THE "COMMUNITY CHURCH"

AND   CHURCH UNION

A Study of the Nature of the "Community
Church"   and its Contribution to Church
Union in Canada.

By

John M. Buck

Sincerely Dedicated to

MY BROTHER and MY WIFE

Without whose help and encouragement

this paper would not have been written.

John M. Buck

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On the basis of Biblical theology the Church is meant to
be a community church. In the Old Testament the Church is
the "people of God", Israel, a community of people, chosen by
the act of God. The Suffering Servant of the Lord in Deutero-
Isaiah represents in his one person the community of those
faithful to God, the Remnant, the true Israel. In Jesus Christ
the true Servant of the Lord has come and suffered on the Cross
to draw all men to Himself, into the new Israel, the community
of the redeemed, the "body of Christ", the Church.

Throughout the subsequent centuries, tension between New
Testament ideals and sub-Christian community practice has
resulted in the separation between Church and community in
the latter half of the eighteenth century. It is imperative
in the twentieth century, if mankind is to be preserved from
self-destruction, to find some way of bridging the gulf between
Church and community. The ecumenical movement is such an
attempt. An aspect of it, which culminated in the organic
union of three Churches in Canada in 1925, is studied with
special reference to the "community churches" in Western Canada.
In the form of local church unions they anticipated Church
Union and made the consummation of union a necessity.

A sociological study of three contemporary "community
churches" in the environs of Montreal shows them to be dif-
ferent from those of the West in that they are unrelated to
any imminent organic church union movement.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The writer of this thesis was invited on an occasion to preach at an anniversary service of the Nitro Community Church, Quebec. This was the spark that lighted the interest in the subject of the "community church". His membership in the Christian Re-union Movement brought to mind certain questions : What contribution, if any, is the "community church" making at present, and has it made in the past, to Church Union in Canada? What is the nature of the "community church"? What brings it into being? What needs in society does it fulfill? What are the theological and historical considerations involved? What is the relationship between the "community church" and the ecumenical movement? The six chapters that follow will attempt to give some answers to these questions.

By way of introduction to the subject, the Oxford Dictionary defines "community" as :

"1.(a) The quality of appertaining to all in common; common ownership.

   (b) Society.

2.(a) A body of persons living together and practicing community of goods; the people of a country (or district).

   (b) The public."

Furthermore :

"Generally speaking, the word "community" means the people who reside in one locality, who are subject to the same laws, and have the same interests.....

The word "community" signifies a population-group which has become socially conscious and is working together as one body to satisfy common needs or ambitions."[1]

The "community church", so-called by its membership, is an attempt to give expression to the religious nature of man in an outward institution whereby the population-group, irrespective of denominational affiliation, may worship God in common together and organize common religious instruction for the young. By the term "community church" is meant the church which is common, or meant to be common, to all the people who call themselves Christians in a given district. As shall be seen shortly, there are a number of "community churches" in Canada today and they have been with us for some time. In short, it is the intent of this paper to study the nature of the "community church" and its contribution to Church Union in Canada.

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1 - R.E.Diffendorfer, The Church and the Community, New York, Interchurch World Movement, 1920, p.4.

BOOK I

THEOLOGICAL and HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

CHAPTER I

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY IN THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT [1]

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The very nature of God is community. The basic Christian conviction about God is Trinitarian, not Unitarian. The nature of God's being is not simple, but complex. The Godhead is a social entity. He is the Father-Son-Holy Spirit God : a community of "Persons".

The very nature of man is community. He is social by the creative act of God. He is "Adam". The Hebrew word ʾadam used in the creation stories designates man, not only individually but collectively. Adam is not to be alone, but is given a 'help meet'.[2] "God created man in His own image --- male and female created He them. --- be fruitful and multiply".[3] Man is to continue this community.

But how is community related to church? Modern man thinks of community as distinct from church. Modern man wants from the church, if he is interested in anything the church has to offer, directions on how man may live a moral life and achieve security in society. But the Biblical account, by contrast, does not begin with man. Rather it begins with God, and what God has done, and what man's response ought to be.

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1 - G.E.Wright, "The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society", Ecumenical Biblical Studies No.2, London, S.C.M.Press, 1954, is most helpful on this subject.

2 - Gen. 2:18 (The earlier "J" document).

3 - Gen. 1:27,28 (The later "P" document).

Man is to commit himself to God who brought him into being and to participate actively in the process of history as a member of the community - the people of God - the church. In Biblical teachings the community is not something distinct and separate from the church, but rather something brought into being by God in order to be the Church. At the centre is a Power whose purpose is to create and sustain community, a community which is to exist in love and in peace, united by a common allegiance to its Lord. The community is to co-operate in the Divine process of history so that the future will bring true community throughout the whole of creation. Thus, community is central to the Biblical teaching concerning the church.

But the question may well be asked : what about the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament? In Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible[1] it is suggested that in the attempt to discover the Biblical teaching on a specific social or political problem we should begin with the teaching of the New Testament, in the light of which we should then turn to the Old Testament in order to view the problem in the perspective of God's total revelation. That is, we are to take a Christocentric view. There is a difficulty here : the Old Testament is a book about the activity of God which led to His act in Christ, not a book

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1 - A.Richardson and W. Schweitzer, eds. Biblical Authority for Today, London, 1951, pp. 240-3.

about Christ. But "God is not confined; He speaks in His own way and by diverse methods; but He is the same God in both Testaments, the Lord of Israel and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ".[1] Or, as Snaith puts it : "The Christian faith is a faith founded on the Bible, with the distinctive ideas of the Bible as its determining factors. The Bible teaches that man must be dominated by the Spirit of God, transformed, born again into a new life".[2] The message of the Scriptures as a whole must be sought.

Before anything was written down (in the primitive period) religion was a matter of spiritual beings, and more a matter of practice than belief. (Worship forms are prior to dogma : the religious cult provides the matrix out of which dogma or doctrine is developed. Doctrine expresses the meaning and value which the community attaches to its religious activity. In most of the great revivals of Christianity, increased theological creativity has followed, not preceded, the new burst of life). Primitive religion was a system of religious acts which every member of the community did with every other member of the community as a matter of course. Religious belief was a sense that there existed a power other than man, more ancient than man, at work in the same world in which man found himself. It expressed itself in such forms as Dynamism, Pan-Vitalism, Totemism, Animism, Poly-Demonism and culminated

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1 - Ibid., pp.226-9.

2 - N.H.Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, London, Epworth, 1945, p.87.

in the Biblical context with Yahwehism and its concept of "no
other gods". But whatever form it took, religion was an
expression of the whole community. Admittedly there are to
be found in the Bible varieties of expression of this community
religion and how it is related to its Author over the gamut of
the thousands of years that the Biblical account covers. But
"thou shalt be my people and I shall be your God" is the con-
stant theme of the Biblical literature over the centuries.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY [1]

To the modern Westerner with his almost licentious emphasis
upon the individual and individual freedom, the Biblical con-
cept of the relationship between the individual and the com-
munity is essentially foreign. For the Bible gives its primary
attention to the community as the people of God, rather than
to individuals as such. That there is a place for the
individual, reference to both the Old Testament and the New
Testament sustains. But, it is secondary. God brought into
being through acts that culminated in Christ, a community in
which the individual finds his true life and fulfills his pur-
poses of being in the world. In loyalty to the common Lord
of the church, who is also Lord of the community, man finds
fulfillment of life in society. The basic presumption of both
the Old Testament and the New Testament is that the individual
was created for society. "One man is no man".[2] That is, there

1 - cf. H.H.Rowley, The Faith of Israel, London, S.C.M.
Press, 1956, Chap. 4, with Wright, op.cit. on this subject.

2 - "Ein mensch is kein Mensch", L.Kohler, Theologie
des Alten Testaments, 2nd Impression, Tubingen, 1947, p.113.

is no man apart from the people in whom he lives and moves and has his being. We have pointed out previously that, Biblically speaking, man is social by his very creation, and furthermore that the Biblical term for community is the 'people of God'. The people of God were an 'am (Hebrew) or laos (Greek), whereas the people of the world were designated by different terms, viz. goi (Hebrew) and ethnos (Greek). God chose an 'am (laos) from the goi (ethnos). The Old Testament concept of community is a people in covenant with its Lord (Yahweh), involved in a mutual sharing and common life of the individuals who comprise it.

Does this mean that man is only a fragment of the community, or is he an individual in his own right? Let us look at some examples :

It was a law of ancient Israel that there be no private plundering of a defeated enemy. Achan (Josh. 7:1) sinned by retaining for himself sacredly forbidden enemy property, and the whole community is considered to suffer for it. His whole family, conceived as an extension of the personality of its head, had to be destroyed, in order to rid the community of the taint upon it. David sinned in numbering the people and the whole nation suffered for it through plague and loss of life (II Sam. 24:1 ff). In contrast, Enoch as an individual walked with God, until God took him (Gen. 5:24). Noah was saved from the general disaster of the Flood (Gen.6). Abraham was singled out for his nobility of character. The

murder of Naboth to get his family heritage, stirred Elijah
to denounce the King who executed it or permitted its
execution.

While these examples may belong to the legendary past,
they do testify to the worth of the individual in his relation-
ship to God. The rights of the individual were proclaimed
not on the basis of human power, but the will of God.

On the other hand, the pre-exilic prophets pronounce
judgment on the people as a whole. The annual sacrifice of
the Day of Atonement is made for the sins of the whole com-
munity in the preceding year. (Neither the Law nor the
Prophets regarded religion as "what man does with his solitari-
ness"[1]). But righteous and unrighteous, as members of a common
society, suffer for the sins of society, because sin is against
God.

The prophets of the classical period[2] shared with other
Israelites the traditional belief that Yahweh had entered into
a distinctive relationship with this people, though it was
through intense individual experiences like those of Hosea
and Jeremiah that an understanding of the individual's freedom
and responsibility emerged alongside a consciousness of com-
munity. Man is what he is within a social complex. He is
son, brother, husband, father, neighbour, but always within
the community, which remains primary. The Israelite community

1 - As A.N.Whitehead, in one definition, calls religion
in Science and the Modern World, Cambridge University Press,
1943, p.237.

2 - R.B.Y.Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, New York,
Macmillan, 1947, gives a full treatment of this subject.

is ideally a family. In relation to other nations and to
its God it is a 'people' or corporate unit, with a <u>corporate
personality</u> of its own.[1] It was to the community as the
people of God that the revelation of Yahweh was given. Isaiah
felt himself unclean as a member of an unclean <u>people</u>.[2] For
the doom of the <u>people</u> Micah lamented as for his own family
or his own person.[3] Jeremiah heard and joined in the weeping
of Rachel as the mother of <u>the people</u> of Israel.[4] The moral
condition of man was defined for the prophets by the 'goal of
life' that the community set for itself. If the community
sought its satisfaction solely in the life of the flesh, then
the individual's moral condition was bound to be poor. If
the nation set its heart on material wealth, military power
and alliances, the ostentation of its sanctuaries, the com-
munity suffered and therefore the individual suffered.[5] And
vice versa, if the individual leaders concerned themselves
solely with privilege rather than responsibility the community
suffered in the consequent instability.

Why does the community assemble periodically for 'religious
exercises'? Because of its effect upon life. It is important
for the community to worship. It is equally important <u>how</u> the

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1 - J.Pedersen, <u>Israel, Its Life & Culture</u>, London,
Cumberlege, 1946, Vols. I & II in one, pp.54-57.

2 - Isa. 1:8, 6:5

3 - Mic. 1:8ff.

4 - Jer. 31:15ff.

5 - Isa. 3:1-7; 31:1; Mic. 3:1; Am. 6:1

community worships. Men must cease to do evil in order to offer true worship. True worship is the sincere expression in words and symbols and actions of what is taking place in the lives of men. It must give expression to how men actually feel and act toward God and their fellow man. "Come let us go up to the hill of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may instruct us in His ways and that we may walk in His paths."[1]

The Old Testament concept of the relationship between the individual and the community is that man is created in God's image as a member of a corporate society and not merely as an individual going his own way. It was the faith of Israel that every man was his brother's keeper.

In the Biblical context one finds no extreme collectivism or extreme individualism. The strong sense of community found therein is based upon traditional family solidarity alongside an appreciation of the freedom and responsibility of the individual. The Old Testament concept of community is not that of an association of individuals but an organic whole, yet preserving a place for the individual to be himself.

THE REMNANT

The term "Israel" designated a community of people of common ancestry and traditions : the people of Yahweh, chosen by the act of God, to do His will and to be the vehicle of

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1 - Isa. 2:3

the revelation of Himself to the world. But when ancestry and tradition became dominating factors to a majority of the nation, and the doing of the will of God of significance to only a few, tension developed. This tension developed between those who were nominally the people of God and those who in their practice were the people of God, between the national Israel and the faithful remnant. We hear of this tension for instance as early as the time of the great flood. Noah and his family are the faithful remnant, whom God spares in order that the divine creative purpose may continue.

It is to "Abraham and his seed" that the promises of God are made. The "seed" becomes narrowed down to the faithful remnant, namely his son, Isaac. In the time of Elijah the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal are the faithful remnant.[1]

The Remnant is thought of as bringing about the salvation of the community. For the sake of a few righteous men the whole community might be spared.[2] A society might be rotten to the core and may need to be destroyed to prevent its corruption from spreading, but a Remnant might be spared, for its own sake or for the sake of those coming after.[3] The major concept is the concentration in itself of the life and promise of the community. The Hebrew could think of an individual who

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1 - I Kings 19:18

2 - Gen. 18:16ff.

3 - Isa. 4:3; 10:20; 28:5; Amos 3:12; 4:1.

was representative of the community, or whose experience was
typical of that of the community, as identified with the com-
munity. For the time being he was the community.

The Classic Old Testament example is that of the Suffering
Servant of Deutero-Isaiah. Without going into the pros and
cons of the scholarship on this extensive subject, the Servant
is at once Israel and an individual, who both represents the
faithful remnant and carries to its supreme point the mission
of the nation, while calling the whole people to enter into
that mission, so that it shall be its mission and not merely
his. There is about the Servant that which is future and that
this future individual is to be a prophet. The songs of the
Servant contain a portrait, though not photographically accurate,
of some one like unto Jesus and point out a path along which
he trod, not as a political messiah but as a soteriological
one.[1] If we believe in the unity of Scripture as "the word
of God" then we cannot fail to regard these passages given of
the Holy Spirit to be a guiding light to the Messiah who
came six centuries later.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The writers of the New Testament never regard the
Christian Church as coming into existence at the Nativity of
Jesus Christ or at the Feast of Pentecost. "As Dr. Goudge
often said there are in the Bible two doctrines only ---
God and the Church, and God and the People of God. From

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1 - C.R.North, The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah,
Oxford University Press, 1948.

before the time when history is distinguishable from legend there was a community conscious of a commission to bear witness to the One True God."[1] This people was led to believe that the God who had chosen them for His own was indeed the God of all the earth. Amos proclaimed it. It was the faith of Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah and the author of Deuteronomy. But until the Exile it never gripped the whole people.

