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The Christian Heritage in Canada[1]

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THE WORLD Council of Churches has set up a Theological Commission[2] whose purpose is to seek out among the various expressions of Christianity a tradition common to them all. It is hoped that the explication of this common tradition may be a helpful step along the way to a reunited Christendom. The purpose of this paper is similar: to discover if there is a Canadian expression of Christianity which has put its impress upon all the various traditions that have been brought to this country from many different lands. There is also the subdued hope that such a search may reveal a "Canadian expression of all that the Catholic church stands for."[3]

I

Such a project bristles with obstacles, for it implies that there is a Canadian identity, vigorous enough to have put its stamp upon all the various institutions and structures that go into the making of a national culture. Canadian identity, however, is a matter of much dispute among our historians and literary folk. The historians range in their pursuit from the Turner frontier thesis school to the St. Lawrence River school; the former sees Canada as a typical North American country largely shaped by the open frontier, while the latter plays down the American link and holds "that the St. Lawrence River with its extensions far into the continent, has been from the beginning the main determinant of Canadian history, political as well as economic."[4] These are, however, more or less environmental interpretations of Canadian development, to which our novelists add their quota with their emphasis upon the startling aspects of Canadian climate or the delineation of regional types.[5]

Making all due allowances for environmental and regional factors, which must always be given a high priority in any estimate of the Canadian identity, there must also be found a large place for strong personalities who contribute to the formation of national types. It is perhaps not possible

1. The Presidential Address, delivered at the second annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Church History, Montreal, May 17, 1961.
2. Theological Commission on Tradition and Traditions. A good outline of the purpose of this Commission is A. C. Outler, *The Christian Tradition and the Unity We Seek* (New York, 1957).
3. A paraphrase of Bishop Palmer's vision: "An Indian expression of all that the Catholic Church stands for." Quoted by Bengt Sundkler, *Church of South India: The Movement towards Union, 1900–1947* (London, 1954), p. 121.
4. C. B. Macpherson, "The Social Sciences," in Julian Park (ed.), *The Culture of Contemporary Canada* (Ithaca, 1957), p. 195.
5. Cf. Roy Daniells, "Literature," in *The Culture of Contemporary Canada*, pp. 33–44.

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to point to a Canadian John Knox and apply to him what Carlyle said of Knox: "to whom the Scotch owe everything that distinguishes them among the nations." It is possible, however, to say that Canada is somewhat distinguished among the nations because of Bishop Laval and Egerton Ryerson: the former in the early days of colonization provided French Canada with a unique parochial system that is still vital today;[6] the latter, on the eve of Confederation presented Ontario with an educational system that became a model for the rest of English-Speaking Canada.[7] But far more important than environment and strong personalities is the existence of two major cultural groups within one national framework. The clash of cultures is the great Canadian theme, for it brought about Confederation, and was a most determining factor in shaping our fundamental instrument of government, the British North America Act of 1867. It is seldom absent from any session of the Canadian parliament.

II

Behind this persistent theme in Canadian national life is one supreme interest—the preservation of a French Canadian identity. Whatever misgivings there may be about a Canadian identity, and there are many, there are none about a French Canadian identity. Such an identity was evident almost from the first days of colonization. The explanation for this early emergence of a peculiar people lies in the fact that the original settlers in Canada came mostly from one area in France, Normandy and the adjacent territories. Nor did they come in any large numbers, only a few thousand, after which the colony peopled itself by means of an extremely high birth-rate.[8] Thus, from the beginning, New France was a homogeneous state with a uniformity of outlook, that put it in sharp contrast to Old France, which has long been noted for its infinite variety of views.[9]

It does not follow, however, that there were no clashes of opinion in the colony or that the circumstances of the New World did not leave their impress upon the Normandy tradition. One serious division appeared almost immediately, because of the fact that the colony began as a combination of a trading post and a missionary project. Behind the missionary project was a tremendous religious zeal, generated by the Catholic revival of seventeenth-century France.[10] This revival is a most significant fact to keep

6. Cf. M. Roy, *The Parish and Democracy in French Canada* (Toronto, 1950), p. 17.

7. Cf. C. B. Sissons, *Egerton Ryerson: His Life and Letters* (Toronto, 1937–47), Vol. II, ch. III, "The Quest of a School System."

8. Cf. A. R. M. Lower, *Canadians in the Making* (Toronto, 1958), pp. 33–34, for an interesting comment on "reproductive valour in New France," accompanied by a chart.

9. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 28–33, for a discussion on the uniformity of the outlook of New France.

10. Cf. E. Lavisse, *Histoire de France* (Paris, 1905), Vol. III, p. 88: "Negliger les choses religieuses du XVIIᵉ siècle ou les estimer petitement, c'est ne pas comprendre l'histoire de ce siècle, c'est ne pas le sentir."

in mind for any understanding of the nature and quality of the religious life of New France; but perhaps its chief significance lies in the fact that it supplied the colony with a superabundance of religious orders and thus made possible a very close church supervision of the social and cultural development of what was intended to be a Catholic empire in the New World. The chief obstacles in the way of this goal were the needs of the trading post; unless the trading companies could show a profit New France was not a viable state; and profits seemed to be bound up with a rather disreputable liquor trade among the aborigines.[11] To this, the church in the person of its first bishop, François de Montmorency Laval, was unalterably opposed. Thus arose a bitter struggle between church and state fired by the spirit of Gallicanism, which could not be wholly excluded from New France.

But though Gallicanism was early imported to New France, the church on the whole was able to exclude other dissident movements that so much disturbed the religious life of eighteenth-century France, such as Jansenism and quietism; nor was the colony allowed to share in the theological unrest of Europe brought about by what has been described as "the downfall of Aristotle and Ptolemy."[12] One result of this exclusion from the tensions and polemics associated with the Copernican challenge was the creation of a people who are even today deeply estranged from the modern world and for whom adjustment to the industrial revolution has been far more painful than it might otherwise have been.[13]

III

While the Church remained rigid on matters of doctrine, it did make, as it were, sociological adjustments to the New World environment. One of these was to impose an austere way of life on the early settlers, which was no doubt necessary for survival on the open frontier where intemperance has always been a serious threat to community life. Also it was found necessary to make concessions to the democratic spirit of frontier settlements, and this is reflected in the parochial system of Quebec, in which, since the time of Laval, parishioners have been permitted to elect wardens, who are embodied in a *fabrique*, the church council which unites both the civil and religious aspects of the community into one corporation.[14] But this concession to frontier democracy was closely bound up with an immediate supervision by priest and bishop of every aspect of community life. Consequently, when the British took possession of the colony in 1759, they found it impossible to rule their new subjects except through the intervention of

11. On the liquor trade, cf. *Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France*, Vol. I (Quebec, 1885), pp. 534–536.
12. H. Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science* (London, 1949), p. 48.
13. Cf. E. C. Hughes, *French Canada in Transition* (London, 1946), *passim*.
14. Cf. Roy, *The Parish and Democracy*, p. 17.

the parish priests. Thus arose an even closer relationship between priest and people than had prevailed under the old régime.[15]

Since Britain was facing serious disaffection among her Thirteen Colonies to the south, she was inclined to foster this close alliance between priest and people as one way of securing the loyalty of her new subjects. This involved making considerable concessions to the church, such as allowing it to continue to tithe and permitting the new province to retain French civil law and the feudal practices of the old régime.

Naturally special privileges of this nature were greatly resented by the English-speaking settlers who moved into Canada after the British Conquest. Britain tried to remove this racial clash by the Constitution Act of 1791 which divided the country into English-speaking and French-speaking areas, leaving to the French their old customs and church privileges. This solution only seemed to intensify the ill-feeling between the two Canadas, and after a searching inquiry by a commission headed by Lord Durham, a famous Report was issued which urged that the two Canadas be reunited and that French Canadian culture be suppressed.[16]

The Durham Report had just the contrary effect, for it challenged François-Xavier Garneau to write his *Histoire du Canada* (1843), which has done more than even the church to make French Canadians remain a people apart from the rest of Canada. Garneau saw that the survival of French Canada as a cultural entity within an aggressive Anglo-Saxon culture would depend upon his compatriots' becoming sensitively conscious of themselves as a people. He wrote his history with this end in view, and to this day the purpose of French Canadian history writing has remained the same. What differences there are among the historians are only on the best way of making French Canadians conscious of their nationality. And since all of them regard the church as the first line of defence in the struggle for cultural survival, the church has continued to hold a position of respect and authority as in no other country in the world.[17]

IV

Such a solid and impregnable phalanx of Roman Catholicism could not fail to have a profound influence upon the development of Protestantism. The most evident effect was the desire to create an equally solid phalanx of Protestantism, but it was a hope long deferred, because of the lack of homogeneity within English-speaking Canada and the failure of the traditional Protestant churches to provide for the religious needs of uprooted people on the frontier.

