

Toronto School of Theology

Neither Sociology Nor Socialism

The Evangelical Social Agenda of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1900-1945

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ABSTRACT

Baptists in Canada have sometimes been identified as fundamentalists who tended to withdraw from active social engagement, in contrast to Methodists, Presbyterians, and other denominations that have historically demonstrated well-developed social service agendas. While some Baptists were fundamentalists, most members of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ) were not; on the whole, the Convention manifested a balanced perspective which included positive elements from both conservative evangelicalism and the Social Gospel tradition of the aforementioned mainline denominations. The primary aim of this thesis is to outline the social programme of the BCOQ between 1900 and 1945 to demonstrate that these Baptists demonstrated a social service agenda which addressed a wide range of issues and concerns but which nevertheless sought to remain true to Baptist doctrinal distinctiveness. Baptists cooperated with other socially sensitive denominations to the limits of Baptist doctrinal convictions, unlike fundamentalists, who saw withdrawal as their only option. Baptist social work was wide-ranging and included activism as well as remedial work. Although Baptist social service was hampered by the inability to fully unite Canadian Baptists in order to develop a national Baptist social service agenda, the BCOQ did contribute as a regional denomination to larger social efforts, and individual Baptists served capably in social service leadership positions.

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INTRODUCTION

Baptists of the Convention of Ontario and Quebec have long been noted, and rightly so, for their doctrinal conservatism and devotion to the Bible as the ultimate foundation of orthodoxy. Their reputation as a socially sensitive denomination is less well known, and often misunderstood. In the first half of the twentieth century, these Baptists engaged in social reform efforts in order to evangelize all people and create a Christian society in Canada. While many mainline Baptists considered Canada to be a Christian country – i.e., a country founded on Christian principles – they realized that in practical terms the Kingdom of God did not extend throughout the entire Dominion. Their aim was to extend the Kingdom through evangelistic and social thrusts.

Although Baptists¹ in Canada do not have a reputation for being agents of social change, they do have a significant history of social action. Unfortunately, they were frequently hampered by the often independent and fractious nature of Baptist theology and polity. Sometimes, social reform efforts were unfairly accused of being doctrinally suspect or even heretical. My intention is to show that Baptist social and political action in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ), while part of a different overall agenda from that of other denominations, was nevertheless an integral facet of Baptist theology and church mission.

The Baptist social gospel was uniquely shaped by the Baptist distinctives in such a way that it does not always fit into the commonly understood parameters of the traditionally-defined Social Gospel. Baptist belief in the separation of church and state tempered Baptist social forays into the political arena such that authors like Stewart Crysdale have interpreted these discreet forays as evidence of a lack of social concern rather than of the moderated social concern they

¹Although not always defined as such by authors whose works I will cite, in this paper, “Baptist” and “Baptists” will refer to members of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec unless otherwise noted.

demonstrate.² Arising from the influence of thinkers who were trying to come to grips with the nature of societal ills, Baptist social gospel efforts also grappled with the awareness of the need to apply Christian piety to human relationships on a large scale and from the realization that social problems posed a considerable obstacle to traditional evangelistic efforts. Social service came to be seen as the servant of evangelism; this is a theme which is continually repeated in the BCOQ over the years.

Socially sensitive Baptist Christianity sought to be true to both its doctrinal heritage and its newly informed community conscience by incorporating social service into its agenda of personal piety. In other words, the greater effect of the Social Gospel on Canadian Baptists was to round out an otherwise insufficient Baptist theology which failed to understand and address the full implications of what it meant to be Christian, both individually and communally. The Baptist social agenda was consequently wide-ranging and ambitious, expressing interest in everything from personal health and hygiene to international politics. Although not innovators in Canadian social service circles, Baptists were cooperative participants, attentive to the communal implications of the Gospel message.

Moreover, Baptist cooperative forays were moderated by a desire to maintain a degree of distance between Baptists and other denominational groups because of the Baptist belief in the non-negotiable nature of the essential aspects of Baptist theology, primarily believer's baptism by immersion and regenerate church membership. Interdenominational associations were formed around several commonly-valued causes, but Baptists never seriously considered organic union. To Baptists, belief in separation of church and state was too important a consideration to allow

²See the critique in Stewart Crysdale, *The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada: A Survey of Changing Power Structures and Christian Social Ethics* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1961), 125.