When the nation went into Exile the prophetic faith was the faith of a minority. Among those who returned to the homeland after the Exile this faith was the faith of the majority. From the Exile onwards Judah was truly a Church-community or a community-church. Yet from the moment of Return, Deutero-Isaiah perceived that not all would remain faithful. The "Servant of the Lord" who is at first the whole people, dwindles to a part, and then shrinks at last to an individual.

So it came to pass. The true Servant of the Lord was born. But only a few followed Him and they at last fled from Him. At the moment of the Cross He was in His own Person the whole People of God. He put forth a Power drawing all men to Himself. Those incorporated into Him as limbs in the Body became the People of God, the new Israel, those of whatever race or nation who heard and received the Gospel. Men do not constitute the Church by joining it. God proclaims its existence and men enter into it. The very word church means

1 - William Temple, Citizen and Churchman, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1941, p.13.

"belonging to the Lord". The church is the community of the redeemed.

The term Church History is commonly used with far too narrow a meaning : it is often used for the record of ecclesiastical assemblies, doctrinal controversies, and the like. Its real meaning is "the story of the impact of the Gospel upon the world".[1] In the New Testament the Christian Church is the "new Israel" by faith rather than heredity : it is Israel after the Spirit as distinct from Israel after the flesh.[2] Thus the early Christian Church was conscious of being a people in a special relationship with God in Christ and therefore with each other and amazingly free of institutionalism as distinguinguished from the clubs and societies typical of the Roman world. The new Israel was a community (the Christian Church) within another larger community (the Roman Empire) and therefore in tension with what the New Testament designates the 'world'. It had a highly developed sense of community ("had all things in common"[3]), with a spiritual basis for community as indicated by the various terms it used to describe itself : the "church" (Ecclesia), the "fellowship" (Koinonia), the "body of Christ" (Soma Christou), the "assembly", the "household of faith", the "family of Christ".

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1 - Wm. Temple, op.cit., P.47

2 - Rom. 9:6ff.

3 - Acts 2:44

The Pauline concept of the Church as the "body of Christ" is the distinctive New Testament description of the Christian community. It uses the term "body" in its Hebraic sense referring to the total person as a living organism -- a body-mind-spirit entity. It expresses an intimate relationship between the individual and the community, between the community and the church.

Thus the relationship between the individual and the community in the New Testament is essentially the same as in the Old Testament. It involves the principle of <u>corporate personality</u>, referred to previously, so common to the Semitic world.

It is the new community wherein the individual members are likened to the members of a body, so that "There are many parts, yet one body".[1] It carries forward the ancient identification of the head of the state with his subjects, the patriarchal father with his family, the Servant of Deutero-Isaiah with his people.

The body of Christ is Christ himself. Christ is the community, and the community is Christ active in the world fulfilling his purposes. The new community is a people united not by outward human organization, but by inward spiritual mutuality. The common loyalty to God-in-Christ in loving and free-hearted obedience to the Ruler of the Kingdom of God meant service and loving consideration for

1 - 1 Cor. 12:20.

all other members of the community. Therefore the Church
lived as a <u>koinonia</u>, a fellowship in a common life, under the
leadership of the invisible Lord whose spirit 'tabernacled'
in and possessed the whole community. The Golden Rule became
"Do unto others as Jesus has done unto you". The Christian
community-church was filled with tremendous enthusiasm and
boldness, holding material possessions in common, and yet not
swallowing up individuality in collectivism.

> ..."In the Bible we have to do with a community of a
> most remarkable and unusual kind. Its worship, con-
> fession, proclamation and sacred literature were for
> the most part centrally dominated by the understanding
> of God as Lord of history who had created a special
> community, revealed to it the manner of its life,
> provided for it the means of interpreting events by
> chosen spokesmen, and by unmerited acts and promises
> had given to it hope in the midst of the tragedies
> of history. ---attention was on its Lord, on what he
> had done and would yet do, and on what he rightfully
> claimed from his people. To Biblical man, then, the
> peoples of the earth, who did not acknowledge God's
> sovereignty, who had no consciousness of God's role
> in sustaining community, --- such people could not
> hope for a future in and through their social
> structures. Their societies and gods were man-made;...
> in time of trouble their communities would dis-
> integrate"..[1]

Man's lostness today results in part from his loss of
community. Society has been broken up into fragments, and so
we talk of "mass man" in our industrial age. Our Church con-
gregations tend to be gatherings of individuals who know
little of community in the Biblical sense, and are more like
secular clubs than the body of Christ or the people of God.
The Church's theology, traditionally theocentric, today tends

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1 - G.E.Wright, <u>The Biblical Doctrine of Man in Society</u>,
London, S.C.M., 1954, p.76.

to be anthropocentric. The worship of the Church tends to be individualistic and pietistic, concerned with the individual's need of peace and comfort in the storms of life, rather than with a vigorous expression of Christian community. This results in a growing sectarianism in our midst.

If the ecumenical church is to speak to the divided and chaotic world of our time with confidence, it must recover the Biblical sense of common-unity, i.e. community, which has always been the mark of the true universal Church of God, and which it does not at the present time possess.

The contemporary phenomenon of the "community church" is an attempt on the part of a secularized society to recapture a sense of corporateness and community which, as we shall see in the next chapter, it has lost.

CHAPTER II

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY : AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

In his essay Community and Church : An Historical Survey and Interpretation,[1] Latourette makes the following seven observations (here summarized) :

1. Every community from the dawn of history has had some form of religious expression, to which the members of the community subscribed. The primitive tribe had its own deities which it carried into battle or otherwise appealed to for help. The Greeks had gods of each city. The Roman Empire had an official religion culminating in emperor worship. The ancient Jews worshipped Yahweh. The Chinese had Confuscianism, the Persians had Zoroastrianism. Sometimes in one community more than one religion existed. At the dawn of the Christian era, Christians set up a community (the Church) within the larger community (the Roman Empire). For their unwillingness to conform to the status quo, the early Christians were persecuted. On persecution Christianity thrived until it became, in the fourth century, the official religion of the whole community.

2. With the decline of the Roman Empire in the fifth century the Christian Church or community broke up

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1 - K.S.Latourette, "Community and Church : An Historical Survey and Interpretation", in Church, Community & State, Vol.5, The Oxford Conference Series, London, 1938.

into regional bodies --- in the Eastern Mediterranean
what we designate the Orthodox Church and in the West,
the Catholic Church. In the centuries that followed,
as the Christian Church spread into all parts of the
World, conversion took place by community rather than
by individuals. This took place sometimes by outside
coercion, or by the local king's order, or by the
national leader being converted to be followed volun-
tarily by his subjects. St. Patrick's success in
Ireland was largely that of the last mentioned method.
This was the case too with the Franks and Anglo-Saxons.
But in Norway the king compelled his subjects to accept
baptism. In the Americas of the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries, the Spanish and Portugese conquerors used
economic and inquisitional means to persuade their
subject communities to adopt Christianity. But what-
ever the method, the result was that the Church and the
community were one and the same.

3. In the Medieval period, often regarded as the golden age
of the Christian Church, though the Church and the com-
munity were coterminous, not all subscribed fully to
the beliefs of the Church. Unbelief expressed itself
in contempt for the clergy on the part of the laity
and simony and nepotism on the part of the clergy.
Nevertheless, Church attendance was general and the
community as a social entity submitted to the rites of

the Church. With the coming of the Renaissance, when
scepticism became fashionable, Christianity still
remained the official faith of the community.

4. Tension between Church and community has prevailed in
all periods. It has resulted from the contrast between
New Testament ideals and community practice. While the
Church was small and subject to persecution it stood
apart from society as a whole. As it won its way and
its membership increased, persecution died down. The
Church became more fashionable and many not wholly con-
verted sought admission. By the fourth century when
Christianity became the official religion of the whole
community, the Church's ranks were swelled by thousands
of nominal members. Men and women desiring to find a
way of maintaining the high ethical demands of New
Testament religion formed themselves into separate com-
munities. Thus came into being Christian monasticism.
This community of the elect within the community of the
world is a constantly recurring phenomenon in the
history of Christianity. Eventually the community
accepted monasticism as one of the valid expressions
of Christianity, and part of the life of the com-
munity at large.

In the Middle Ages, the monastic movement from centres
such as Cluny attempted to purify the community of
simony and nepotism, robbery and murder, and other

departures from Christian ethics. They were not very successful. Their efforts resulted mostly in the formation of new religious communities such as the Cistercians and the Franciscans within the Church and the Lollards and the Poor Men of Lyons as "heretics" outside the Church. Yet for all of this the Church and community were not separate, although it must be stated that the mass of people took little interest in the direction of either. The hierarchy looked after the Church; the king and his council, the affairs of the community. So the Medieval period is full of the struggles between Popes and Emperors, ecclesiastics and princes.

5. With the coming of the Reformation changes took place; but this did not involve basically the separation of Church and community. The break with the See of Rome took place community by community --- Germany, Scandinavia, England, Scotland, etc., --- resulting in a more intimate relationship between Church and community. Furthermore, these local communities became moulded by their local Churches. Who can think of Scotland without thinking of Presbyterianism or Scandinavia without thinking of Lutheranism?

A view, in contrast to this, is set forth by William Temple,[1] outlining four main theories of the relation of the Church to the Kingdom of God, following the

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1 - William Temple, Citizen and Churchman, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1941, p.70.

Reformation, summarized as follows :

(a) <u>Roman</u> : The Church <u>is</u> the Kingdom. The Church and state are identical. Man must give absolute allegiance to an historical and, in part, earthly institution.

(b) <u>Lutheran</u> : The Church and the Kingdom are separate. The Church's members are known only to God. The state's function is to guarantee a stable society for the continuance of the visible Church. Each is supreme in its own sphere.

(c) <u>Calvinist</u> : Church and state are separate, but the Church members should control the machinery of the state. The state is to be used by the Church to bring about the Kingdom of God.

(d) <u>Orthodox and Anglican</u> : Church and state are separate but are made up of the same people fulfilling different capacities. The Church must not interfere in matters of state, and the state in matters of the Church. It is the function of the Church to remind statesmen of their responsibility to God. It is the function of the state to maintain justice and promote human welfare.

In any case, the tension between New Testament ideals and sub-Christian community practice continued to express itself : the Council of Trent, the Church of Rome's response to the Reformation challenge, attempted to bring the Church closer to New Testament standards, and gave rise to new monastic orders. Pietism within Protestantism and Puritanism without gave rise to the "sects" who

separated themselves from the official Church of the community. Nevertheless, it was still true in general that to be a member of a particular community was to be a member of a particular branch of the Christian Church. Baptism was still subscribed to and formal connection to the Church continued. Even Voltaire was baptised in the Church and buried in consecrated ground.

6. The Greek concept of the world, as found in the philosophers, was of a well-ordered and harmonious whole, beautiful, good, and rational. Throughout the Middle Ages and the Reformation, the Biblical view of the world was accepted as largely self-evident. But the seventeenth century, following the path of Greek philosophy, set the stage for society to be organized on a non-religious, that is, non-Christian basis. It is notable that sectarianism paved the way. The Puritans led the way by drawing a line between the sphere of nature and the sphere of grace. To the former, they maintained, belong politics, science and economics; to the latter personal and family life, and worship. For the former we seek guidance in the rational, in the natural reason. For the latter we turn to the Bible, which has no relevance for the former, but only the latter. Therefore, religion no longer has relevance to the majority of people in their social and political action. (Paul Tillich speaks of this period as characterized by autonomy and heteronomy, in

contrast to the former theonomous age,).[1]

This Greek world-view that the world at large is essentially a reasonable and moral order resulted in certain philosophies relpacing the Biblically based Christian world-view, viz,

(a) Laissez-faire Capitalism which has held that because the world at large and human society in particular are essentially a harmonious, rational structure, all elements of disorder are accidental. The individual, therefore, must be given complete, unhampered freedom in order to guarantee ultimate harmony. Each individual by pursuing his own selfish ends will bring about by natural processes the good of society as a whole. All intentional interference of individual freedom (whether by the state or other agency) is both immoral and destructive.

(b) Marxism which begins in the same manner and views the disorder of society as sin against the way the universe is intrinsically an eternal, rational and harmonious order. The chief form which this sin takes is that of yielding to class distinction within society. The true society is the 'classless' society. Those who are strong rationally and morally in favor of this 'classless' society can unite and lead mankind to the final revolution. Inevitably a 'new man' will grow up who will establish

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1 - Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era, Chicago, 1948; "The World Situation", The Christian Answer, ed. by H.P.Van Dusen, New York, 1945, Chap. I.

the 'new society'. When the 'new society' is estab-
lished there will no longer be any disorderly elements,
thus making possible the harmonious community without
outside force being required to keep it harmonious.
(c) Democracy which also believes in the rational structure
of the world and human society. Utopian democrats believe
in the essential rationality of the cosmos and hold that
it is possible to do away with disorder completely so
that an entirely harmonious society can be established.
Sincere Christians have often confused this "Utopia"
(which has no Biblical basis) with the Kingdom of God.
Moderate democrats, on the other hand, do not hope to
do away with disorder completely, because the world and
human society are rational only to a certain extent.
From the Biblical point of view, then, all of these con-
temporary beliefs, which tend to deify elements of
creation, can only be denounced as idolatries.[1]
By the latter half of the eighteenth century, separation
between Church and community had taken place, and it is
significant that this happened first in America. When the
Thirteen Colonies gained independence from the British, it
took only two generations for the separation of Church and
community to be complete. It is said that in the year
1783 nine-tenths of the population of the new United
States were without membership in the Church. In Europe

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1 - Vide Wright, op. cit., pp. 33-34, for sections (a),
(b), & (c).

the French Revolution in the same period brought about
similar results in France. The nineteenth century saw
the continuance of this severance in scores of other
countries. The Church now for the first time in its
history, no longer en compassed the same community as the
state. By the end of the nineteenth century millions
were without any connection to the Church.
What were the causes? Two contradictory factors : the
first and obvious -- scepticism and indifference; the
second -- the vigour of those who remained in the Church
and their enthusiasm for the spread of Christianity
throughout the whole world.
Unbelief has existed in the Church ever since Christianity
became a community faith in the fourth century. The new
element that has appeared in the last 150 years is the
severance on the part of a large section of the popula-
tion of even nominal membership in the Church. Christianity
is regarded as intellectually untenable and contemporarily
irrelevant. It is not a matter of open hostility, but
inner indifference.
With regard to the second factor, the greatest territorial
expansion that has ever taken place in the history of the
Christian Church has taken place in the last 150 years.
"Among non-Christian peoples Christianity has been pro-
pagated over a wider area than any religion or any other
set of ideas has been spread by professional agents in

the entire history of mankind".[1] Millions of Christians
have given generously of their substance, of their own
free will, for the spread of the Christian Faith. As
well, they have given their lives, and the lives of their
sons and daughters. In their efforts they have reduced
to writing more tongues than had previously been given
written form. They have brought education to areas of
the world wheretofore was none. They have laid the
foundations of modern medical care wherever they went.
They have brought into existence growing Christian com-
munities in practically all of the non-Christian parts
of the world. Furthermore, they have "insisted upon
longer periods of probation, upon more instruction and
upon higher standards of conduct for admission to the
Church than has been general since the earliest Christian
centuries".[2] As the "younger" Churches have come into
being, they have striven to live their life in accordance
with New Testament ideals. This has meant an unwilling-
ness to compromise with the sub-Christian religious
practice of the community at large. Missionaries
returning home have had an impact upon the "older"
Churches. Standards of Church membership have risen,
the tension between Church and community has increased,
and separation of Church and community accentuated. Those

1 - Latourette, op.cit., p.13.