15. An interesting comment on the relation between priest and people is to be found in an article by K. H. Cousland, "The Roman Catholic Church and the State in Canada: An Historical Survey of their Relations," *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. II, No. 2 (March, 1956), pp. 101–106.

16. Cf. Reginald Coupland, *The Durham Report: An Abridged Version with an Introduction and Notes* (Oxford, 1945), p. 15.

17. Cf. Macpherson, "The Social Sciences," p. 187.

It was the intention of the British government to set up, as soon as times were propitious, an established Protestant church which would serve as a counterweight to the Roman Catholic, and perhaps in time embrace the latter within the new establishment. The very variety of racial stocks and religious allegiances of the new immigrants soon made it evident that this was a vain hope. Furthermore, such a reversal of the French Canadian allegiance would have required a religious zeal on the part of the Protestants equal at least to that of the Roman Catholics; but as has been pointed out by Professor John T. McNeill, who has made a close study of the religious and moral conditions among the Canadian pioneers, "Religious motives were not present in the migrations to the Canadian provinces." It is his conclusion that "the mass of settlers at all stages came to obtain material and not religious opportunity."[18] Even of the Scots we are told that "they did not belong to that class in which religion has the strongest hold."[19] An even greater obstacle in building up a united front before the close-knit French community was the ethnic diversity of the Protestants. In not a single province except Quebec was one racial element dominant. A third consideration to keep in mind when estimating the challenge that faced the Protestant churches in Canada in pioneer days was the social status of the first settlers. The vast majority came from the socially underprivileged; many of them were "induced to go to the colonies, more for the convenience of the parish authorities at home than for their own."[20] A few upper-class people did arrive but they were eager to enhance their standing and created much discontent by monopolizing privileged positions in all the provinces.

With the arrival in the middle eighties of some forty thousand United Empire Loyalists, there seemed good hope that these would provide a more homogeneous population with which the Anglican church could make establishment a reality. It was a deceptive hope as the racial descent and religious allegiance of the Loyalists were just as varied as those of the earlier settlers. Nor did later immigration from either the United States or the British Isles prove to be any less mixed. It soon became evident that, with the exception of Quebec, no church was to become dominant in Canada; consequently there began a stiff rivalry among all the churches to gain a secure foothold in the colonies, and this development hindered all attempts on the part of the British authorities to establish a church which might remind the French Canadians that their Roman church was merely tolerated by the government.

v

Even if conditions for the creation of an established church in Canada had been more propitious, none of the traditional churches of Europe or America would have been equal to the challenge presented by frontier life

18. *Papers of the American Church History Society*, Second series, Vol. VIII (New York and London, 1928), p. 71.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

in the closing days of the eighteenth century. The obvious task before the churches was the reorganization of the social life of a people, many of whom had abandoned established *mores* and had developed intemperate habits.

In England itself, in the new industrial cities, there was need for the same kind of social reorganization as on the turbulent frontier of British North America. As Professor G. R. Cragg has recently reminded us, the Church of England in "the Age of Reason had forgotten certain fundamental human needs; natural religion might satisfy the minds of some, but the hearts of the multitudes were hungry."[21] The best representatives of the Church of England, Bishops Butler and Berkeley, had little to say that either the industrial worker or the frontiersman could understand. Both of them looked upon the national church as the guardian and protector of a caste-privileged society—hardly a view that would be received with any warmth in the levelling atmosphere of the New World.

The Anglican clergy for the most part took as their textbook on morals and manners *The Whole Duty of Man*, which proclaimed "that rigid class divisions were divinely ordained, and that all good subjects must faithfully perform their duties in those particular stations of life wherein it has pleased God to place them."[22] Unfortunately, these were the morals and manners that the first Anglican bishops in Canada, Charles Inglis in Nova Scotia, and Jacob Mountain in Quebec, tried unsuccessfully to inculcate, with disastrous consequences for the Church of England in Canada.