Baptist participation in exploration of the possible formation of a Protestant ecclesiastical hegemony. Despite Baptist efforts, particularly in liberal arts education, to attain legitimacy as a denomination, Baptist theology prevented them from becoming too corporately influential. This was a continual tension.

The aim of this paper is not to prove that support for the causes in the BCOQ was universal, nor that the BCOQ lobby was effective in influencing either the provincial or the federal legislative agenda, nor that Baptist social concern was equal to that of other denominations. The BCOQ was a small group and had modest sway in public affairs, but I believe that as a denomination it generated a significant amount of support for proactive social involvement and articulated a unique social agenda to its constituency and others in annual Convention resolutions and publications.

Scope and Time Frame of the Survey

I will try to accurately identify BCOQ social and political emphases primarily by examining denominational records from 1900-1945, as well as historical accounts about key figures and events from the period. In examining denominational yearbook reports and historical retrospectives, I expect to determine overall trends in thought and practice in light of historical events and parallel developments in other Canadian denominations. I have chosen the time span roughly from 1900 to 1945 because it represents a convenient time frame from the turn of the century to the end of World War Two, after which new social challenges and foci arose, and also because the end of the period ends at roughly the same time as Canadian Baptists formed the Baptist Federation of Canada at the end of 1944, which impacted the organization and articulation of the Canadian Baptist social service agenda.

The Distinctive Canadian Baptist Social Concern of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ)

Canadian society was undergoing profound change in the early part of the twentieth century, change which posed daunting a challenge to Canadian churches. While clergy and lay people were accustomed to addressing the vicissitudes of the normal church agenda, namely evangelism, indoctrination, and pastoral care, they were less accustomed to having to meet the challenges of immigration, urbanization, industrialism, and materialism. While the preoccupation in many Victorian-era churches, not only Baptist, was with an individual gospel which glorified the personal relationship with God and defined social work simply as acts of charity, the increasing clamour of social problems such as poverty, prostitution, disease, and labour exploitation demanded that some preventive and restorative emphases be added to the agenda. This focus on social activism, which came to be known as the Social Gospel, revolutionized the life of the church. Directing attention to corruptions in the political and social structure and the inherent inequities which these exacerbated, the Social Gospel highlighted the manner in which historical Christianity had not only often ignored them, but also aggravated them.

It should be noted that the changes which precipitated the formation of what came to be known as the Social Gospel did not all occur in a short period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. This period is more accurately that of the height of Social Gospel influence. Similarly, the proliferation of new theological expression that is associated with the Social Gospel is but the best known portion of a stream of theological thought that goes back much earlier. Nevertheless, it was in the early twentieth century that these trends affected Canadian churches, and particularly Baptist ones, most profoundly. Few trends have been as

formative or divisive in Baptist circles as those associated with the Social Gospel.

The truly unfortunate reality of the trauma of the Social Gospel is that a large portion of the controversy arose from a misunderstanding of its expression. Whereas the focus in theological expression had traditionally been much more devotional and transcendent, new attention to societal needs resulted in language which sounded altogether more worldly than before. In addition, attention given to scientific advances which seemed to hold the solutions to medical, political, and economic questions with greater certainty and immediacy than religious thinkers could muster accentuated the apparent shift in priority. John Moir notes that "the fact that the Social Gospel was enunciated in response to the problems of modern urbanization, industrialization and materialism attracted to the so-called Social Gospel so much public attention that time it seemed that its teachings constituted some newly-revealed panacea for the ills of this world."³

What was especially problematic for Baptists, among others, was the fact that it appeared that undue emphasis was being given to science instead of the Church as the agent which would usher in the new utopia. According to the new expressions, the appearance of the Kingdom of God seemed to many to hinge more on social reconstruction than on spiritual renewal. This tension caused a dichotomy to develop between those who continued to hold high the plain proclamation of the Gospel as the means by which to usher in the Kingdom and those who would establish it by scientific means. There was some debate in Baptist circles whether practical measures were indeed part of the Church's mandate, even after Baptist social efforts

³John S. Moir, "The Canadian Baptist and the Social Gospel Movement, 1879-1914," in Jarold K. Zeman, ed., *Baptists in Canada: Search for Identity Amidst Diversity* (Burlington, Ontario: G. R. Welch Company, 1980), 148.

were well under way.