2 - Latourette, op.cit., p.15.

of the community unwilling to subscribe to higher prin-
ciples of Church membership have severed their connection
altogether. Those already indifferent to the Church have
called subscription by its membership to its principles
as fanaticism, and have had nothing further to do with it.
"For the first time in human history multitudes have been
born, grown to manhood, and died without having even a
formal connection with what is usually termed religion.
In the twentieth century this tendency has been accelerated".[1]
The ecumenical movement is not the only "great new fact of
our era" : separation of Church and community is another.

7. It is said "mother nature abhors a vacuum". So does
human nature. A community does not long remain without
a faith. Karl Jung, a modern psychologist and philosopher,
has said that he considers "it wiser to recognize the idea
of God consciously; otherwise, something else becomes God,
as a rule something quite inappropriate and stupid ....."[2]
While this remark was made with reference to the individual,
it has relevance surely to all mankind. For in the modern
period, the loss of faith by the community, the "God-
shaped blank" (as H.G.Wells called it) in the soul of
man, has been filled by an ideology that may be described
under the term nationalism. In Russia, the place of the
Orthodox Church has been filled by Communism, a messianic
nationalism. In Italy, it was Fascism; in Germany, it

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1 - Ibid., p.16.

2 - Quoted in an article on Karl Jung in TIME magazine,
New York, July 7, 1952, p.35.

was Naziism; both are a totalitarian form of national-
ism. And so on in China, Cuba, South Africa, the Congo,
each with its own brand of nationalism. And national-
ism pursued with the fervour of religion and combined
with the recent scientific discovery of a mass-destructive
device has brought us to the brink of annihilation of the
human community from the face of the earth.

It is imperative, therefore, for the preservation of the
community that some way be found of bridging the gulf between
Church and community. There is no facile solution available.
We cannot go back. We must go forward --- to a new relation-
ship between Church and community on a world-wide basis. Does
hope lie in the direction of the Ecumenical Movement --- the
world-wide movement towards unity, towards the healing of the
schism in the soul of the Church? Is it possible that as
Christians throughout the world seek to grow together, they
may leaven the whole lump, and thus bring to the community of
this world a new unity of action and belief so sorely needed
to save its soul alive?

It is the purpose in the next chapters of this paper to
study one small aspect of this Ecumenical Movement as it has
taken place in Canada : the relationship between the Church
and community under the heading, The "Community Church" and
its Contribution to Church Union in Canada.

BOOK II

THE "COMMUNITY CHURCH" AND

ITS CONTRIBUTION TO CHURCH UNION IN CANADA

INTRODUCTION

Many romantic stories have been written about the adven-
turous frontier situation in Canada at the time it became a
British Colony and in the years immediately following. When
the Thirteen Colonies achieved Independence, Canada entered
upon a new historical period, prompted by the ever-increasing
tide of immigration. As far as the religious situation was
concerned "in the opening years of the nineteenth century
there occurred a great religious revival in Canada ---. It
was an awakening which produced an unusual crop of schisms
---".[1] The explanation, according to S.D.Clark, is that "in
the frontier situation instability is the mark of the religious
organization of the community ---. Undercurrents of unrest in
religious organization have found expression in the break from
established religious forms. The movement towards separation
has constituted a powerful force resisting any effort to build
up in the country a system of ecclesiastical control".[2]

It is surprising, then, that the latter half of the nine-
teenth century was marked by a vigorous movement towards unity
(a new experience in the history of Christianity) whose momentum
carried forward into the first quarter of the twentieth. The
"community church" on the frontier of Western Canada played a
distinctive role in the progress towards Church Union, that
"traumatic experience" in the ecclesiastical life of Canada,
from which it has not yet fully recovered.

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1 - H.H.Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada, Toronto,
Ryerson Press, 1956, p.134.

2 - S.D.Clark, Church and Sect in Canada, Toronto, University
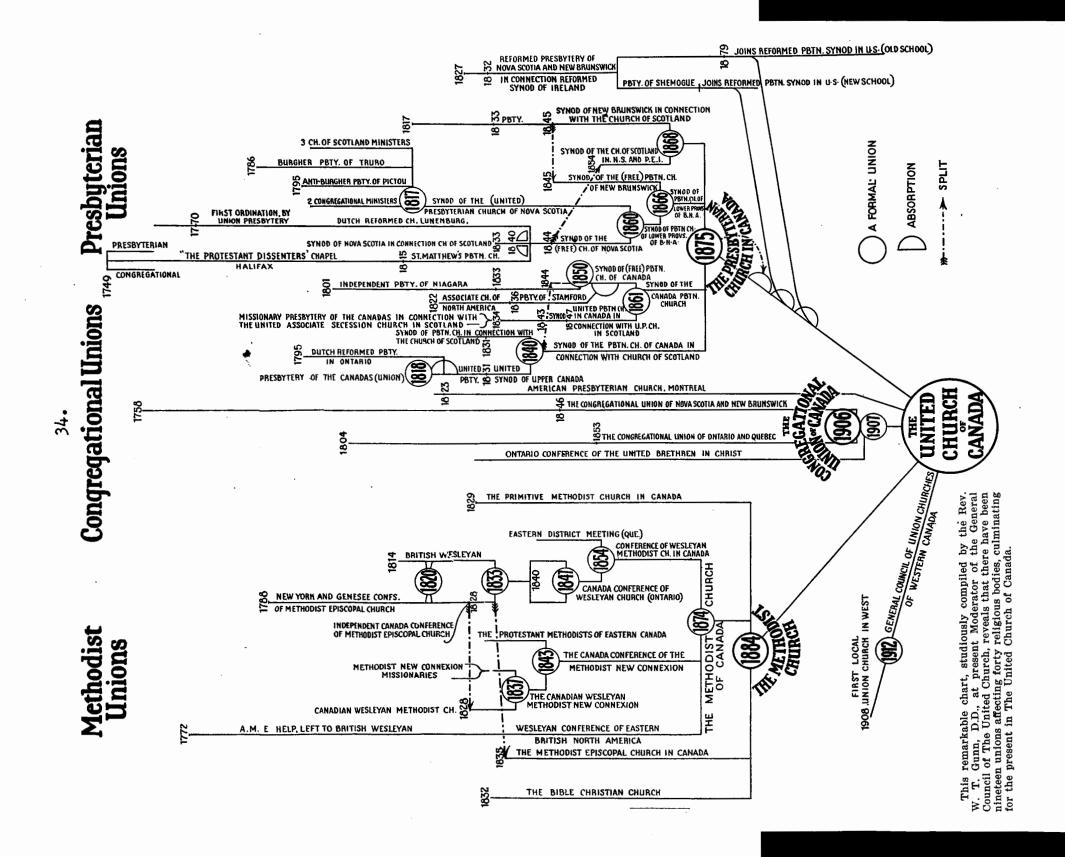of Toronto Press, 1948, p. xi of the "Introduction".

CHAPTER III

THE "COMMUNITY CHURCH" IN WESTERN CANADA AND CHURCH UNION

CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

It is not the purpose of this paper in general, nor of this chapter in particular to recount the story of Church Union in Canada and the controversy precipitated thereby --- this has been dealt with adequately in the sources mentioned in the bibliography, especially in the comprehensive text on the subject by Dr. C.E.Silcox --- but rather to study briefly the role of the "Community Church", especially in Western Canada, and its contribution to the Church Union consummated on June 10, 1925. It will, however, be necessary to outline in a chronological sequence the events that led to the union of Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Canada. (There is a helpful chart included on the next page).

1749 : "The Protestant Dissenters' Chapel", established in Halifax, a union church partly of Congregationalists and partly Scotch Presbyterians, meeting in an Anglican Church, was the first non-Episcopal Church in Canada.[1] It got its ministers from both churches.

1770 : Union, for the moment, of two Presbyterian and two Congregational ministers, to form a Presbytery in order to conduct the ordination at Halifax, of

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1 - T.B.Kilpatrick, Our Common Faith, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1928, p.10.

34.

This remarkable chart, studiously compiled by the Rev. W. T. Gunn, D.D., at present Moderator of the General Council of The United Church, reveals that there have been nineteen unions affecting forty religious bodies, culminating for the present in The United Church of Canada.

1770 (cont'd) Mr. Bruin Romcas Comingo to the ministry
of the <u>Dutch Reformed</u> Church.[1]

1817 : The first organic church union took place. From
this date, although there were some splits that
occurred along the way, unions began to take place
among branches of the Christian Church in Canada.

1874 : The Rev. George Monro Grant foresaw the day when
through "charity and wise cooperation" Canada might
have "the greatest of national churches" including
even the Roman Catholics.[2] Anglicans were showing
an interest in church union when, in the same year,
the Quebec Diocese of the Church of England in
Canada appointed a committee to promote church
union.

1875 : Four sections of Presbyterianism came together,
taking the name "The Presbyterian Church in Canada".

1881 : Canon (later Bishop) Carmichael, of Montreal, urged
the Church "should face infidelity and heathenism
unitedly" and "march as an army rather than as in-
dependent regiments, and in some way, as yet un-
defined, for the love of Jesus and the good souls,
be united".[3]

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1 - C.E.Silcox, <u>Church Union in Canada</u>, New York,
Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933, p. 56.

2 - In an address (before the first meeting of the Dominion
Branch of the Evangelical Alliance, at Montreal) entitled "The
Church of Canada; Can Such a Thing Be?" It is still a per-
tinent question. Quoted in C.E.Silcox, <u>op.cit.</u>, p. 465.

3 - <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 136.

1884 : Four sections of Methodism formed "The Methodist Church (Canada)".

1886 : The Anglican Church, at the suggestion of its Ontario Provincial Synod, met in conference with the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches on the subject of church union.

1888 : The Lambeth Quadrilateral, with its fourth-point insistence upon the acceptance of the historic episcopate as the guarantee of a valid ministry, and the unwillingness of the non-episcopal churches to accept it, made it difficult for Anglicans to take further action.

1892 : The Presbyterian General Assembly, meeting in Montreal, made an approach to the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec on the subject of union. Joint committees conferred.

1893 : The Presbyterian Assembly meeting in Toronto broadened the base by appointing a committee on the general subject of union with other churches.

1894 : The Methodist General Conference proposed a plan of federation of churches.

1899 : The Presbyterian General Assembly on the request of the Board of Home Mission[S] appointed a committee "to confer with other Evangelical Churches --- to prevent overlapping in Home Mission fields", especially in the West. The General Board of Home Missions of the Methodist Church appointed a similar committee.

1902 : Principal Patrick of Manitola College, conveying
greetings from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian
Church in Canada to the Methodist General Conference
(both meeting in Winnipeg) made his well-known appeal
for the unification of the two churches. The General
Conference passed a resolution stating that the time
was considered opportune for the organic union of the
Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Methodist Church,
and the Congregational Unions. The formation of the
basis of church union was begun.

1904 : April 21st, the first meeting of the Joint Union Com-
mittee was held in Toronto. A letter was sent to the
Church of England in Canada and the Baptist Churches,
which replied courteously, but appointed no committee.

1905-07 : The Joint Union Committee considered Doctrine,
Polity, the Ministry, Administration and Law.

1906 : "The Congregation Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick"
(organized in 1846) and "The Congregational Union of
Ontario and Quebec" (organized in 1854) united to form
"The Congregational Union of Canada".

1908 : A proposed Basis of Union was agreed upon, which was
then submitted to the Supreme Courts of the Churches
and then to the membership at large. "Local Union"
churches, especially in the West, started to come into
being in increasing numbers.

1910 : The Congregationalists gave full approval to participate
in union.

1912 : The Methodists were fully prepared to consummate
the proposed union. The Presbyterian vote indicated
about two-thirds in favor and The General Assembly
delayed action, hoping for practically unanimous
action in favor.

1915 : The sentiment against union had grown amongst
Presbyterians. The Basis of Union which had been
revised slightly was approved by the Assembly.

1916 : The Presbyterian Church resolved to unite with the
other two churches but to await the end of the first
Great War for consummation.

1921 : The General Assembly resolved "to consummate organic
union", though some churches would stay out. Draft
bills for the federal parliament and the provincial
legislatures were prepared. The politicians entered
"the great ecclesiastical battle of the century".[1]
The Prime Minister, W.L. Mackenzie King was the
chief spokesman for the anti-unionist forces, while
Arthur Meighen, the great parliamentarian, success-
fully defended the unionist cause.

1924 : In anticipation of organic union there were in local
unions, mostly in the West, 1200 pastoral charges and
3000 congregations.[2] Parliament of Canada passed the

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1 - Quoted in Walsh, op.cit., p. 301.

2 - For comment on these statistics see Silcox,
op. cit., pp. 228 ff.

1924 (cont'd) necessary legislation for the formation of the "Federal United Church of Canada", to give its legal title.

1925 : On June 10th, 1925 at an impressive Service in the Arena, Toronto, with 8000 people present, the union was consummated of the Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist and Local Union Churches in Canada, comprising 8000 congregations, 600000 members and 3800 ministers, into the United Church of Canada.[1]

THE WESTERN FRONTIER

"The dominant motive in the religious life of Canada has been the winning of the Frontier".[2] Certainly this is true with regard to church union in Canada and the part played by the community churches or, as they were known in the West, the Local Union Churches. Some idea of conditions in the West in 1875 may be gained from an off-print entitled William Newton, Anglican Beginnings in and about Edmonton:[2]

> "The Edmonton to which Newton came was scarcely more than a community surrounded and supported by the Hudson's Bay Company's fort --- hexagonal in shape with an area of 300' by 200' fenced by a 20' palisade. (He) obtained the use of a partly finished log building in which he --- spent the winter --- with the temperature often registering --- fifty degrees below zero. --- 'Often I tried to write, --- but before the pen could touch the paper and write a word the ink in the

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1 - For comment see Silcox, op.cit., pp. 287 ff and pp. 433 ff.

