to provide more hymns appropriate to children and youth. Looking only at the table of contents, one could conclude that the hymnal has failed in this respect. There is no heading relating to children, youth, or young adults. This lack is especially apparent if we consider the 1897 hymnal in which the category devoted solely to "Hymns for the Young"[29] contains 12 subcategories. In 1918, this category was continued (albeit without the explicit subheadings), but it disappeared from the table of contents in 1972. However, like many aspects of the 1997 hymnal, simply because it does not appear as a unique heading does not mean that it is not represented. I have mentioned before that the Task Force crafted a very detailed set of indices for the new hymnal, and one of these indices is labelled "Items for Children and Youth." This index is further divided into 29 of the subheadings from the table of contents. Although there may not be many children-specific hymns, the Task Force has endeavoured to index any hymns that are helpful for engaging children and youth in worship services. This effort suggests a shift towards including children and youth into the whole life and worship of the church. In this way the Task Force fulfilled the goal and vision of including children and youth even at the cost of breaking continuity with the *Book of Praise* tradition.

One other goal of the Task Force relating to the vision statement of the Church was that the hymn book clearly communicate the Gospel. Although no heading is titled "The Gospel Call"[30] as there was in 1918 or "The Gospel: (1) Needed, (2) Provided, (3) Offered, (4) Accepted"[31] as there was in 1897, the Gospel is communicated throughout the hymnal. As John Derksen noted in *The Presbyterian Record*, "Paul Westermeyer observes that if you laid out all of our hymns in a sequential fashion, you would find the entire story of God's mighty acts there — from creation, through Old Testament history and prophets, through Incarnation to the Church 'between the times' . . ."[32] In this context the 1997 *Book of Praise* does communicate the Gospel of Christ, but not explicitly. In this matter the hymnal again breaks with the tradition in order to meet the needs of the denomination.

The brief comparisons given above between the 1997 revision and the previous three editions show that there is continuity but also great discontinuity in the *Book of Praise* tradition. This suggests that, between 1972 and 1997 there was a shift in self-understanding within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. This shift seems to be towards more community focus; an understanding of Christian discipleship as justice, love, and peace as well as personal piety; and a more inclusive approach to children and youth in the body of believers that make up the denomination. Although the study of the tables of contents as well as the front cover and emblem shows the marked discontinuity of the 1997 hymnal within the *Book of Praise* tradition, that discontinuity is a result of striving to meet the goals laid out by the Task Force in answer to the calls from presbyteries and synods for a revised body of hymns. The goals set out by the Task Force for the revision of *The Book of Praise* were met by the 1997 hymnal. These goals (arrived at by a careful

---

29 Alexander MacMillan (convener) and William B. McMurrich (secretary), table of contents of *The Presbyterian Book of Praise* (London: Oxford University Press, 1897), v.

30 W. J. Dey (convener) and A. MacMillan (secretary), table of contents of *The Book of Praise* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1918).

31 Contents of the Hymnal, 1897 *Book of Praise*.

32 John Derksen, "You Are What You Sing: You Sing What You Are," *The Presbyterian Record* (March 1997): 19.

study of the context in which the Presbyterian Church in Canada exists) suggest that the hymnal does reflect the PCC's understanding of its identity and purpose for the 21st century. This identity and purpose is one of inclusivity and striving to be an agent of God's work of social and environmental justice. However, in order to achieve these goals, the 1997 *Book of Praise* did have to break with the continuity of the *Book of Praise* tradition.