Another more traumatic question centred around whether the innovation of the Social Gospel was compatible with orthodox Baptist – or even Christian – theology. By the turn of the new century, a further tension began to develop between emphasis on Baptist social action and the influence of so-called “new theology.” Up to this time, socialism, for example, had been described in favourable terms because the socialism being described was “Christian socialism,” which involved society-wide evangelism – effectively large-scale personal renewal. With time however, socialism took on an identity of its own apart from its former Christian context and became associated with secular ideas and “German rationalism.”⁴ Conservative church people reacted with alarm as language and methodology were increasingly appropriated by progressive church leaders. For example, the “harvesting of revivalism by some progressive clergymen was only one facet of a much larger strategy to employ the technology and venues of popular culture to instill Christian belief,” and evolutionary ideology also affected religious language.⁵ This observation is not a value judgment; Social Gospellers made many legitimate suggestions and criticisms about traditional Protestant Christianity. Salem Bland wrote that “Protestantism tends to be shallow, with the thinness and hardness and tinniness of mere intellectualism.”⁶ This harsh commentary on the Church in *The New Christianity*, while based on a doctrinally different foundation from evangelical Christianity, rightly pointed to the excesses of dogmatism and

⁴John S. Moir, “*The Canadian Baptist and the Social Gospel Movement, 1879-1914*,” 153.

⁵Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 43, 79.

⁶Salem Bland, *The New Christianity, or The Religion of the New Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 79.

individualism in Christian faith. Rather than welcome the many positive characteristics of the new emphases which progressives like Bland advocated, many Baptists decried the perceived attack on traditional orthodoxy, as in this excerpt from the 1903 Convention Home Mission Board Report.

We need not point out to use the many and insidious forms in which error in doctrine and thought and consequent sin in life are making breaches upon truth and by which the so called Christian life of to-day is being led into amusements occupations and methods of business that are utterly incompatible with principles of life given to us by Christ and His apostles.⁷

It would be unfairly sectarian, not to mention overly simplistic, to characterize all Protestant Canadian denominations as doctrinally tainted to one level or another by Social Gospel influences (i.e., that Social Gospel Christianity is incompatible with orthodox Christianity), but it is true that a significant number of Baptists considered this to be the case in the early 1900's. Of particular concern was the doctrinal decay they felt in their own Baptist denomination. While debate over heterodox doctrine did not centre around social service, the two were often lumped together in Baptist circles, and many socially conservative Baptists who took pride in doctrinal rectitude considered social service largely irrelevant to their mission.

As a denomination, however, the Ontario-Quebec Convention attempted to occupy the middle ground and combine faithfulness to their doctrinal heritage with obedience to the call they felt to contribute to social reconstruction. Maintaining this course did not come easily or without division, but the Convention did so fairly consistently during the period under consideration. The result was a more comprehensive expression of faith, one which saw constructive activity – in social, missions, or educational endeavours – more than piety as the goal of the Christian life,

⁷1903 *Baptist Year Book*, 163.

as what became characteristically Baptist. Lorraine Coops describes “the enduring evangelical impulse” of Canadian Baptists thus:

The ongoing emphasis on adult conversion and baptism as well as activism and fellowship – an experiential faith that requires active involvement, be it through proselytizing, preaching, missions, education, or good works – remains the key to understanding and tracing the evangelical ethos of the Canadian Baptist world view ...⁸

Likely the most succinct articulation of this Baptist social conscience is a booklet entitled *What is Social Service? A Valuable Answer to an Important Question*, written by Samuel Z. Batten and published by the Social Service Department of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. In it, Batten spells out the core of Baptist thinking on this subject, and breaks down the totality of the Christian programme into four parts: evangelism, missions, education, and social service. He goes on to say that

Each is a necessary form of social service. Where all are Christian, and each is necessary it is needless to establish any priority or pre-eminence. They who would make one first and all the others subordinate, or would pit one against another, do not really understand any. The evangelist who makes light of social service does not really understand evangelism. The social worker who ignores missions does not really understand social service.⁹

Within this framework, social service was the holistic approach which took in “all forms of effort for man’s redemption, which in a conscious way and by collective action [undertook] to improve living conditions and transform human society.”¹⁰ It embraced three components, relief, prevention, and construction. Relief, or traditional charity work, was short term aid just for the

⁸P. Lorraine Coops, “‘Shelter from the Storm’: The Enduring Evangelical Impulse of Baptists in Canada, 1880s to 1990s,” in George Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 209.