2 - E.H.Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, Toronto, United Church Publishing House, 1930, p.1.

3 - F.A.Peake, William Newton - Anglican Beginnings in and about Edmonton, Off-Print No. 7, The Canadian Church Historical Society, Toronto, 1961, pp. 6 ff.

"pen would be frozen'. The upper part of the building was fitted up as a church with a simple altar place covered with a red and blue cloth. 'In fine weather it was suitable and looked very well; but in snowy weather the storms gave us a great deal of trouble. Often on Sunday mornings we had to use shovels to throw the snow out of the window; then, when the fire had melted the snow on the open rafters, the wet came down on our heads, and caused discomfort at the Services'. Such were the tribulations attendant upon early missionary work.

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When Dr. Newton arrived in 1875 it was to find a settlement in which the only services, apart from a Roman Catholic Chapel within the walls of the fort, had been those of the Wesleyans who had been established for thirty-five years. Consequently, his relations with them were never very happy. 'It seemed as if I had come to upset Methodism, and to introduce religious strife into a distant, and not very devout community'. With the Presbyterians his relations were much happier. The first Presbyterian minister arrived in November 1881 ---. Dr. Newton --- delivered the address of welcome ---. With the Roman Catholics Newton's relations were probably the happiest of all ---. 'On every occasion when I have met the Roman Catholic Bishop, and his people, I am bound to say that I have received most graceful and kindly attentions'."

The lawlessness intendant upon frontier conditions is described and is somewhat similar to those seen on the 'Westerns' of the T.V. screen, though the latter suffer from considerable embellishment.

However, with the completion of the trans-continental railway (C.P.R.) in 1885, and the new immigration policy of the Canadian government, the West began to undergo considerable change. Tens of thousands of settlers,[1] of a great variety of ethnic groups, began to pour into the wide-open prairies and new communities grew up almost overnight

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1 - According to Government statistics, nearly 1,500,000 people immigrated to Canada between the years 1900 - 1910. Vide C.E.Silcox, op.cit., p. 231.

along the rail lines like beads along a string. There was
a strong feeling among Protestant church leaders that over-
churching, and consequent strain on resources of men and
finances should be avoided. Besides, the settlers them-
selves were not inclined to support in one centre a number
of churches, all proclaiming, as far as they were concerned,
the same Gospel. The distances in the West were great, the
communities small, the frontier ever expanding. To minister
to these lonely and isolated families, the churches were
forced into new and untrodden paths of service. As
Bishop William C. Bompas said, "For any other object than
that of walking patiently and humbly with our God this country
offers but a poor position".[1] It was the sincere attempt of
the churches of the East to minister the Gospel to the
Western Frontier, both spacial and ethnic, and the resulting
reaction of the West on the East that precipitated the union
of the churches. "The West was always pushing the East".[2]

BACKGROUND TO COOPERATION

Concerning the movement in the West for church union,
Principal Oliver has stated, "It is a people's movement and
you cannot stop it. How does it arise? Let us say that
here is a new line of railway; some people come around, they
worship first of all in school houses, three or four
Presbyterians, a few Methodists, a few Baptists, a few

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1 - H.A.Cody, An Apostle of the North, London, 1910,
p. 63.

2 - C.E.Silcox, op. cit., p. 224.

Anglicans. They decide they will build, with their slender resources, a church ---. Lumping together their resources, they build one church. That is how the thing arises, just as naturally as that".[1] Many of these community churches would number no more than 30 to 35 souls in the whole con-gregation.

In a letter, to the Rev. Dr. W.D.Reid,[2] one of the pioneers of cooperation in Alberta, and a superintendent of Home Missions for the Presbyterian Church at the time, states that in many of the areas there would be "found --- two churches at least, the Methodist and the Presbyterian, struggling --- drawing heavily on home mission funds". Consultation between the Methodists and Presbyterians followed and ..."one church had to go in with the other [with the result] that there was scarcely any overlapping". If a Methodist was taken out of one field, a Presbyterian would be taken out of the next : the first one on the ground usually was left. The denomina-tions agreed not to plant new causes within six miles of each other. (Most of the new 'causes' in the West were started by the Presbyterians or the Methodists. The number of Congregationalists or Baptists in the field was small).

Manitoba and Saskatchewan followed the same plan and later Northern Ontario. A layman from Leduc reported, "Everybody is pleased with the change. We now pay our own

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1 - E.L.Morrow, Church Union in Canada, Toronto, 1923, p. 56. Quoted from a speech by Principal E.H.Oliver, at Sir James Wood's Banquet, Toronto, Jan. 9, 1923.

2 - Ibid., p. 101.

minister a good salary --- and a unity and harmony prevail in the town that we never had before".[1]

"Often we had difficulty the first year or two, usually with some old stiff-necked Presbyterian (they were usually much stiffer than the Methodists) -----".[2]

In an interview[3] with the Rev. Dr. George Doré the following story was recounted : In a certain Western town there were two churches - one 'below the tracks', a Methodist with its own minister. The other was 'above the tracks' - a Presbyterian with its own minister. It was the custom for the two ministers to exchange pulpits for the evening service. One day the Presbyterian minister, who didn't like being in lower town after nightfall called his 'elders' together and told them of his dissatisfaction with the arrangement. He expected them to sympathize with him and to have the practice of such church cooperation discontinued. To his great surprise they suggested that if he didn't like the present arrangements his resignation would be accepted and a minister would be found who would carry it on. This was typical of the lay feeling for cooperation in the West generally.

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1 - E.L.Morrow, op.cit., p. 101.

2 - Ibid., p. 102.

3 - The author was granted an interview with the Rev. Dr. George Doré, moderator of the United Church of Canada, 1956-58, and for a time on the Home Mission field in Saskatchewan at the beginning of this century. It was held in Emmanuel College, June 5, 1961 in the presence of Rev. A.G.Reynolds, United Church Archivist. Most of the interview was recorded on tape.

"The majority of the peoples on the prairies are not
strong denominationally, (as long as) the gospel is preached
......".[1] "The common people on the prairies strongly favor
union --- it is a movement of the people".[2]

"But in Saskatchewan and Manitoba many have broken out
into union and have not federated with either denominations,
and they call their own minister as suits themselves. There
are over 300 such places ---. They have their own Conferences
---".[3] The concern felt by the officials of the Presbyterian
and Methodist churches was that a new denomination would be
set up with no connection to the parent body.

> "A notable step in cooperation was taken when the Co-
> operating Committee of Alberta agreed that, so far as
> sparsely settled or as yet unoccupied territory was
> concerned, Presbyterianism should confine itself to
> work contiguous to the lines of the Canadian Pacific
> Railway, while the Methodist Church would minister to
> the people settling along the lines of railway now
> included in the Canadian National Railways system.
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>
> A strong public opinion also demanded the rectifica-
> tion of ecclesiastical lines ---. Leaders in many
> localities argued that the people of the Prairie
> Provinces were virtually undivided in their community
> life, in everything but religion. They were unified
> educationally under a public school system; and they
> had no gaping chasms between social classes. Very
> pointedly, then, they asked why religion should prove
> the only divisive exception in their community life." [4]

It was the sense of community that was compelling the
Westerners to a community church. For, as far as they were

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1 - E.L.Morrow, op.cit., p. 102.

2 - Ibid.

3 - Ibid.

4 - S.D.Chown, The Story of Church Union in Canada,
Toronto, Ryerson, 1930, pp. 53-55. The italics are mine.

concerned, there were no basic theological differences. "It was no wonder that common sense democratic people reacted against the idea of having the population of small communities divided into three or four competing congregations while listening to _essentially the same gospel_".[1] These conditions gave "impetus to the establishment of Local Union congregations".[2]

Denominational differences seemed unimportant in the severe frontier conditions which treated Presbyterians and Methodists alike with the same bitterness. As time passed it became apparent that if organic union did not result from co-operation, the communities of the West would take matters into their own hands. Scores of independent union congregations (community churches) were coming into existence. They organized themselves loosely into a General Council of Local Union Churches.[3] A new denomination was in the process of coming into being. "Throughout the West there would have been scores of independent union congregations, which must either unite to form a new denomination, or else stagnate and wither spiritually for lack of fellowship ---. In the success-ful Local Union Churches it soon became evident that the widsom of the community was sustained. _The community church_ soon became a more impressive factor in the _life of the_

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1 - _Ibid_., p. 55. The italics are mine.

2 - _Ibid_., p. 56.

3 - Unfortunately the minutes of the meetings of this Council are not available at the United Church Archives, Toronto. Indications are that they have been lost to posterity.

community than were the competing congregations".1 The
minister was also affected by the greater number of people
in attendance and the greater enthusiasm shown by the people
for the work of the church.

COOPERATION, THE WEST, AND UNION

The cooperation of the churches with each other, especially
in the mission fields of the West, and the movement towards
organic church union, went on hand in hand. "Organic union
in Canada was preceded by, and to a large extent, grew out of
a system of cooperation".[2] Cooperation took place first in
the Department of Home Missions, and later in Social Service,
Religious Education, Theological Education, the publication
of Sunday School periodicals, and the work amongst New
Canadians. The churches were consulting with each other
about organic church union and at the same time sending
students, training for the ministry, to serve in the West
for the summer months. Newly ordained ministers went out to
give the first years of their ministry as home missionaries
in Western Canada. These returned with first-hand reports of
the situation in the field and the difficulties brought about
by the churches competing with each other on the ever-
expanding frontier. The result was that churches were making
a sincere effort in cooperation.

This cooperation among the churches in the West can be

1 - S.D.Chown, op.cit., pp. 56-57. The italics are mine.

2 - S.D.Chown, op.cit., p. 50.

described as falling into four periods : [1]

1.   1903 - 1911 : Informal conversations between superintend-
     ents of home missions. The beginning of Local Union
     Churches formed on the proposed Basis of Union.

2.   1911 - 1917 : formal agreements, delimitation of ter-
     ritory by provincial and district cooperation committees
     in the field. The resulting local church formed of
     mixed membership was always a strict Presbyterian or a
     strict Methodist church in its structure and administration.

3.   1917 - 1922 : the formation of local union churches òn
     the Basis of Union, but affiliated with one of the
     negotiating churches.

4.   1922 - 1925 : the formation of local union churches on
     the Basis of Union, but affiliated with two or more
     of the negotiating churches.

     This resulted, before Union was consummated, in five
different kinds of community churches in the West, popularly
known as Local Union Churches :

1.   The strictly denominational church, either Presbyterian,
     Methodist or Congregational : a single church in a given
     place serving the community and to which the community
     belonged.

2.   The cooperation church, attached to one of the parent
     bodies and organized by the agreement of the district
     cooperating committees, following the plan of coopera-
     tion of 1911.

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1 - C.E.Silcox, op. cit., p.229.

3. The double affiliation (or triple affiliation) church, organized with the agreement of the district cooperating committees, on the Basis of Union, but affiliated with two (or more) of the negotiating churches, following the plan of cooperation of 1917.

4. The strictly Local Union Church, formed on the Basis of Union, from 1908 on, but independent from the negotiating churches.

5. The strictly Local Union Church, from 1922 on, formed, at the outset, with no stated reference to the Basis of Union, and independent of the negotiating churches.

THE FIRST PERIOD

The first step in cooperation was taken by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1899 when it instructed its Committee on Church Union to consider the whole matter of cooperation with the Methodist Church. At the Methodist General Conference of 1902 there was presented a "memorial of N.W.Rowell, that the General Board of Missions be authorized and directed to appoint a committee or committees, to confer with similar committees, appointed by the Presbyterian Church, with a view of devising a plan whereby Home Mission work can be carried on in friendly cooperation".[1] Three meetings of representatives of the two churches were

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1 - Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Church, 1902, p. 124, in the United Church Archives, Toronto.

held, culminating in one on March 17, 1903, the result of
which was that the following letter[1] was sent :

"To the Home Mission Superintendents, and Ministers
and Missionaries in charge of Home Mission Fields,
in the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches :-

"A meeting --- was held on 17th March at which all
the Superintendents were present, when the practical
difficulties in the way of cooperation were again
discussed with the utmost frankness.

"[The Committee] --- therefore recommends :-
1st That a letter --- be sent ---
2nd That we strongly urge the Superintendents of both
Churches to keep the principle of comity and co-
operation steadily in view --- [and] meet together
at intervals for consultation --- respecting the
opening of new fields, or the possible re-adjustment
of fields already occupied.
3rd That where a field has been occupied for at
least one year by one of the Churches, --- [the
Superintendents] act on the principles of non-
intrusion.
4th The ministers and missionaries of both churches
--- be recommended to consult together --- [regarding
the possible readjustment of their fields].

"It is hardly necessary for us to say that, in
adopting the above resolution, the joint committee
did not contemplate any course being taken that
would restrain the religious life or unduly limit
the religious activities of either of the churches
in its work for our common Master and our common
country.

"But the cause of Christian charity, --- the cause
of Christian unity, so dear to the heart of Him
who prayed, 'That they all may be one; as Thou,
Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also
may be one in Us : that the world may believe
that Thou hast sent me'; the desirability of
economizing both men and means --- [in] the
tremendous burden that is being laid upon all
the churches of Canada by the marvellous tide

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1 - A copy of the letter is in the United Church Archives,
Victoria University, Toronto, under the title "Minutes, Cor-
respondence, and other Papers relating to Cooperation and
Local Union in Alberta".

"of immigration that has set in toward our young
Dominion, and that must continue to flow in ever
fuller volume for many a year, all demand ---
some honest effort in cooperation.

(signed)   A. Sutherland
           General Secretary of Missions
           Methodist Church

           E.D.McLaren
           General Secretary, Home Missions
           Presbyterian Church in Canada."

Thus the meetings to consider cooperation in the mission

fields of the Western Frontier took place in 1903 and the

first meetings of the Joint Committee on Church Union took

place in 1904. The two inter-acted upon each other until

consummation of union in 1925.

In Canada in 1901 there were in existence no less than

267 union churches (reference will be made again to them

later). These churches were for the most part community

societies which held property in their own name but obtained

the services of whatever minister they could.[1] But these

local union enterprises were not connected with the local

union churches of the West, which came into being as a

result of the expectancy of national organic church union

taking place momentarily.