Nor did the Scottish Presbyterians have a more inspiring or comprehensible doctrine for the frontier. At the time that Canada was opened up to Scottish immigration the Established Church of Scotland had come under the influence of the Enlightenment and was inclined to deprecate religious enthusiasm. In the words of its historians it was an era of moderatism, which did not produce missionary zeal or the spirit of self-sacrifice; and so very few ministers of the Kirk volunteered to go to Canada. Indeed there was not much call for them as most of the Scottish settlers came from the less well-to-do families and belonged to the dissenting Presbyterian churches. Even dissent, however, had been affected by the spirit of moderation and dissenting clergy were almost as reluctant to leave the homeland as the clergy of the Kirk, despite the pleas of their compatriots in Canada.[23]

It is the same story when we turn to non-conformity in England. "For the non-conformists," says Professor Cragg, "the eighteenth century was a placid and unheroic age. Their forefathers had arisen in their wrath to bring down king and bishops, but scarcely an echo of the old zeal survived."[24] Non-conformity in Canada was represented by New England Congregationalists, who arrived in fairly large numbers in Nova Scotia in the middle of the eighteenth century. Congregationalism or Independency

21. G. R. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason* (Harmondsworth, 1960), p. 141.
22. Cf. J. W. Bready, *England: before and after Wesley* (London, 1938), p. 85.
23. Cf. G. Patterson, *Memoir of the Rev. James MacGregor, D.D.* (Philadelphia, 1859), p. 220.
24. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason*, p. 132.

(as it was known in England) had in New England assumed the unusual role of an established church; but just when it might have taken over the organization of the religious and social life of Nova Scotia it was at a peculiarly low ebb in its homeland.

For some reasons New England Congregationalism seemed to be the least able of all the traditional churches to export its peculiar form of church government and never became a major denomination in Canada, though some individual Congregational ministers did play an important role in the political and social life of our larger cities. In their failure to sever their church membership from civic responsibility and to provide a less class-conscious church government they were never able to appeal to the socially disorganized frontiersman.

This was done by the Baptists in Nova Scotia, and for a time it looked as if the Baptist church was the ideal frontier church; but after its promising start in Nova Scotia, it never was able to repeat its original triumph on the Western frontier. It may well be that its victory was too great in the Maritimes, where it practically took over the former Congregational churches and flocks after they had passed through a Newlight phase; along with this it received an influx of dissident evangelical Anglicans who provided it with a new intellectual status. Although this combination gave the Baptist church an influential place in the social and political development of the Maritime provinces, it seems to have taken it out of the running as a frontier religion.

<div align="center">VI</div>

The picture I have drawn of the traditional churches of Britain and America is perhaps too bleak; within all of them were stirrings of future promise. The "Religious Society Movement" of late seventeenth-century England[25] was to be productive of an evangelical revival within the churches of both England and Scotland which would eventuate in missionary programmes that would plant both Anglicanism and Presbyterianism firmly in Canada. But before these established churches got around to adapting their old-country ways to the new conditions on the frontier, there was a decided weakening of religious interest in Canada; and none of the traditional churches were capable of renewing that interest. There was evident need for a drastic religious awakening; and the awakening, when it came, was in part an angry revolt against the traditional churches. As S. D. Clark has so copiously illustrated in his *Church and Sect in Canada*, the religious movements started by two men, Henry Alline in Nova Scotia in 1775 and William Aberhart in Alberta in 1922, though "separated in time by a century and a half and in space by over three thousand miles . . . were intimately related in the larger complex of the religious social development of Canada."[26] The similarity of the two movements is due to the fact that both Alline and

25. Cf. C. F. Pascoe, *Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.* (London, 1901), Vol. I, p. 2.
26. S. D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto, 1948), p. xi.

Aberhart found themselves dealing with a like situation, preaching to a mixed population which had arrived in great numbers from various parts of the world—an uprooted and to some extent a demoralized people who could not find an answer to their problems in the traditional churches.

This phenomenon is not peculiar to Canada, but is part of the North American religious complex. In point of fact most of the religious awakenings that spread across Canada during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries originated in the United States, but they did not always consolidate their gains in the same way. For example, the great religious awakening that occurred in Nova Scotia in the late eighteenth century can be traced back to an earlier revival under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards in New England; but whereas the New England revival culminated in a New Divinity School, and an Enlightenment "logically blending into an amorphous cultural humanism,"[27] the Nova Scotian revival, although it culminated in a very dogmatic type of religion, of which the Baptists were the chief exponents, exerted its greatest influence in "social reorganization or social unification."[28] In its attack upon the exclusive claims of the Church of England and the special privileges of the colonial upper class, it found itself more and more concerned with the political life of the province, so that in time it put one of its own members into the premier's chair, and became responsible for the formation of a public school system.[29] Thus a sectarian movement with an emphasis upon separation from the world was forced by the extensive changes it had brought about in social relationship to accept political responsibility.