⁹Samuel Z. Batten, *What is Social Service? A Valuable Answer to an Important Question* (Toronto: The Social Service Department of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, n.d.), 3-4.

¹⁰*What is Social Service? A Valuable Answer to an Important Question*, 4.

recipient. Prevention kept the sick well instead of just healing, but its focus was still mainly negative. Construction built up and developed human capacity, making “a Christian type of society” for the benefit of all.¹¹ Thus Canadian Baptists expressed their distinctive brand of evangelical social concern, which while taking in science, could not be reduced either to mere sociology or socialism. More than being truly Christian yet socially oriented, it was truly Christian *because* it was socially oriented, determined to place human worth above material wealth, and that people should work their best in any and all contexts, “[filling] each with the Christian spirit.”¹²

TOUCHSTONES AND RALLYING CRIES: BAPTIST AUTONOMY AND FLUIDITY OF ALLIANCES

The Baptist emphasis upon the universal priesthood of believers mandated that there was no hierarchical structure within Canadian Baptist circles which defined and enforced theological orthodoxy (notwithstanding later Fundamentalist efforts made by people like T. T. Shields to police denominational doctrinal expression). Tests of orthodoxy were ultimately individual, experiential, and personal, and although appeals to normative Scripture were routine, they were not usually conclusive because of differing interpretations of Scripture. Associations among Baptist churches, though common, were cooperative and purely voluntary, and despite the presence of a commonly held doctrinal statement which helped bind these associations, tests of faith could not be imposed on either individuals or congregations. As a result, differing positions on different points of doctrine at different times caused associations and allegiances to evolve over time.

¹¹*What is Social Service? A Valuable Answer to an Important Question*, 5-6.

¹²*What is Social Service? A Valuable Answer to an Important Question*, 6-7.

Consequently, not only is impossible to articulate a uniform Baptist doctrinal statement, it is exceedingly difficult to point to any kind of universal Baptist denominational cooperation, and any Baptist ventures which manifest the appearance of being universally denominational can generally be shown to have been disavowed by at least a few individuals or churches.

Nevertheless, there are areas in which it can be shown that support for certain causes received the support of a sizable proportion of Baptists who felt able to cooperate without sacrificing autonomy. One such area in which Baptist doctrinal distinctiveness was wedded fairly successfully to a proactive social agenda was in post-secondary liberal education.

Cooperation in Christian Education

According to Jarold Zeman, "Baptists pioneered in nonsectarian education in ... Ontario."¹³ Established in 1887, McMaster University represented the realization of almost fifty years of Baptist efforts to establish a denominational institution of higher learning. Baptists in the 1840's had been strong supporters of educational reform in pre-confederation Canada because they had no voice in the one sectarian university then extant and could not afford to establish their own school, mainly because of factionalism which precluded financial cooperation. A division within Baptist circles over communion had already left a Baptist theological college in Montreal totally unsupported by Baptists in Canada West after 1848, forcing it to close. The Montreal Baptists favoured open communion, but the Baptists of Canada West (later Ontario) whose financial assistance was required insisted on closed communion, and so refused to support

¹³Jarold. K. Zeman, "Baptists in Canada and Cooperative Christianity," in *Foundations* 15 (July-September 1972), 221.

the school.¹⁴

"The Baldwin Bill [the government bill of 1849 creating a new, non-sectarian provincial university] was the fulfilment of the dreams of the Baptists. Not one criticism is found in the records of the denomination. The great central University was to be established, with all sectarianism banished." The new university created by the Baldwin Bill "would now furnish the Baptists with an institution in which their youth and prospective ministry [trainees] could acquire higher education without the interference of sectarian influences."¹⁵ The aim was to have denominational theological colleges affiliate with the non-sectarian university so that each group could have distinctive theological education and equal access to higher education in the arts and sciences, and the Baptists of Canada West reached an affiliation agreement with the university in 1853. Unfortunately, this arrangement fell apart in 1863, but Baptists remained resolutely committed to the principle of a secular (i.e., non-sectarian) university. The reasons for this are as much pragmatic as theological; although Baptists placed great weight upon the total separation of church and state, the reality was that they wanted to retain access to non-sectarian university education because, refusing government funds, they could not at that time afford to establish their own sectarian school.¹⁶

Baptist fortunes took a significant turn as a result of the efforts of William McMaster, successful businessman and politician. As the president of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, he possessed considerable wealth as well as influence which he used to support the

¹⁴Walter G. Pitman, *The Baptists and Public Affairs in the Province of Canada, 1840-1867* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 143-146.