When the proposed Basis of Union was issued for study

in 1908, "a new type of union church sprang into existence,

the distinctive characteristic of which was its acceptance,

as far as it was applicable to the local church, of the

proposed Basis of Union".[2] In a sense these community

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1 - C.E.Silcox, op. cit., p. 215.

2 - Ibid.

churches were United Churches before there was a <u>United Church of Canada</u>. "The West thus took Church Union by the forelock 'without tarrying for any'",[1] At a later period in the negotiations towards organic union the existence of so many of these union churches was a prime factor in making it necessary that union be consummated.

The first of these local union churches was at Melville, Saskatchewan. The railways were pushing their lines through and towns were coming into existence. The people of Melville wanted a church. The Rev. John Reid (later a secretary of the General Council of Local Union Churches) organized the congregation on the proposed Basis of Union. The doctrine followed in that church was as set forth in the proposed <u>Basis of Union</u>. It was a period of rapid changes and before any official knew what was happening, the Rev. George Monroe, a Congregationalist minister , in consultation with the Melville church people, organized a church in nearby Frobisher, in Jan. 1909, following the Melville pattern.

Being a Congregationalist, and a man of determination, he approached and obtained from the provincial legislature a private bill incorporating the church as a legal entity and obtaining for himself the right of performing the marriage ceremony. The building, according to the interview with Dr. G. Doré[2] was a very substantial one, built of brick (which was unusual at the time in the Prairies) obtained from Estevan.

1 - C.E.Silcox, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 216.

2 - Referred to previously on p. 43.

The building still stands and is in use at the present time.

By 1911 other churches of similar character had been organized at Kerrobert, Conquest, and later at Ceylon and Lembering, all in Saskatchewan. While these ministers were permitted to work out these experiments, the missionary officials viewed with some alarm the prospect of a great number of churches independent of the denominations which trained their ministers and supplied funds for the home mission work. For these "community churches" were loathe to contribute to the mission funds of the negotiating churches. It is one of the marks of the "community church", as we shall see also in the next chapter, that it feels little responsibility to give financial support to the general missionary obligation of the church.

THE SECOND PERIOD

The result was that in March, 1911, the cooperation committees of the three churches met in Toronto and developed a formal scheme to meet this problem. An _Agreement for Co-operation in Home Mission Work_[1] was issued, stating that the "principles of cooperation be applied :

1. In the adjustment of overlapping in existing fields.

2. In the arranging of religious work in absolutely new districts.

3. In the work to be done amongst people of foreign nationalities."

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1 - Pamphlet in the United Church Archives, Victoria University, Toronto.

An approach was also made to both the Anglican and Baptist
Churches in the interest of cooperation, but complete joint
action was considered impracticable by them. (In some
individual cases, cooperation took place). This cooperation
was to be effected by the agencies already in the field,
namely the district cooperative committees set up previously.
In actual practice, what it often meant was that Methodists
found themselves going to what they considered to be a
Presbyterian Church and vice-versa. It worked best in Alberta :
perhaps because from 1911-12 the population of the province
increased from 374,000 to 588,000.

Nevertheless, when union was postponed in 1912 by the
General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church at Edmonton, with
a view to securing greater unanimity, further independent
Local Union Churches came into being. Their feeling was that
they were not going to wait for the ecclesiastics to bring
about organic church union. They were going to bring it
into effect in the only place they could experience it ---
in their own community through a community church, i.e. a
Local Union Church. At the same time they regarded themselves
as units of the proposed United Church of Canada. They
desired to form a General Council of Local Union Churches,
to have an executive secretary of their own and to establish
a relationship with the parent churches through an advisory
council. So, they met twice in 1912, first in Regina and
then in Moosejaw, and drafted a resolution stating their

wishes, which they sent to the Joint Committee on Cooperation. "Their very existence constituted a challenge from the frontier to the parent churches to hasten the consummation of Union".[1] The parent churches continued to urge direct affiliation of the individual church with the parent churches, but had to concede to the setting up of an Advisory Council as formulated at a meeting of the General Council of Local Union Churches in Regina, April 3, 1913. The function of this Advisory Board was :

"1. The advising and counselling of Union Con-
gregations as to the general direction of work.
2. To consider and make arrangements whereby
ministers connected with the three churches
now negotiating union may be able to accept
the pastorates of Union Churches without loss
of standing ---.
3. To consider and advise with regard to tenure,
administration and disposal of all church property
involved in the establishment of a Union Church.
4. To advise as to the collection and disposition
of missionary, educational and other funds.
5. To give such other counsel as may appear to them
to be expedient." [2]

The Regina meeting also suggested the following procedure in the formation of Union Churches :

"1. That when in any community it is locally con-
sidered desirable, a petition be circulated,
praying for the organization of a Union Church.
2. That the said petition shall set forth the
church relations, if any, of the signatories to
the petition, and the said petition shall be
accompanied by all other information considered
relevant.

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1 - E.H.Oliver, op. cit., p. 247.

2 - Vide C.E.Silcox, op.cit., p. 220.

3. That the said petition be presented to the local
courts of the churches interested for report to
the advisory committee, and that it also be
presented to the advisory committee for their
consideration and action." 1

At least, if this procedure were followed, the parent
churches would know when Local Union Churches were being
formed! Heretofore, they hardly knew. It also ensured that
ministers serving Union Churches would not lose their member-
ship and status in the parent body.

The result of this agreement was that more union churches
came into being, six in Manitoba and one in Alberta in 1913
alone. In 1915 the Advisory Council recommended "that when
a union church acquired its own property --- the property be
held by local trustees until the consummation of union".[2]
The General Council of Local Union Churches met in Regina,
April 5, 1916 and decided to form three of its own
Presbyteries, a type of organization proposed in the draft
Basis of Union. Eventually there were six Presbyteries.

But the Joint Committee on Cooperation was still unhappy
about the growth of these Local Union Churches and their
future. When the Presbyterian Church voted in 1916 to delay
the consummation until the close of the first Great War, the
Committee's concern found expression in a 1917 revision of
the 1911 agreement on cooperation.

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1 - _Vide_ C.E.Silcox, _op. cit._, p. 220.

2 - _Ibid._, p. 222.

THE THIRD PERIOD

The Committee met Jan. 3-4, 1917, in Toronto, without any representatives from the Local Union Churches, and decided on a policy which would permit a locally amalgamated church to be 'affiliated' with one of the parent denominations without becoming necessarily an integral unit of it as in the past, and at the same time without being a Local Union Church.

The revised suggested plan for local union churches [1] began :

> "In the judgment of this committee the principles of union in different localities, until the organic union of the negotiating churches is consummated, should find expression in the organization of charges under the plan of cooperation jointly adopted by the negotiating churches rather than by the organization of independent Local Union Churches."

The purpose, of course, was to conserve the strength of the negotiating churches.

By an affiliated charge was meant a local church or churches, under the care of one pastor, organized upon the Basis of Union, desiring to form a united charge and looking to one of the parent churches for spiritual guidance and supervision. By a majority vote of the communicant members in good standing, decision was made as to which of the three mother churches the charge would be affiliated. Such churches were to be recognized as ready to enter into organic union when consummated and in the meantime were called "The United

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1 - Agreement for Cooperation between the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Canada, pending their organic union. Revised Jan. 3, 1917. Pamphlet in the United Church Archives, Victoria University, Toronto. The italics are mine.

Church of ---- (the name of the place) in affiliation with
--- (the name of the parent church)". This 'single affiliation'
didn't work very well. At Grand Coulee, Saskatchewan, an ex-
periment was made in 1918 with 'double affiliation', that is,
the local church being affiliated with two of the parent
churches. Two (or more) communion rolls were kept and members
thereby retained their membership in their own denomination.
In 1921 this plan was adopted by the Provincial Committee on
Cooperation in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The accepted pro-
cedure was :

1. The pastoral term was for four years.

2. The denomination of the first minister, if the congregation
   desired, was chosen by the Provincial Committee.

3. The ministers were chosen alternately from the cooperating
   churches, e.g. a Presbyterian for one term, a Methodist
   for the next, etc.

4. All money raised over and above local expenses was divided
   equally between the parent churches' mission funds.

This was a Methodist approach applied to a local problem
and contributed valuable experience to the United Church of
Canada in the work of its 'settlement committee' after union.
The Dominion Committee on Cooperation gave formal approval
to this plan Oct. 22, 1922. Thus experimentation at the local
level, in the community church (Local Union Church) and in
the cooperation church (single or double affiliated), first
paved the way, then forced the way, to Church Union in Canada.

This did not happen without producing tensions between the leaders of the local union churches and the leaders of the denominational cooperation churches. In some cases, after Oct. 22, 1922, community churches were organized without reference to the Basis of Union.[1] A good part of the difficulty no doubt was caused by the hesitance of the Presbyterians to consummate union. But with the "West pushing the East", consummation of union was bound to come.

> "Thus the needs of the Frontier inspired the vision and raised the issue of Church Union. It was the Frontier that led the way, when the churches hesitated, through cooperation and delimitation of territory, through independent unions and 'affiliation plans', and made Church Union an accomplished fact in hundreds of small communities. It was the Frontier that continued the pressure for Church Union when difficulties of sentiment and prejudice asserted themselves in more populous communities. It was the Frontier that voted overwhelmingly in favor of Church Union." [2]

It is rather a sad commentary, therefore, that church union did not bring to the West what the West brought to church union --- a sense of church unity and community. Today, 35 years after church union, the West is divided by sectarianism and denominationalism, the very things it hoped to avoid through church union.

In the interview referred to previously[3], Dr. G. Doré stated that up until 1925 the sectarian forms of religion did not exist to any extent on the Prairies. Such groups as

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1 - C.E.Silcox, op. cit., p. 224.

2 - E.H.Oliver, op. cit., p. 252. The italics are mine.

3 - Supra p. 43.

"Pentecostals" and "Plymouth Brethren" came afterwards. He associated their coming with the Great Depression[1] and an influx of people from the Western United States. But he also admitted that there were those of the Methodist background who pined for the revivalism of the old days. In particular he cited one woman who went regularly to the 'store front' church as well as the United Church. When asked about it, she admitted going because 'she got a kick out of it'.

He also cited the case of a layman who had at one time been Minister of Agriculture for the Saskatchewan provincial government. In the days before the consummation of union he had been very active in the church union movement. When visited in the 1930's in the twilight years of his life, he told how he, now an elder of the United Church, had been one of the ones who had refused use of their church building to a sectarian group, because it would give support to a divisive force in the community. In a prayer that he made aloud, he said something like this : "Lord, we believe that it was You that wanted us to unite, to have one church. If we did wrong, Lord forgive us, but we believe it was right".

1 - This seems to be the diagnosis of S.D.Clarke, Church and Sect in Canada, University of Toronto, 1948, p. 432. "When drought and the collapse of wheat prices shook the foundations of the Western rural society and man no longer seemed to have any rational control over his fate, the simple faiths of religions secured a new hold. The phenomenal spread of religious sects in Saskatchewan and Alberta after 1930 was a manifestation of growing disillusionment --- with --- political parties and farmer organizations."

By 1921, independent local churches connected to the
General Council of Local Union Churches numbered 70. Of these,
67 were in the West, 3 in Ontario. Data concerning them is
scarce,[1] but it seems they had 10,000 members, 151 preaching
stations, raised an annual sum of $300,000, and administered
property valued at $700,000. Their ministers were :
Presbyterian, 30; Methodist, 21; Congregational, 8; Baptist,
2; Anglican, 1. The growth in the number of these local union
churches had been checked by the double affiliation scheme,
but these independent churches were quite vigorous and made
the negotiating churches not only think, but act. By 1919 the
General Council of Local Union Churches employed a salaried
field secretary. In 1921, with the Great War over and no
action having been taken to consummate union, this General
Council sent a communication to Toronto asking for representa-
tion on the Joint Union Committee. A previous request in 1917
had been refused. This time it was granted and when the
first General Council of the United Church of Canada convened,
10 representatives of the Local Union Churches were included.
The final legislation, when drafted, included, along with
Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregationalist, the churches
affiliated with the General Council of Local Union Churches
and its president - a Baptist - participated in the inaugural
service. And, from this body, came two Baptist ministers and
one Anglican "without reordination", into the ministry of the
United Church of Canada.

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1 - C.E.Silcox, op. cit., p. 224.

On the other hand, these community churches (as is the case with present-day community churches) were dependent upon the parent bodies for their ministers. Furthermore, in a multiple-church charge, a number of independent local union churches were more difficult to administer than churches all belonging to the same denomination and administered from a denominational office.

Another result of the formation of Local Union Churches in the West was their influence in the process of local amalgamation in the East. After the 1917 plan of co-operation, brought about by the influence of the West, was proposed, local amalgamations took place in New (Northern) Ontario so that there was a "saving of eighty men, thirty-nine Methodists and forty-one Presbyterians, together with upward of fifty thousand dollars ---".[1] Cooperation also took place in other areas, including the Maritimes, so that "the really effective union of churches in Canada anticipated the formal union".[2] On the next page is a table, presented in 1923, describing the situation reasonably accurately.

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1 - C. E. Silcox, op. cit., p. 226.

2 - Ibid., p. 227.

AMALGAMATION OF CHURCHES PRIOR TO UNION[1]

Number of Churches

Synods	Cooperating & Delimiting Territory	Affiliated	Independent Union	Total
Maritime Provinces	22	6	2	30
Montreal & Ottawa	--	28	1	29
Toronto & Kingston	168	2	--	170
Manitoba	64	69	15	148
Saskatchewan	350	51	30	431
Alberta	278	16	3	297
British Columbia	132	4	3	139
Totals :	1014	176	54	1244

It will be seen that of the 1244 churches with some form of union, 1015 (81%) of them were in the West. "It will thus be seen that in 1923, two years before the consummation of Union, there were in Canada 1244 pastoral charges, representating at least 3000 preaching stations, where union in one of the various forms was already in operation".[2]

THE FOURTH PERIOD

One of the major arguments advanced by those supporting union was that union was already an accomplished fact in so

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1 - C.E.Silcox, op.cit., p. 227.

2 - Ibid., p. 228. See also R.J.Wilson, Church Union in Canada after Three Years, Ryerson Essay No. 39, Toronto, 1929, Pamphlet in the United Church Archives, Victoria University, Toronto.

many places in Canada, that not to consummate union would be
to break faith with those who had entered local union in good
faith.[1] "--- Those opposed to union realize that these
figures, when complete, will constitute a tremendous argument
in favor of union. It is an argument that is converting a
lot of our hard-headed laymen down here in the East ---",
said J.H.Edmison.[2] It was a strong argument. Maps of Canada
were circulated showing printed in red the names of all the
pastoral charges where some form of cooperation was in effect,
and in black, places where both denominations had separate
churches.[3] The red was overwhelming!