Although the Baptist church in the Maritimes moved rather rapidly from a sect to a church type of religion it has not been able to repeat this process in other parts of Canada. Frequently, Baptist associations have been prey to sudden schisms which organize new religions of protest against the established churches. The most notable of these was the break-up of the Ontario-Quebec convention in 1926 and the formation of an association of Regular Baptist churches, dedicated to a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible. Out of this movement came the Prophetic Baptist Church in Alberta, which with the assistance of other fundamentalist sects put its founder William Aberhart into power as premier of Alberta. Thus was repeated once again that strange anomaly of Canadian religious development—a sectarian other-worldly religion creating a very this-worldly political party.[30]

Because of the constant disruptions within the Baptist community it has never been able to create a genuine national church. Other denominations in Canada have faced a similar problem. The Lutheran church, for

27. E. S. Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England* (New York, 1957), p. 138.

28. Clark, *Church and Sect*, p. 88.

29. Cf. H. H. Walsh, *The Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto, 1956), pp. 159–160.

30. Cf. John A. Irving, *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta* (Toronto, 1959), *passim*.

example, has had a continuous history in Canada since 1772, but it has failed as yet to complete a national structure. This failure has been partly due to the language barrier among the various ethnic groups that have come to Canada in recent years; but it is also due to the fact that these recent immigrants are displaced and uprooted people and so open to the lure of the fundamentalist sects.[31]

The same may be said of those churches closely allied in spirit to Eastern Orthodoxy. Their strength comes in the first place from the fact that they serve as conservators of old-country ethnic customs and historic prejudices, as in an earlier day both the Anglican and Scottish churches considered themselves the conservators of old-country ideals and practices. But just as the Anglican and Presbyterian churches were attacked by the Newlight sects in Nova Scotia, so today new sects are making inroads upon Orthodoxy and its allies; Jehovah's Witnesses, particularly, are making a strong appeal to Orthodox, Uniat, and even Roman Catholic churches in Western Canada.[32]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to follow further these religious movements of protest, which are of so great interest to our sociologists, for they contribute little in a search for a Canadian Christian tradition. As long as Canada continues to receive large numbers of immigrants, who for a time will repeat the cycle of disorganization and reorientation, there will be confusion of outlook among the churches to which these immigrants belong, or among the new emerging sects to which they may turn to secure a new social status "in the community of the saints." What will be the ultimate form of their Canadianism must remain in the realm of speculation; and in such areas and among these newer citizens Canada will continue to be, in the words of Bruce Hutchison's title, *The Unknown Country*.

VII

It should be remembered, however, that the sectarian aspect of our religious and social development belongs to minority groups of our population. The vast majority of Canadians have gone through, as it were, the sectarian phase of their development and have reached a mature adjustment to New World conditions. It is to such sectors of our people that we must look for a Canadian identity and the shape of Canadian Christianity. The church that best illustrates for us this transition from sectarianism to a New-World church type of religion is the Methodist, now embraced in the United Church of Canada. Methodism has long been recognized as one of the determining influences in shaping the national character of English-speaking Canada. Although it had close affiliations with the pietistic movements on the continent of Europe and with Newlightism in America, there were in its early development certain historical factors which gave it a

31. Cf. W. E. Mann, *Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta* (Toronto, 1955), p. 33.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

decided advantage over rival sects as a frontier religion. The first of these was the class meeting, organized by Wesley as a means of keeping his followers true to their conversion experiences and to serve as a check upon extravagant expressions of religious enthusiasm.[33] A second factor in its favour was the circuit system with its itinerant ministry; other denominations soon learned the value of an itinerant ministry, but the Methodist preachers had an advantage over all other itinerants in that they carried along with them less baggage in the form of doctrinal tests. It was an Arminian type of Methodism that predominated on the American continent; consequently, activism rather than pietism became a characteristic of Canadian as well as American Christianity. Except in Nova Scotia, Methodism was at first an importation into Canada from the United States, during the second great religious awakening on the Western frontier. On the Canadian side of the border, however, there entered an element not present on the American side, for during the war of 1812 it became necessary to look for missionaries from England; these, when they arrived, brought with them a far more conservative type of Methodism than the American. The tension between these two wings of Methodism was to be productive of many schisms until Egerton Ryerson, the son of an Anglican Loyalist, but a convert to American Methodism, attempted to bridge the gulf between the two wings of the movement. He did this because he was engaged in a political duel with John Strachan, Archdeacon of York, who was attempting to create an Anglican-dominated society through church control of the educational system of the province. In the heat of the quarrel Strachan had cast aspersions on the loyalty of American-type Methodists.[34] In order to combat this accusation and also to secure governmental subsidy for Methodist educational and missionary objectives, Ryerson was willing to subordinate his own branch of Methodism to the English Wesleyan Conference.