¹⁵*The Baptists and Public Affairs in the Province of Canada*, 147, 148.

¹⁶*The Baptists and Public Affairs in the Province of Canada*, 154.

Reform cause of George Brown and Alexander MacKenzie, leading to his appointment to the Canadian Senate in 1867. McMaster was more than simply an entrepreneur; he was a deeply committed evangelical Baptist who “was obsessed with the desperate search for denominational respectability.”¹⁷ He felt that the key to this was the establishment of a reputable Baptist university, one which, while contributing to the common good, could also help validate Baptists socially and culturally as well as religiously. Although not all his denominational compatriots shared his vision, he was able to use his wealth and influence to orchestrate the transfer of the theological department of the Canadian Literary Institute in Woodstock, Ontario, to Toronto. His aim, legitimacy among the political entrepreneurial elite, was essentially the same as that of R. A. Fyfe, the founder of the institute in Woodstock.¹⁸ Unlike Fyfe, however, McMaster had the monetary resources to draw upon to make his longing a reality.

In 1880, under the control of his carefully selected board of trustees, McMaster incorporated the Toronto Baptist College. The trust deed of this new institution stipulated that the trustees were to carry on the work of a Regular Baptist denominational theological college, meaning that those associated with the college were to be Regular Baptists “baptized on a personal profession of their Faith in Christ holding and maintaining *substantially* the following doctrines.”¹⁹ The document goes on to list the individual doctrinal tenets, but it remains unclear

¹⁷ G. A. Rawlyk, “A. L. McCrimmon, H. P. Whidden, T. T. Shields, Christian Education, and McMaster University,” in G. A. Rawlyk, ed., *Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 31.

¹⁸ Daniel C. Goodwin, “The Footsteps of Zion’s King: Baptists in Canada to 1880,” in George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 201-202.

¹⁹ Rawlyk, “A. L. McCrimmon, H. P. Whidden, T. T. Shields, Christian Education, and McMaster University,” 32-33, emphasis his.

whether “substantially” was intended to serve as a qualifier or an intensifier, although William Gillespie’s explanation of the evolution of Ontario Baptist doctrinal statements does help shed light on this issue. Citing a similar reference in the 1844 Grand River Association constitution (“such churches only as embrace in substance the following doctrines”), he notes that this clause was crucial to the expression of the sentiment that Baptist tradition was dynamic rather than static; the goal was not rote repetition of the wording of a particular creedal formula, but rather examination of consistency of a new doctrinal statement with the spirit of an existing one. He writes that

The church wishing to join an association was not expected to subscribe to the association’s ready made confession of faith, although it obviously had the right to express its beliefs in those words if it so desired. Instead, it presented a statement of its beliefs in its own words. This was then evaluated by the association to see whether, in the judgment of the association, its beliefs were “in substance” in accord with the association’s standard.²⁰

While this procedure was intended to prevent the preservation of a particular creedal formulation despite its having long since died in spirit, it did subject examinations of doctrinal consistency to the changing nature of patterns of interpretation and expression. I believe this was later a factor in the debate, first in the controversy between Elmore Harris and I. G. Matthews, and later with T. T. Shields. Shields also debated the implication of this requirement; he considered this the criterion for testing the orthodoxy of the faculty of McMaster, though his seems to be a minority opinion.

It is clear that despite beginning humbly with a theological college, William McMaster had great plans for Toronto Baptist College to be an influential Baptist university. Inspired by

²⁰William Gillespie, “The Recovery of Ontario’s Baptist Tradition,” in David T. Priestley, ed., *Memory and Hope: Strands of Canadian Baptist History* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 32.