This fourth period saw the further formation of co-
operation churches, on the proposed Basis of Union, but
affiliated with two or more of the negotiating churches, cul-
minating in the consummation of union in 1925.

Some Observations

Most of the cooperation churches formed through the four
periods were in the Home Mission fields. Self-supporting
churches were not involved, as they did not feel the same
pressures, especially the economic one. It is interesting

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1 - Vide E.L.Morrow, op. cit., pp. 55-56, especially the
quotation of the Rev. Mr. Pritchard at Toronto Presbytery
Meeting, Dec. 1922, viz., "Union is an accomplished fact---."
And Principal Oliver's at Sir James Wood's banquet, Toronto,
Jan. 9, 1923,viz., "In Saskatchewan, the thing is done ---".

2 - In a letter, dated Dec.13, 1922, from the Rev.J.H.Edmison
to the Rev. A.C.Bryan, Ogden, Alta. in the United Church
Archives, Toronto.

3 - Copies of these are in the United Church Archives,
Toronto.

to note also that most of the opposition to union came from
the conservative, wealthy Presbyterian congregations of the
East, who did not feel the pinch of frontier conditions.
Nor was this opposition basically doctrinal (as much as this
was the purported reason), but sentimental. There was a
distinct unwillingness to see the identity of the old and
known Presbyterian Church in Canada, per se, lost in the new
and yet unknown United Church of Canada. Dr. Silcox sets
forth five non-theological (what he calls 'psychological')
factors for Presbyterian opposition to church union[1]:

1. A superiority complex on the part of some Presbyterians,
   who regarded themselves as a superior class, being
   Scottish and successful in Canadian economic, political
   and educational life.

2. The "Wee Free" decision in Scotland in 1904 whereby a
   minority group of the Free Church of Scotland, by legal
   battle, ended up with all the Presbyterian Church pro-
   perty, which they were too weak to administer. This
   happening in Scotland colored the thinking of
   Presbyterians in Canada opposed to union.

3. The antipathy to Methodists on the part of many
   Presbyterians. This is best illustrated by a story
   recorded by Dr. Silcox.[2] Following union, a retired

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1 - Vide C.E.Silcox, op. cit., P. 198ff.

2 - Ibid., p. 297.

3 (cont'd)

minister in the continuing Presbyterian Church attended
service, as a worshipper, in a United Church where the
minister, a former Methodist, had adopted the Geneva
attire of gown and bands, previously unusual for a
Methodist to wear, but usual for a Presbyterian. At
the close of the service the United Church minister
went to the back to greet his congregation. He shook
hands heartily with the retired Presbyterian minister
and said that he was glad to see him. "But," said the
venerable dominie, "I am a Presbyterian." "Oh," replied
the United Church minister, "we are all one now."
"Perhaps," said the Presbyterian dubiously, "the gown
and bands may be the gown and bands of Esau, but the
voice is the voice of Jacob."

4. The fear of political domination by one great national
church.

5. The position of Presbyterians in Canada. Between 1901
and 1911, Presbyterians, according to the federal census,
became the largest Protestant group, numerically, in the
country, replacing the Methodists.

Whatever the factors were, it is a fact that most of the
non-concurring churches were the wealthy, Presbyterian, city
churches in the East.

The "community churches" of the West made church union a
necessity, whether the churches in the East wanted it or not,
in 1925. In carrying out their missionary obligation to take

the Gospel to the Western Frontier of Canada, the East accepted a responsibility that became an involvement in something larger than any simply denominational interest and resulted in organic church union. The same has been true in other areas of the world. Where the missionary responsibility of the Church has been given a primary place, organic church union has come to the fore as a necessity, e.g. the United Church of South India. The missionary obligation and the ecumenical movement have gone hand in hand. The International Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910 was the beginning of the World Council of Churches. As the ecumenical church seeks to fulfill its missionary obligation, its sense of visible unity will grow and develop. The non-Christian who responds to the call of Christ does not want to be asked to what church he wishes to belong --- Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational or Anglican. He will tell you that he just wants to belong to the Christian Church.

BOOK III

THREE CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITY CHURCHES

INTRODUCTION

The first Protestant Church in Canada was a "community church".[1] It was attended by Congregationalists and Presbyterians, and was regarded as a union church. Since then there have been such "community churches" in all the provinces of Canada throughout its history.

Three factors, either together or separately, have contributed to their existence :

1. The demands of the pioneer situation.

2. The smallness of the individual community.

3. The mixture of denominational affiliation of the inhabitants of the community.

Other factors have been :

4. The sense of isolation.

5. Economic difficulties.

6. The desire for a place of worship in the community.

7. The desire for the religious instruction of the children in the community.

It is difficult to document the extent, number or nature of these community enterprises because records giving such information have been poorly preserved. The author of this paper discovered this truth as a brief study of three modern examples of "community churches" in the Montreal area was carried out. Lacking denominational headquarters where documents of historic interest might be preserved these

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1 - Supra p. 33, Chap. III.

churches have kept them in private possession with the result that many have been lost.

The 1901 census showed 554 Union Sunday Schools and 267 such community churches in Canada.[1] These were, in many respects, quite different from the local union churches developed later in the West. But they had this in common : they both came into existence by the spontaneous action of the members of the given community. In the case of the 1901 union church, the people of a community, usually small in number and diversified in denominational connection, feeling the need of a place of worship for themselves and for the religious instruction of their children, took spontaneous action to erect a central place of worship, open to all the people and to the ministers of every denomination. In most cases this would be the only place of worship in the community. Sometimes ownership in the building was as in a joint stock company, each member purchasing a share, whereby he got a vote in the corporation, a pew in the church, and a stall in the horse shed. The problem in such churches was that as the original shareholders died, and their heirs moved to addresses unknown, administration became difficult. In some cases a particular denomination, by purchasing the majority of shares, became the "owner". In other cases one denomination became the "owner" in practice, because no one else made use of the building. In still other cases ownership

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1 - C.E,Silcox, op.cit., p. 74. Of these, 70 churches and 248 Sunday Schools were in Ontario; 16 churches and 22 Sunday Schools were in Quebec; 98 churches and 123 Sunday Schools were in the Maritimes.

was vested in a Board of Trustees. A local committee usually
arranged for the Services of worship to be taken by ministers
of the various denominations, in rotation, from a nearby
city or town. Many of these points will be borne out as
the following three contemporary churches in the Province of
Quebec are studied :

1. The Union Church of Otterburn Park.

2. Roxboro Protestant Community Church.

3. Nitro Community Church.

THE UNION CHURCH OF OTTERBURN PARK[1]

BEGINNINGS

The first of these was organized in 1915 and was known for some years as the "Otterburn Park United Church". The community of Otterburn Park, for many years a summer vacation area for Montrealers, is a growing suburban development on the Richelieu River some 25 miles from Montreal on the C.N.R. line to the Maritimes and the provincial highway to Quebec City.

The Otterburn Church was initiated by the student minister of the Presbyterian Church at Beloeil (on the side of the river nearest Montreal), but early took on the character of a community church. "A Short Historical Report" presented at the annual meeting July 3, 1927 records :

> "It was in June 1915 that Mr. Penny, the student in charge at Beloeil came over to St. Hilaire (the general name of the area] and enquired of Mr. Peterson, the Station Agent, as to the possibility of holding services on this side of the river. Mr. Peterson advised him to see Mr.Murray who gladly undertook to discuss it with other residents. It was decided to arrange a meeting place. Mr. Penny secured the loan of a tent which was erected on Mr. Murray's property and in it the first service was held on Sunday, July 4th of that year. Mr. J.H.Carson conducted public worship with a congregation of thirty-two. This was the beginning of our church.

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1 - Quotations are from the official minute books of the Congregation of the Union Church of Otterburn Park retained at the Manse in the possession of the minister, the Rev. T. MacLeod, at the time of writing. Minute Book I covers the period Aug. 18, 1918 to June 26, 1936. Minute Book II commences July 5, 1936.

The credit for this undertaking is due entirely to
Mr. Penny who worked hard, bringing the tent and chairs
from Beloeil in a row boat and he, Mrs. Bradley and
Mr. Murray erected the tent on Sunday afternoon. He
secured a carpenter and worked with him in laying a
board floor for the tent ......"[1]

To this tent-church an organ was carried every Sunday.
They used the hymn book of the Presbyterian Church, the "Book
of Praise".[2] On the second Sunday --- "two little girls
arrived at 3 o'clock and, as the service was not until four,
Mrs. Murray talked to them. They wanted to know whether
there was going to be a Sunday School. Sunday School was
held the following Sunday at her house" ---[3] with a total
enrollment of three children. The teaching material over many
years consisted of 'hand-me-downs' from various churches in
Montreal. When material was purchased it was usually the
'non-denominational' type from American publishers like
Gospel Light of the Christian Literature Crusade.

FIRST CHURCH BUILDING

Sunday Services were held in the summer only, and during
the following four years the tent occupied several locations
according to the needs of the population.

"As the attendance in 1918 had increased encouragingly
and the tent was showing signs of wear, it was decided to
secure a site on which to build a church".[4] A meeting was

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1 - Minute Book I, pp. 46ff.

2 - This is the hymn book still used in the present day
church services.

3 - Ibid.

4 - Ibid.

called of all the Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians,
Methodists residing in the community, there being about 60
families at the time. Apparently the Anglicans had the
largest representation at the meeting, when it was decided
that three lots near the river be purchased, and that the
property be held in the personal names of the three Trustees,
viz. Mr. Evans, Mr. Hope and Mr. Roberts. A church building,
designed by architect Mr. David MacFarlane, and erected by
Mr. Arthur Charette at a cost of $4124, was opened, free of
debt, on July 20, 1919, "the Rev. J.H.McConnell and the
Rev. L.F.Kipp officiating". Apparently at this time it was
known as the "St. Hilaire United Church" and got some home
mission financial support and its student minister from the
Presbyterian Church. It was not until 1923 that it took the
name "Otterburn Park United Church".

CHURCH UNION

The community of Beloeil, the site of a plant manu-
facturing fertilizer and explosives, experienced during the
war a considerable increase in population and consequent
growth in its church life. When Church Union was consum-
mated in 1925, as the only non-Roman church in Beloeil, this
Presbyterian Church voted to enter union and thereafter was
known as the "McMasterville United Church" with its own
resident minister. The difference between the community
church at Otterburn Park and those in Western Canada was
shown by the fact that, though it bore the name "Otterburn

Park United Church" it did not enter union. Quite the
opposite took place. For, in 1929 the question was raised
whether or not to substitute the word 'community' for 'United'
in the name of the church, in order to emphasize its in-
dependence from denominational affiliation.[1] Perhaps the
explanation lies in the fact that the congregation contained
a substantial number of Anglicans, Baptists, and continuing
Presbyterians!

LAND PURCHASE

The "community church" tends to be a layman's church,
organized by laymen, for laymen. This fact encourages self-
sacrifice on the part of the membership. In every "community
church" there seems to be one or two who are willing to take
positions of responsibility that often involve far more,
personally, than otherwise.

In 1924 the problem arose of the purchase of three more
lots to protect the church property from the possibility of
having next to it some commercial enterprise that would inter-
fere with public worship. There was no church money available
for the purchase. Mr. Alex Murray and Mr. F.W.Evans prof-
fered to "advance $275 each, to be returned by the church as
soon as possible". Their step of faith was justified when
six months later "the treasurer reported the receipt of the
sum of $550 from the Ladies Aid Society of the Church to

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1 - Vide Minute Book I, p. 60.

cover the purchase price of the three lots of land situated between our church and the main highway".[1]

"In the fall of 1924 it was decided to continue the services through the winter and they have been held continuously ever since".[2] The ministrations of the McMasterville United Church ministers were obtained. By 1927 there were 16 families in the winter and 116 in the summer.

THE SACRAMENT OF DIVISION

During all this time the sacrament emphasizing "our unhappy divisions" was of course not celebrated at all. "The first time in its history the Congregation partook of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper"[3] was on Easter Day, March 31, 1929, fourteen years from the date of its formation! There were 30 people present and the McMasterville United Church minister, the Rev. T.F.Duncan, was given specific instructions "to prepare a simple form of service which would be undenominational and that he would conduct the service alone".[4] This is still an influence in the present day church's worship and apparently was a stipulation of the Anglican constituency in the congregation. The minister was to have no elders, no one, assisting him in the Service or in the administration of the sacraments. In fact, those

1 - Ibid., p. 29.

2 - Ibid., p. 46.

3 - Ibid., p. 62.

4 - Ibid., p. 62.

(presumably the Anglicans) who wished to go to the front of the church and receive the sacramental elements kneeling from the hand of the minister did so. The rest received them sitting in their seats, but at the hands of the minister alone!

The present minister candidly reports that the present membership roll of some 400 families contains some 40 families who still consider themselves Anglicans and yet wish to remain members of the Union Church of Otterburn Park, even though the parish of St. Martin's Anglican Church, Otterburn Heights, has been organized and a new church building erected. He also states that the order of worship used in the present church services follows a pattern influenced by the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, with prayers taken directly from it.[1]

SOCIAL CONCERN

The concern of the Otterburn "community church" for the social welfare of the community may be indicated by the following reference[2] :

> "Complaints had been made to the Committee of
> Management in regard to slot machines which had been
> installed --- in the village and that some of the
> young people of the community had lost considerable
> money playing them". [It was] "unanimously resolved
> that the committee --- lodge a protest with the
> proper authorities, on behalf of this congregation,
> against these machines being allowed --- and to ask
> that steps be taken to prohibit their use in this
> community".

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1 - Where else but in a "community church" would hymns be sung out of the Presbyterian "Book of Praise", and worship be led by a United Church minister out of an Anglican Prayer Book, with the assistance of a Baptist soloist!

2 - Ibid., p. 64.

There is no further mention of the subject, so presumably the machines were removed.

"UNION" not "UNITED"

At the 23rd Annual Meeting July 3, 1938 the name of the church was changed.

"The Secretary read a letter received from Mr. Fred.W. Evans with reference to changing the name of the church from 'United Church' to 'Union Church'.

Resolution :
Whereas, when it was decided to purchase land and build a Protestant church in the district of St. Hilaire, a meeting was called of the residing Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians, ---
Whereas, in view of the letter as received and read from Mr. Fred.W. Evans suggesting the desirability of the changing of the name of the Church from 'United' to 'Union' in order _to perpetuate the idea on which this congregation was established_ and in view of the adoption of 'United' by the Church of the Protestant faith who have adopted the former name and that by using the latter name 'Union' it will more clearly show the origin and _freedom from affiliation_ with any particular church ---
That the following Resolution is moved without prejudice in the expectation that by changing the name it will re-act to the benefit of the church in their efforts to spread the Christian way of living _in_ this community :
Be it resolved that the Congregation of people who now worship in the Church and are known as 'Otterburn Park United Church' be hereafter known as 'Union Church of Otterburn Park' --- ".[1]

It is still known by that name today.