At the end of a long and painful controversy, both Anglicanism and Methodism went through many structural and ideological changes, not the least being an acceptance by the Anglicans of the much contemned voluntary system for church support, and the acceptance by the Methodists of state subsidy. Nor were the Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Roman Catholics merely spectators in this controversy between church and state. All of them became involved in the political aspects of the struggle and more and more conscious of the national welfare of their country; this was particularly evident during election campaigns preceding the consummation of the confederation of the provinces into the Dominion of Canada.

<div align="center">VIII</div>

We come now to one of the most important factors in the creation of a Canadian church tradition. As soon as Confederation became an actuality

33. Cf. S. G. Dimond, *The Psychology of the Methodist Revival* (London, 1926), p. 38.
34. Cf. Sissons, *Egerton Ryerson*, Vol. I, pp. 152–191.

in 1867 the major denominations endeavoured to make their ecclesiastical structures conterminous with the new national state. This goal was necessarily preceded by a series of church unions. In 1870 four independent Presbyterian churches began to negotiate for the creation of one Presbyterian church; this was accomplished by 1874, bringing into being a General Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, representing a church population of 578,185.[35] Thus the long-divided Presbyterians took the lead in building a territorial church that was conterminous with the national boundaries of the confederated provinces of Canada. Next in line were the Methodists, who by 1884 succeeded in uniting six separate Methodist churches into one territorial church ruled over by a General Conference meeting every four years. This church became the largest Protestant body in Canada, with a membership at the time of the census of 1891 of 861,666, being 17.8 per cent of the population; the Presbyterians at the time of the same census represented 15.9 per cent. The Anglicans came next with a membership of 661,608, or 13.7 per cent of the population. According to the same census the Roman Catholics numbered 1,814,055, or 41.9 per cent of the total population of Canada.[36]

The Anglicans were somewhat delayed in forming their territorial church by the fact that they had become wedded to diocesan and provincial synods, which were difficult to fit into a national framework. By 1893, however, all the dioceses of Canada were represented in a General Synod which meets every three years. It was not until 1944 that a Baptist Federation of Canada was finally accomplished, but it was by no means representative of all the Baptists of Canada, and it still remains a very loosely organized federation because of the Baptist fear of monolithic unity. At the time of formation it had some 443,944 adherents, or 4.2 per cent of the population of Canada. A Congregational Union of Canada, whose function was "to cultivate brotherly affection and to obtain accurate statistical information," was founded in 1906, but it never attained the status of a national church. At the time of its formation the union was representative of about 25,504 Congregationalists, being 0.5 per cent of the population of Canada.

In 1952 there was set up a Canadian Lutheran Council to which most Lutheran bodies are affiliated, but their historian V. J. Eylands assures us that ultimate Lutheran unification is still a dream in Canada.[37] The Lutherans, all told, number some 444,923, or about 3.2 per cent of the population. Despite the hesitation of all these smaller groups to give up their local autonomy, there is evidence of a desire among even the most fearful to bring about a constitutional development in harmony with the political boundaries of Canada. Nor does this general observation exclude the Roman Catholic Church, whose first task after Confederation was to decentralize

35. Cf. W. Gregg, *Short History of the Presbyterian Church in the Dominion of Canada* (Toronto, 1892), p. 191.

36. *Ninth Census of Canada, 1951* (Ottawa, 1953), Vol. I, table 37, contains "numerical and percentage distribution of the population by religious denominations" from 1871 to 1915.