American Baptist institutions such as Colgate, Rochester, Chicago, and Kalamazoo, as well as Acadia University in Nova Scotia,²¹ his desire was to see a similar institution in Toronto in order to establish its position as a centre of Baptist learning even as he desired to establish Toronto as a financial centre. His prominent place in this undertaking was a given. According to Rawlyk, McMaster seems to have viewed his role in the foundation of Toronto Baptist College less in terms of propagating Baptist theology and polity than in terms of providing the means by which to exercise hegemonic control over the training of the Baptist ministers who would shape the direction of not only Baptist ecclesiastical structures but all of Canadian society.²² In terms of theological distinctiveness, Joseph Ban relates that “[one] knowledgeable source described McMaster’s intention less an effort to meet the needs of ‘a few narrow-minded sectarians’ than a broad vision of ministering ‘to the entire denomination with all of its diversities of view.’”²³ McMaster’s theological college was part of a larger vision for Christian education, one which was finally realized through the Act of Incorporation of McMaster University in 1887.

Unlike Toronto Baptist College, which became the theological department of the new university, McMaster University was not a specifically Baptist institution. According to the Act of Incorporation, McMaster’s vision was to create a “Christian school of learning” where students would be educated by evangelical Christian teachers in order to “be thoroughly equipped

²¹G. Gerald Harrop, “The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec,” in Davis C. Woolley, ed. *Baptist Advance: The Achievements of the Baptists of North America for a Century and Half* (Forest Park, IL: Roger Williams Press, 1964), 12. My page number references do not correspond to those in the book because my copy of the article is a prepublication manuscript copy from the Canadian Baptist Archives collection.

²²A. L. McCrimmon, H. P. Whidden, T. T. Shields, *Christian Education, and McMaster University*, 34-35.

²³Dr. Joseph D. Ban, “Canadian Baptists and Renewal: Some Movements Deserving Historical Consideration,” in *Canadian Baptist History and Polity: Papers from the McMaster Divinity College Baptist History Conference, October 1982* (Hamilton: McMaster University Divinity College, 1982), 155.

with all the resources of the best and most liberal culture to enable them to meet the polished shafts of a refined and subtle infidelity.”²⁴ The university was for Baptists, but not merely to promote Baptist doctrine alone; nor was course content even necessarily to be taught by Baptists exclusively. While the leadership of McMaster University expressed loyalty to a foundational core of evangelical truth, they were also open to taking advantage of advances in the fields of science and modern scholarship which they believed would complement the Bible teaching students would receive. What role McMaster himself played in shaping the theological direction of McMaster University is not known, but despite what is known about McMaster’s evangelical Baptist piety and the content of the documents concerning the establishment of the university, questions about its theological intentions began to arise from the beginning of the institution’s history. It is certain that these doubts arose at least in part because of the degree of openness and cooperation which the new university was designed from its inception to exhibit. Although speaking to a different historical scenario, Jarold Zeman points out a commonly recurring situation which applies to the way in which many Baptists viewed McMaster University in the early part of the twentieth century. “Because of their regular involvement in ecumenical contacts, Baptist leaders of Ontario have sometimes been suspect and accused, by their brethren elsewhere, of betraying the Baptist witness.”²⁵ This is not to say that the McMaster platform was ecumenical – it was not – rather, it was the perception of McMaster as a potentially ecumenical institution which seemed to cause some to draw negative conclusions about the school’s theological stance and cast doubts upon the integrity of its mission. As the administration

²⁴ *1883 Baptist Yearbook*, cited by Rawlyk in “A. L. McCrimmon, H. P. Whidden, T. T. Shields, Christian Education, and McMaster University,” 41.

²⁵ “Baptists in Canada and Cooperative Christianity,” 223.

discovered particularly in the turbulent years leading up to the schism of 1927, the balance between theological distinctiveness and social relevance can be a difficult one to find.

Interdenominational Cooperation and Church Union

Baptists in Ontario and Quebec have always maintained an interesting relationship with other denominations in which they have demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with the other denominations in a variety of projects but have remained resolutely committed to preserving their own uniqueness. Baptists were invited in 1907 by the leadership of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational church to participate in a conference addressing the potential union of Protestant churches in Canada. Although Baptists had already participated in several interdenominational efforts with these same denominations, they replied that

“they did not admit that the organic union of all Christians is an essential condition of Christian unity, or even necessarily promotive of it.” They went on to summarize the basic Baptist principles and the reasons why they could not enter into union with Pedobaptist churches. They concluded: “It is because of these principles which represent to them the Divine will that the Baptists find it necessary to maintain a separate organized existence. In relation to these matters they can make no compromise, but feel themselves under a Divinely imposed obligation to propagate their views throughout the world.”²⁶

Here again is an example of the desire to strike a balance between maintaining a distinct theological agenda and expressing social concern through concerted effort. Baptists never entered denominationally into negotiation toward church union, though they continued to cooperate with the constituent members of United Church from the turn of the century on. As late as the 1960's, the Baptist Convention cooperated with the United Church on a shared Sunday School curriculum, and the main reason for discontinuing the cooperation was Baptist perception that divergent theological evolution made impossible further harmonious participation in this

²⁶“Baptists in Canada and Cooperative Christianity,” 230.

area.