MISSIONARY INTEREST

In 1952 the author himself had the occasion to visit the

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1 - _Minute Book II_, whose pages are not numbered. The italics are mine.

church and to talk with some of its members. In the conversation that ensued some members expressed dissatisfaction with the general attitude in their community church towards the missionary work of the Christian Church in general. This is witnessed by the following :

"Rev. J. Lynn remarked that, the church being in a fine financial position, he felt that we could contribute towards some missionary work either at home or foreign ---. The sum of $20, for this year, was agreed upon"[1] --- for foreign work, out of a total budget of around $2000. A perusal of the minutes and financial statements indicates that this was not surpassed or even repeated.

There was considerable difficulty caused by the deaths of the original trustees who owned the property in their own name. "A Trustee Board should be formed as those who held trusteeship have passed away with the exception of Mr. E.W.Christmas".[2]

BUILDING EXPANSION

In 1949 decision was made to raise the height of the foundation under the building and add a new wing to provide accommodation for the increased number of children in the Sunday School and people in church. This was endorsed enthusiastically by the membership. Some money for the project was solicited among the people travelling on the

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1 - Ibid., Meeting of Board of Management, Feb. 8, 1945.

2 - Ibid.,   "   "   "   Apr.24, 1947.

commuter train to Montreal, irrespective of their denominational connection. It is reported that a number of Roman Catholics contributed generously. Many men of the community contributed the labors of their hands, assisting in the actual raising of the church building and the pouring of the concrete. The lowest tender of $3500 for the contractor's work was accepted and the whole project, which by the time it was completed cost $8000, represented a very considerable undertaking for a small community.[1] Practically all of it was paid before the building was dedicated by the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, the Rt. Rev. John Dixon, as the "Union Church of Otterburn Park".

CHURCH UNION AGAIN

In 1955 the whole area of Beloeil, McMasterville, Otterburn Park and St. Hilaire began to experience a large influx of Montrealers, as the area was being developed as a suburb of Montreal through large scale housing developments. The McMasterville United Church gave notice that its minister was required full time and therefore his ministrations would be available no longer to the Union Church. This faced the Otterburn Church with a grave problem. It resolved the problem by entering into union with the United Church of Canada during the year of the thirtieth anniversary celebrating the consummation of union and in the fortieth year of its own history. As part of the agreement of union it retained the name of "Union Church of Otterburn Park" and some of its

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1 - Ibid., Building Committee Meeting, May 5, 1949.

"peculiar" practices in worship, liturgy, polity and membership.

Today it is a self-supporting charge with its own resident minister, all building debt paid, making a substantial contribution to the mission funds of the United Church, and planning to erect a $250,000 building on a new site.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

When asked to comment on the subject, the present minister of the church stated that the difficulty with the "community church" was :-

1. Where will the minister come from?

2. What will be its doctrine?

3. What money, if any, will it give to missions and what missionary work will it undertake?

4. What polity will it follow? How will it organize itself for purposes of administration? Who will 'own' the church property?

His opinion was that the "community church" tends to be a congregational church.

CHAPTER V

ROXBORO PROTESTANT COMMUNITY CHURCH

BEGINNINGS

In contrast to the former community church and its forty-five year history, this one covers a short five years. Nevertheless, in that short period it will be seen that very much the same factors and difficulties were involved in its development. The town of Roxboro, Quebec, is located on the electrified C.N.R. line to the Laurentians, 15 miles from Montreal on Rivière des Prairies. There are 35 commuter trains a day. In earlier days, like Otterburn Park, it was a summer vacation area.

> "The idea of a church in Roxboro was conceived in the summer of 1954. Four friends at a garden tea were responsible : Mrs. C.Howes, Mrs. O. Skane, Mrs. J. Carwood and Mrs. A. White. They formed a committee and took a census of the Protestants to be served. It showed that of the 68 families the majority would prefer a Community Church with rotating services by ministers of various denominations."[1]

One of the members of this committee had a relative who was in a position of responsibility in the nearby community church at Ile Bigras, and drew on the experience gained in its formation.

The Committee found "the Protestant group included many denominations -- each and every one unable to support the

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1 - Quoted from a duplicated sheet entitled "A Synopsis of the Church History" issued Christmas 1956, a copy of which is in the possession of the minister, Rev.J.W.McCarthy, at the present time.

minimum requirements of a house of prayer".[1]

The first services of worship were held in private homes;
the first one, conducted Nov. 7, 1954 by a Major of the
Salvation Army, A.G.James, was an Armistice Service, in the
home of Mr. & Mrs. C. Howes. On Nov. 24, a general meeting
of the Protestant residents of Roxboro was held. As there
was no place large enough, Father Valois, curé of the church,
Mary Queen of Peace, offered the use of his church. Two
speakers, Mr. Davis and Mr. Gray, from the Community Church
of Ile Bigras gave interesting and pertinent details re-
garding building a church of this nature.

> "This event was history-making : the Anglicans,
> Baptists, Presbyterians, United, Lutherans and
> Salvation Army members joining together to build
> a Community Church and meeting as guests of the
> Roman Catholics.
>
> That night an Executive Board was elected with
> Mr. C.Howes [an Anglican] as president. One of its
> duties was to secure speakers for the Sunday Services
> and to arrange for their transportation, Plans for
> a Building Campaign were inaugurated." [2]

Considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining a
supply for the Sunday Services as there was a disinclination
on the part of the Anglicans, Presbyterians and United Church
authorities to become involved in a Community Church project

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1 - Quoted from an article entitled "Roxboro Protestant
Community Church" in the magazine The Anglican Outlook,
Vol. 12, No. 5, March 1957, p. 13. Copy on file in the
Archives of the Synod of the Diocese of Montreal.

2 - Vide the sheet entitled "A Synopsis of Church History".
The Anglican Outlook article, p. 13, calls the "Board" a
"Board of Trustees under the chairmanship of Mr. C. Howes".

in an area which could readily become overnight a densely
populated municipality. However, students from the three
theological colleges in Montreal took services frequently,
each of the denominations following their own pattern of
worship, the Anglican students taking Morning Prayer
according to the Prayer Book, and so on. It is interesting
to note that the people of Roxboro early desired the sacra-
ments of the Church for, within one month of their first
business meeting, "On Sunday, Dec. 26, the Rev. R.V.Fricker
(an Anglican) celebrated the church's first communion. There
have been four christening services".[1] In November 1954, the
Roman Catholic School, the first large scale building in the
community was completed, and "on March 16th, 1955, Dr.Douglas
Wilson (of the United Church) conducted the first service
held in the assembly room of the Roman Catholic School. The
School Board had kindly consented to the free use of this
room for services until the church was built".[2]

In the meantime "Three Ladies' Guild groups were soon
formed with one major objective --- to raise money for the
Building Fund, which they did through 'Penny Bags and proceeds
from Home Cooking Sales, Bazaars, Garden Parties and
Christmas Teas'."[3] They were encouraged in their objective

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1 - Vide the sheet entitled "A Synopsis of Church History".

2 - Ibid.

3 - Ibid.

by "the donation [Jan. 1955] of a plot of land at the
corner of 6th Ave. and Gouin Blvd., to the Church, by
Mayor Roland Bigras, as the site of the Roxboro Protestant
Community Church Building".[1]

From the beginning, a Sunday School was part of the
church organization and met first in the home of
Mr. & Mrs. A.G.James. The lesson material in use con-
sisted of old United Church and Anglican papers donated for
the purpose. "In February 1956 Sunday School classes were
begun for the nursery and kindergarten age groups" thus pro-
viding a baby-sitting service for parents with young children
who wished to attend the worship services.[1]

It is always surprising how much time is spent by the
officers of a "community church" in drawing up a constitution
and set of by-laws by which the church, as a legal entity,
functions. It has been done many times before but each com-
munity considers it has to do it entirely on its own : "the
officers spent long hours originating a constitution and set
of by-laws".[2] A charter was granted by the provincial govern-
ment in 1955 constituting "The Roxboro Protestant Community
Church" as a legal entity.

In this work the officers had the advice of the rector of
an adjacent Anglican Church, who was responsible for them

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1 - Vide the sheet entitled "A Synopsis of Church History".

2 - Vide article in The Anglican Outlook, p. 13. Cf.
the Nitro Community Church, described in the next chapter.

including in their charter the concept that the original
charter members would have the deciding vote in any future dis-
position of the church property. This was to be one of the
decisive factors in the course of the Roxboro Church.

CHURCH BUILDING CAMPAIGN

The campaign to erect a new church building excites
enthusiasm wherever undertaken. But nowhere does it gather
breater interest and wider support than in a community church
project. Such was the case in Roxboro.

> "The same wonderful force that brought this Christian
> group into being also generated the idea that the
> Community should be a place of worship. [There was]
> --- indication that every one would support such a
> project. At the same time there was a full aware-
> ness of the fact that because we were a church of all
> Protestant denominations there was little hope of any
> outside financial assistance".1

Representative members of the community met together in
committee and decided upon the features they would like to
see in a church building. On the basis of these, an architect
drew up plans and estimated the cost at $30,000. This was
a staggering sum for a small community with no resources but
those of its individual members. The group thought first of
employing a commercial fund raising organization but was told
by a representative of such a firm that "we as a community
would be lucky to reach a third (or $10,000) of our necessary
objective".2 The canvass carried out by the church on its

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1 - Vide article in The Anglican Outlook, p. 14.

2 - Ibid.

own throughout the community achieved $24,000 "in cash or

pledges". One member of the community offered to mortgage

his house to provide a further $10,000 towards the completion

of the church building. "In the spring of 1956 ground was

broken and the building was commenced through the help of

many Protestants and also a number of the Roman Catholic

faith in the community. Labour Day, 1956 marked the laying

and dedication of the cornerstone, and on Christmas Eve 1956

the first service of worship was held in the Church".[1]

Financial costs were reduced by the contribution of

physical labour by members of the community, When, for instance,

it was going to cost $100 to place three 40 foot long beams in

place the call went out for volunteers. "Twenty-five men

were on the site in a few hours and lifted the beams, each

weighing nearly a ton, into place. This is the type of

spirit that put our church together; without it, it would

have been an impossible task".[2] By Christmas 1956, member-

ship had increased to 150 families.

POPULATION GROWTH

During the next three years the problem that seems to come

to every "community church", with population increase, came to

the Roxboro Church. What is the "community church" to do when

one or other of its denominational groups becomes large enough

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1 - From a duplicated letter entitled "A Short History of
Your Church" dated Sept. 23, 1960 under the signatures of
C. Howes and C.T.Amberley. Copy in the possession of the
minister.

2 - Vide article in The Anglican Outlook, p. 14.

to be on its own and wants to do so? In this particular
instance, a considerable number of people (many from Central
Ontario), members of the United Church of Canada, formed a
separate congregation, which at the time of writing is planning
to build a $500,000 church building of its own. A Presbyterian
congregation has been organized in nearby Pierrefonds.

> "Needless to say, the formation of these groups severely
> affected the membership of the Community Church, ---.
> It became increasingly difficult to continue as such.
>
> The only solution, it appeared, before the Church
> became involved in serious financial difficulties,
> was to become affiliated, with a specific denomination,
> and accordingly at a meeting held in October 1959, the
> remaining members, by majority, voted to have the
> Trustees approach the Anglican Diocese of Montreal to
> become affiliated with that denomination.
>
> The Bishop and the Diocese of Montreal approved this
> request and the inaugural vestry meeting of the
> Anglican Congregation was held November 16th, 1959
> ----."[1]

It is known by the name of "St. Barnabas Church". The
Rev. J.W.McCarthy, appointed June 1st, 1960, is the resident
minister at the time of writing.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

When asked to comment on the subject of the "community
church", its present minister stated that :

1. The "community church" is a good idea, but its constitution
   and by-laws have to be worked out carefully.

2. The denominations should cooperate together in ministering

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1 - From the duplicated letter entitled "A Short History
of Your Church", dated Sept. 23, 1960, signed by the Wardens,
C. Howes and C.T.Amberley.

to "community churches" in a way similar to that of the Chaplain Corps to the Canadian Armed Forces. The suspicion, existing between the denominations with respect to community churches, could thus be overcome.

3. The members of a "community church" are not interested in church doctrine. They are interested in stories from the Bible, and how to get along with their neighbors.

CHAPTER VI

NITRO COMMUNITY CHURCH

Presbyterians are incorrigibly interested in church union.
It was, after all, a Presbyterian, Principal Patrick, who
launched "the frail bark of organic union on the calm sea of
ecclesiastical politics" in 1902.[1] (Although it must be
admitted that some Presbyterians have difficulty when it
comes time for the consummation of union). As in the case of
the Union Church of Otterburn Park, so in the case of Nitro
Community Church : a Presbyterian student-minister took the
initiating steps. In 1947 --- [the first] "Protestant
Services were held in the Nitro school by Mr. J.W.Williams,
a student in Theology at Presbyterian College, Montreal".[2]
As the name of the village of Nitro might indicate, it is
connected with an explosives plant constructed at the begin-
ning of the second world war. (This plant is still in
operation under the name of Canadian Arsenals Limited, a
crown corporation). In order to accommodate the sudden influx
of war workers, 250 prefabricated houses were erected at a
respectable distance from the explosives and within 2 or 3
miles of the city of Valleyfield, Quebec, on the south shore
of the St. Lawrence River, 40 miles upstream from Montreal.

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1 - E. Lloyd Morrow, op. cit., p. 63. Quoted by H.H.Walsh,
op. cit., p. 289.

2 - Quoted from an article entitled "Nitro Community Church
to Expand Facilities" in The Huntingdon Gleaner, a weekly
newspaper, dated July 13, 1955, p. 4.

There was nothing done during the war with regard to community

worship, because of the temporary nature of the whole project

and the transiency of the population.

> "When the war ended, the great majority of the war
> workers left the community to take up other occupations.
> Management of the housing project was taken over by the
> Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and available
> houses were leased to returning war veterans who re-
> quired accommodation for their families; many worked
> in the vicinity of Montreal, commuting daily, and a
> good proportion of these were airline personnel engaged
> in the Atlantic flight services."[1]

Because of the post-war shortage of housing, this was the only

shelter available for most of these people.

These war veterans had come from a variety of backgrounds

and places and felt no connection whatsoever with Valleyfield.