37. Cf. V. J. Eylands, art. "Lutheran Church," in *Encyclopedia Canadiana*, Vol. VI, pp. 226–229.

its top heavy rule from Quebec and then organize a Plenary Council (1909) more in harmony with the spirit of Confederation.[38]

One result of the organization of territorial churches was to lessen denominational rivalry; it became customary at national conferences of the churches to send fraternal greetings to one another. It was while a committee was conveying greetings from the Presbyterian General Assembly meeting in Winnipeg in 1902 to the Methodist General Conference also meeting in Winnipeg that negotiations for organic union between these two churches were undertaken. What at first looked like an impulsive gesture, without much forethought, on the part of an idealistic college professor was soon seen to represent a deep-felt urge in Canadian church life.[39] It is significant that the negotiations originated in Western Canada where all the major churches were facing serious difficulty in providing adequate services to a population thinly stretched out along two transcontinental railroads. Their failure in this regard had been a serious embarrassment to the churches since the Canadian government relied heavily upon them to provide moral and cultural guidance for new Canadians. This responsibility had for some time been the most pressing concern of home mission boards, and when these faltered the scattered settlements began to create community churches adequate to their needs. As these appeared to serve the community better than denominational churches, their members were fired with the idea that such churches should lead the way to nothing less than a national church of Canada.

IX

Many other factors also contributed to the desire for a national church. The artificiality of Canadian Confederation, which has been described as "the child of political deadlock,"[40] has made national unity something that must be constantly cultivated; and this situation has made the churches, which formerly produced the deadlock, more apologetic about their divisions than might otherwise have been the case. Again, the great number of conflicting interests that Canadians have had to overcome in order to create a viable nation has imposed upon them a spirit of toleration that is quite evident in public life. And so when a governor-general of Canada for the first time addressed a joint session of the American Congress he could with good grace plead for "infinite patience in international affairs."[41] It was by the practice of infinite patience that church leaders broke down the sectarian and regional barriers to the formation of territorial churches; the same infinite patience may yet bring about a truly national church of Canada.

38. Cf. H. A. Scott, "The Roman Catholic Church East of the Great Lakes," in A. Shortt and A. G. Doughty (eds.), *Canada and its Provinces*, Vol. XI (Toronto, 1914), pp. 93ff.

39. On church union cf. Walsh, *The Christian Church*, pp. 288ff.

40. Goldwin Smith, quoted by Sir John Willison in G. M. Wrong *et al.*, *The Federation of Canada 1867–1917* (Toronto, 1917), p. 4.

41. Quoted by Roy Daniells in *The Culture of Contemporary Canada*, p. 13.

Other reasons for believing that this is not too remote a possibility is the remarkable similarity of outlook among the major denominations. The most serious problem that the churches have had to face in recent years has been the industrial revolution; their response to this challenge has been very similar. As Stewart Crysdale has pointed out in a very interesting study of the churches and the industrial struggle in Canada, the churches "without exception opposed the first concerted effort of Canadian labour to win its demands by means of a trade-wide strike."[42] But as the churches came to realize that strikes indicated a serious *malaise* in industrial society they came together in search of a solution, just as they had formerly co-operated on the frightening problem of alcoholism on the frontier.

Through the initiative of church leaders the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada was organized in 1907. The Primate of the Church of England was made honorary chairman; the first president was the General Superintendent of the Methodist Church; a Presbyterian minister served as secretary; and to a Baptist minister was entrusted the treasury.

This first tentative approach at co-operation in the field of industrial relations evolved into the Social Service Council of Canada, which in 1914 put forth a statement of Christian social principles with which all the major denominations were in agreement. In 1918 the Council launched a magazine entitled *Social Welfare*,[43] Canada's first interdenominational publication. The Council is now integrated into the social action programme of the Canadian Council of Churches, whence it keeps a close watch upon all social legislation.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century some equally startling events occurred in the intellectual world. At such shocks from abroad as the "Colenso Affair," *Essays and Reviews,* and Darwinism the church leaders in Canada expressed a similar dismay. A perusal of titles of theological writings in a check list of Canadian literature[44] reveals a fairly uniform denunciation of higher criticism and the theory of evolution. Again, as in the case of strikes in the industrial world, this was only a temporary phase. In time the challenges to orthodox beliefs brought together in consultation theologians from various divinity schools with minds more open to new truths. In 1924 they were bold enough to publish a quarterly, the *Canadian Journal of Religious Thought,* which had on its editorial board representatives from five major churches. It began publication at a very unfortunate time in Canadian church history, just before the emergence of the United Church of Canada (1925), which turned out to be a traumatic event in Canadian national life. Church union was followed by the disruption of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, and the emergence of a Society of Regular Baptists, who made the Baptist representative on the editorial

42. Stewart Crysdale, *The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada* (Toronto, 1961), p. 18.
43. *Ibid.,* p. 21.
44. R. E. Watters, *A Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628–1950* (Toronto, 1959).

board of the new quarterly the chief target of their fundamentalist ire. This stormy period in Canadian Christianity, along with the depression of the thirties, brought to an untimely end (December, 1932) a hopeful endeavour to provide an organ for the intellectual expression of Canadian Protestantism.