They wanted their own community life and their own church.

They were, in fact, a sociologically isolated community.

> "The 125 Protestant families in the village were not all
> of the same denomination, being divided into the Anglican,
> Presbyterian and United Church sects [sic.]. Since not
> one of these three groups had sufficient numbers to
> support a church of its own, it was realized that the
> only possible way for a church to be brought into being
> was for all these groups to cooperate in the enterprise.
> Thus, a campaign was launched by Mr. Williams,
> Mr. Thomas Duncan and many public minded Nitro citizens
> for the purpose of providing --- a community church
> where they could all attend services together and in
> which each denomination would retain its own particular
> religious identity."[1]

Just as in the case of each of the other "community churches",

assistance towards the establishment of a "community church"

was solicited and received from business firms and

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1 - Vide the article in the Huntingdon Gleaner.

2 - Vide the article in the Huntingdon Gleaner.

individuals irrespective of religious affiliation. The Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation provided the site.[1] The War Assets Corporation gave, at a nominal cost, a suitable building - it was an old 'smoke house', a building previously provided for the men working in the explosives plant where they could smoke their cigarettes legally and safely.

The financial campaign was a success and "with the money so raised, work commenced on the renovation of the building ---. A great community effort was organized and a total of 6700 man hours of volunteer labor was put into bringing this unique church into being. The total cost in cash to renovate the building was $2100, including the purchase price and the cost of moving the building ...."[2] A Presbyterian layman, G. Douglas Cameron, a member during this period on the Board of Managers reported in an interview : "It was exciting. We had very little money. People who didn't have money gave their time. We enjoyed doing it. We were sorry when we had to move away."[3] The Rev. W. G. New, minister of the Valleyfield Anglican Church at the time commented in an interview, "There was a wonderful spirit in the first two or three years."[4]

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1 - The land is not owned by the Church but permission to place a community church on it was granted.

2 - Ibid.

3 - In a personal interview in the Spring of 1961 at St. Catherines, Ont.

4 - In a personal interview in the Spring of 1961 at Toronto, Ontario.

"The church measures 25 by 50 feet and the body of the church and the altar and choir section are housed in one large room. A vestry at one side of the altar is for the use of the ministers. --- When social activities are being carried out, the altar section is closed off from the hall by means of a curtain. In cold weather the church is heated by --- oil heaters."[1]

On May 9, 1949 the church was officially opened and the dedication, as in Otterburn Park, was conducted by the Rt. Rev. John Dixon, the Anglican Bishop of Montreal. It was no different from the two others studied in thinking of it-self as a distinctive institution. "Nitro can therefore claim the unique distinction of probably being the only com-munity in this Province having a church which serves the Protestant families as a tri-denominational institution. All work in harmony and all work for the common cause. This is truly a community effort ---."[2] Considerable time was spent on the development of a constitution and set of by-laws. Copies of these are on file with the Synod of the Diocese of Montreal, with the Nitro Board of Managers, and with each of the three ministers. One of the major articles in the con-stitution is that there are to be seven members of the Board of Trustees : two Anglican, two United Church, two Presbyterian , and one other.

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1 - Vide the article in the Huntingdon Gleaner.

2 - Ibid.

It is interesting to note that the name chosen for the church omitted the word "Protestant". Some Roman Catholic children were in attendance at the Sunday School and one Roman Catholic family was affiliated. The Sunday School enrollment in 1955 was 110 (at the present time it is about 75) under the direction of Mr. Lloyd Taylor (an Anglican). The material used, and still in use, is the non-denominational Bible lessons produced by Cook's Publications,[1]an American publisher, at one time fundamentalist, now based upon liberal biblical theology. As far as the sacraments are concerned : "There were few Communion services during the year. Baptisms were performed by all the clergy as the need arose."[2]

The chairman of the Board of Managers in 1955 and continuously active in the affairs of the church was J.W.Clandinan, also an Anglican. The members of the church maintain their denominational membership on the rolls of the Valleyfield churches. As in the case of other "community churches", the services of worship are taken by ministers of nearby denominational churches in rotation. "Three ministers of different denominations take turns at carrying the weekly Sunday Service at 9:30 a.m., but regardless of whose turn it is on any particular Sunday, the congregation will consist of individuals belonging to three separate denominations.

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1 - David C.Cook Publishing Co., 850 North Grove Ave., Elgin, Illinois.

2 - Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Congregation, Nitro Community Church, Jan. 19, 1960, p. 7. Copy on file with the United Church minister, Valleyfield.

--- The fact that they attend all services is a tribute to the remarkable position which the Church holds in the Community."[1] This is still the practice at the time of writing. In 1955 a Church hall was added by the excavation of a basement under the building. Once again much of the work was provided by volunteer labor.

The interest of the church in local social welfare is illustrated by a story told in the interview with G.D.Cameron. One mother of six children left destitute by the desertion of the bread-winner of the household was helped by the church paying two months' rent on her house and the gift of $50 for groceries.

The lack of interest in the missionary work of the church is illustrated by the fact that the annual contribution to the Mission Funds of the three Valleyfield churches, out of a total budget of $2500 is $15 divided between the three.[2] The women's organization actually gave the donation, not the church.

This "community church", while there is some doubt about its continuance at the time of writing, has continued largely because its population has decreased, not increased. No one denominational group, therefore, has become large enough to go on its own. At the present time there are 75 families in the church : roughly 40% Anglican, 40% United Church and

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1 - Vide the article in the Huntingdon Gleaner.

2 - Vide 1960 Minutes of the Annual Meeting, p.2.

20% Presbyterian. Many of the Anglicans, encouraged by the
present incumbent at Valleyfield, are going to church there
and withdrawing their support from Nitro. Their children
are going with them. As the Sunday School has been the
raison d'être of the community church, there is a crisis in
its life. The present United Church minister at Valleyfield
has described the Nitro Church as a Sunday School where the
adult people who organize it like to meet once a Sunday for
worship and hold fund raising activities to pay for the up-
keep of the building and the purchase of the Sunday School
supplies. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it is an
experiment in church cooperation and ecumenical activity on
the local level.

THREE INTERVIEWS

The three ministers from the Valleyfield churches who
take the Services at Nitro were interviewed during the spring
of 1961 and asked to comment on the subject of the "com-
munity church" in general and the Nitro church in particular.
They are summarized as follows :-

The Rev. W. Charles Pelletier (at the Valleyfield United
Church since 1955) :

1. The same sermon is used by him in both Nitro and Valleyfield.

2. "Nitro is a layman's church where ministers are invited
   to participate."

3. Their own church is everything to them. Their contribution
   to the mission funds of the Church is small and nominal.

3 (cont'd) Because the "community church" has little mis-
sionary outreach, its interest, as a church, tends to be
self-centred.

4. Pastoral work of ministers amongst the people of a "com-
munity church" is practically non-existant. The life
of the church thereby suffers.

5. Finances were not a problem in the early days of the
Nitro church. But today, with the smaller number of
families, there is a problem of financial support.

The Rev. W.G.New (the Anglican priest at St. Mark's,
Valleyfield, until 1959) :

1. "It should never have been started --- it was too near
Valleyfield. If it was out in the wilds, with a settled
community, it would work. It looks now as if it is not
going to continue, because the Anglicans (at Nitro) are
going to Valleyfield."

2. There was great difficulty with the sectarian groups,
(such as the Jehovah Witnesses and the fundamentalist
Baptists) who would have taken over if they had been
given the opportunity, because it was a "community church"
open to all. The constitution had to be drawn up very
carefully so that only those resident in the community,
regular in attendance at the services, and in financial
support of the church were allowed to hold office.

3. The people active in a "community church" tend to be
"church" people whose interest is reduced to that of

3 (cont'd) keeping the local church going without doing
anything to help other churches. There is little giving
to "Missions". Thus they acquire bad giving habits.

4. The older Nitro children go to school in Valleyfield.
Nitro people buy most of their groceries in Valleyfield.
Why don't they go to church in Valleyfield? The woman's
group --- the "Willing Workers" --- whose president is an
Anglican, is the "back-bone" of the Nitro Community Church.

5. People do not stay long in Nitro : only 2 or 3 years.
They come there to live because the rent is cheap. When
they can afford their own house, they move away. This
rapid turnover of population weakens church life.

6. The "community church" seems to work best when it is
under the aegis of one particular denomination, such as
at Collingwood, Ontario, and Longue Pointe, Quebec.

7. The Bishop of Montreal, the Rt. Rev. John Dixon, has
said that "the community church is an experiment in the
ecumenical movement". It is, and it isn't. The
minister serving a "community church" finds it difficult
to fulfill his ordination vows and his duty to his mother
church.

The Rev. Clarke Hood (Presbyterian Minister of Valleyfield
and Ormstown) :

1. "Nitro is not the kind of place where one would expect to
have men coming forward to offer themselves for the
ministry". None have been reported.

2. Lacking denominational affiliation people of a "community church" lack a feeling of belonging to the Church as the Church. They have little interest in missions and their sense of stewardship is very low. (They do not give financially well to the church).

3. Ministers feel hampered in their preaching in a "community church". They cannot say in Nitro exactly what they would say in their own home church, because the congregation is of mixed denomination.

4. People do not expect to be in Nitro very long. As a result, their attendance at church services is infrequent. The average attendance is 20 people out of 75 families.

5. People belonging to a "community church" are confused as to what they believe. Their feeling is that denominational Sunday School lessons should not be used; so they use "non-denominational" American material. When the children come later to receive instruction in their own denominational church they are theologically confused. The result is that they make poor church members.

6. The "community church" affiliated with a particular denomination functions more satisfactorily. Such a one is that at Baie Comeau, Quebec, under the Anglican Church of Canada.

7. The Nitro church should become affiliated to one of the three denominations.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

When the post war housing shortage began to abate and the war veteran population began to move away from Nitro a change began to take place in the outlook of Nitro Community Church. The common experience of the war shared by these former servicemen helped them to work together in the common interest of their community church. It is no longer a factor. Furthermore, the explosives plant at Nitro is now operating at a reduced level of production. The Merck chemical plant at Valleyfield has closed down due to European competition. The result has been that as English-speaking Protestants have moved away, French-speaking Roman Catholics have taken their place.

Those who live in Nitro today who might support the community church are inclined to associate themselves with the denominational churches in Valleyfield which, feeling the pressure of the present economic decline, beckon them more strongly than ever before.

Prospects for the continuance of Nitro Community Church, as such, are therefore not very great.

CONCLUSION

It is not intended merely to repeat here the conclusions drawn in the body of the thesis as the research progressed, but rather to make certain salient observations as a result of the study as a whole.

An analysis of the theological basis of community showed that, Biblically speaking, the Church was meant to be a community church. In the Old Testament the Church was found to be the "people of God", chosen by the act of God, Israel, a people with a strong sense of community. In time, tension developed between the national Israel and the faithful Remnant. The Suffering Servant of the Lord in Deutero-Isaiah represented in his one person the Remnant, the community of those who remained faithful to God. In Jesus Christ, the true Servant of the Lord came and suffered on the Cross to draw all men to Himself, into the new Israel, the community of the redeemed, the "body of Christ", the Church.

Throughout the subsequent centuries, tension between New Testament ideals and sub-Christian community practice resulted in the separation of church and community, which took place first in the United States of America in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Finally, in the twentieth century, it has become apparent that if mankind is to be preserved from self-destruction some way must be found of bridging the gulf between church and community. The ecumenical movement is

such an attempt. An aspect of it, Church Union in Canada, with special reference to the "community church" was then studied.

The quest was on --- to find out the nature and contribution, if any, of the "community church" to church union in Canada. In any discussion of the subject with other clergy of whatever denomination, the "community church", especially in its contemporary form, has tended to be disparaged. It must be admitted honestly that, before the search was begun, the denominational prejudice of the writer of this paper would have been responsible for his participation in the disparagement. However, as the research progressed, it became increasingly evident that the "community church", especially as it appeared in Western Canada, has made a considerable contribution to church union in Canada. In the form of a local church union from 1908 onwards, it anticipated church union, and made the consummation of union in 1925 a necessity at a time when many had grown weary with waiting. In the Biblical sense it was a community church.

In contrast, the contemporary "community church" does not have this same sense of community. It tends to be a social-club type of organization, anthropocentric, rather than theocentric, or christocentric. It tries to ignore the difficulties and tensions that exist in the world of religion, only to discover that they cannot be ignored with impunity.

To be specific, the difficulty with the present-day "community churches" is twofold :

1. They are, unlike the local union churches of Western Canada prior to union in 1925, generally unrelated to such an officially recognized movement towards church union. They do not come into existence because they are consciously trying to further the cause of the ecumenical movement or in ancitipation of an imminent organic church union. They exist largely to satisfy the desire of some modern people in small communities of diversified denominational affiliation to have a place of worship conveniently close at hand without too great an expense where they might send their children for rather vague religious instruction. To put it another way, they come into existence for social and psychological reasons, rather than for theological reasons.

2. They come into existence largely by ignoring or watering down the distinctive beliefs and practices of the denominational members who constitute their membership. The different denominations have their particular beliefs and practices for valid theological and historical reasons. Denominational differences are real, and they have to be acknowledged and understood, if the tensions they create are to be resolved in any final sense. The contemporary "community

church" does not do this. This is the reason the
membership spends so much time and energy drawing
up a constitution and set of by-laws.

On the other hand, the contemporary "community church"
(as was the Western local union church) is an expression,
though perhaps an unconscious one, of the longing of modern-
day people for a mode of religious expression whereby there
might be recaptured some sense of true community which is
lacking in society today, and which is the mark of the
Biblical sense of community. And in his attempt to find
a true sense of community (though it may prove to be an
unsuccessful attempt) through the "community church" the
denominational individual often finds himself on a voyage
of discovery. This thesis confirms the reported statement
of Bishop John H. Dixon that "the 'community church' is an
experiment in the ecumenical movement". It is a spontaneous,
though unconscious, expression on the local level of what is
going on ecumenically on the national and international
levels. Nevertheless, valuable, if somewhat painful,
ecumenical experience has been gained and is still being
gained through the "community church".

At the same time, it must be admitted that <u>any</u>
experiment in local church cooperation, such as the "com-
munity church" is, is bound to be full of difficulty and
frustration because of the schism in the soul of Christendom.
Reversing the direction of church history from schism to

union, begun in the nineteenth century, is going to be no easy task to accomplish.

But the "community church" in itself cannot, and will not, bring about organic church union. Church union will come only by the grace of God : as the denominations seek truly and honestly to understand each other : to come to know their similarities, to face their differences, and find through the guidance of the Holy Spirit ways of resolving them on a permanent and widely-dispersed basis.

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