In the more subdued era of the fifties the attempt has been renewed with the launching of the *Canadian Journal of Theology* (April, 1955). The new quarterly has replaced the old title "Religious Thought" with the single word "Theology," with the explanation that the *Journal* is to be an instrument for "clarifying the words of God,"[45] a clear indication that theological interest in academic circles in Canada during the fifties was moving away from the social gospel, so prominent in the *Canadian Journal of Religious Thought*, towards the theological renaissance of continental Europe.

It is questionable, however, if the average Canadian has yet adapted himself to this change in theological atmosphere. Even in intellectual circles he does not readily give up the philosophy of common sense coupled with the practical idealism that Professor John Watson taught a host of Canadian students for almost a half century (1872–1920). The editorial board of the *Canadian Journal of Theology* is not unaware of a constant murmur of dissatisfaction for its concern with theoretical theology, which it is told is of little help to busy persons still faced with the problems of providing social cohesion to uprooted or displaced persons moving into suburbia or new frontier towns.

In this complaint one detects a nostalgia for the old theology of religious experience, that arose out of the religious awakenings of the pioneer days of Canada. As if in response to this hunger, a new interdenominational magazine, the *Christian Outlook*, has appeared upon the Canadian scene with the promise that it will "keep an eye on the trouble spots at home and abroad and offer relevant articles on the more urgent social problems of the day."[46] It was on the very high premise that "Christianity is not Canadian but universal"[45] that the *Canadian Journal of Theology* set out to keep its readers informed on the deeper issues associated with the "eternal quality of truth." But these can become very abstract and Canadian church life is still very much directed towards practical problems of a concrete nature.

Since the highest idealism of Canada is expended upon "fashioning into one godly people the multitude brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues," so the territorial churches are chiefly concerned with social and ethical problems associated with national development. This concern has put its impress upon the evolving structures of our churches, which is reflected in the growing importance of the secretariat. In the United Church of Canada, the secretary of the General Council is a far more important official as far as day-to-day responsibilities are concerned than the modera-

45. *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. I, No. 1 (April, 1955), p. 2.
46. *Christian Outlook*, Vol. 15, No. 9 (Aug.–Sept., 1960), p. 6.

tor; the former is a functional office whereas the latter is largely symbolic. It is just possible that the secretary of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service is an even more influential figure than either the moderator or the secretary of the Council, since his administration is concerned. with every aspect of the internal and external affairs of Canada. His opinion on any . of these matters no Canadian politician can afford to ignore, any more than he dare ignore the apostolic delegate speaking in the name of the Plenary Council of Canada.

A similar growth in secretarial importance can be observed in all other churches attempting to strengthen their national structures. The diocesan system of the Anglican Church still gives the bishops an unusual amount of authority in virtue of the episcopal veto, but in the structure of General Synod the primate is just as symbolic a figure as a moderator; he has no fixed see and the greater part of his time is devoted to his own local diocese. So it comes about that the general secretary and the secretaries of the various boards are the functional officers in the national outreach of the Anglican Church.

It is evident, then, that the national purpose of Canada has imposed a new polity upon all our traditional churches. If the day ever comes for these churches to merge their ecclesiastical structures into one national church there will be little noticeable change on the functional level at least. The general secretary of the General Synod would probably need very little training to take over the office of the secretary of the General Council of the United Church of Canada. As for the secretaries of the various boards, they would have little difficulty in exchanging places and writing up one another's reports. In reading over the social service reports of the various churches one may find a somewhat different stress on such matters as gambling and the liquor traffic, but on the whole they have a similar refrain on such matters as industrial relations, prison reform, family planning, war and peace.

The growing importance of the secretariat is not unique to the Canadian churches, but now appears to be part of a world-wide trend. In the United Nations, which is also attempting to reconcile some very diverse groups, the Secretary-General has emerged as a world figure of great power. In the World Council of Churches the General Secretary is one of the most respected spokesmen for Christianity in the world today. His office bids fair to share a place with the papacy as the legitimate voice of Christendom on all matters of ultimate concern. Thus it would appear that the Canadian churches, under the necessity of adjusting their ecclesiastical structures to a most difficult confederation of conflicting loyalties, have pioneered in evolving a polity that may well become universal in both church and state.