Ironically, Baptists in Ontario and Quebec sometimes cooperated more readily with other denominations than with other Canadian Baptists. The timing of the formation of the Baptist Federation of Canada in 1944 coincided with that of the Canadian Council of Churches. When the hesitation of the Baptist Union of Western Canada and the United Baptist Convention of the Maritimes prevented the Baptist Federation from joining the CCC, the BCOQ unilaterally decided to join, much to the consternation of the other groups. Admittedly, the reasons for the increased willingness to collaborate and associate are as much geographical as theological – i.e., the close proximity of the headquarters of the Protestant denominations and the CCC offices – but it is nevertheless true that “by and large, the leadership of the Ontario-Quebec Convention has been involved in ecumenical contacts more actively than Baptists in the other parts of Canada.”²⁷

WHERE WERE THE BAPTISTS? INTERDENOMINATIONAL COOPERATION AND BAPTIST SOCIAL CONCERN

Baptist Fractiousness and Social Reform

Aside from the aforementioned situations in which theological disagreement hampered Baptists’ ability to work together, there was another more serious consideration which demonstrated that the presence of social reform as a priority was by no means a given in Baptist circles. As mentioned in the introduction, social reform efforts were sometimes unfairly accused of being theologically suspect or even heretical.

Traditional Baptist sectarianism, combined with a preoccupation with doctrinal

²⁷“Baptists in Canada and Cooperative Christianity,” 222.

conservatism, motivated some Baptists desirous of being “not of this world” to try to avoid becoming involved in social issues altogether. Biblical proof texts were, of course, integral in arguments supporting this position. Despite often being caricatured as lacking in respect for Scripture (especially later, during the height of the Fundamentalist/Modernist controversy), many of the more socially sensitive Baptists were also quick to bring the weight of biblical authority to bear on this issue.

We regret that some of our Pastors and Laymen in saying that nothing but the Gospel should be presented from the pulpit, apply this to the question of Moral and Social Reform. The Master, however, taught “It is lawful to do well upon the Sabbath day,” and surely we may follow His example. The gospel of Christian citizenship “may well find a place in the services of the Sabbath.”²⁸

Social service efforts continued, despite the fact that the Baptist obligation to intervene in the social scene was by no means universally accepted. As a secondary part of the theological wrangling by T. T. Shields and some of the BCOQ leadership, the debate continued long after the decision to be socially active was officially made. In a 1923 article in *The Gospel Witness* entitled “The Church and Recreation,” Shields criticized a recommendation from the Committee on the State of Religion that suggested “a larger use of church buildings for recreational purposes as one means by which the leakages [i.e., declining membership] in our Denominational life may be stopped.” Shields, on the other hand, disagreed and sought more use of church buildings simply for “prayer and praise.”²⁹ He consistently advanced the relentless promulgation of the Gospel message as the only mission of the Church and ignored any other endeavours which were

²⁸1908 *Baptist Year Book*, 206.

²⁹T. T. Shields, “The Church and Recreation,” *The Gospel Witness*, October 25, 1923.

ancillary to it.³⁰ The debate over whether or not to address social issues eventually diminished in intensity as social conservatives allied themselves with the Fundamentalist element in the BCOQ and eventually separated from it.

Critics of Baptist social service efforts have rightly criticized the fact that Baptists have not been able to orchestrate a national union of Baptists in Canada as indication of Baptist fractiousness short-circuiting what could otherwise have been a vital social influence. It is one thing for Baptists not to have been willing to consider organic union with other denominations, citing significant theological reasons, but theological differences among Canadian Baptists are insignificant and certainly no impediment to Baptist union.³¹ Baptists must acknowledge the disservice that divisiveness has done to Baptist attempts to implement their social agenda. The sanctity of the authority of the local church has often been a shield behind which Baptists have hidden from the Christian mandate to cooperate. This was recognized long ago, as seen in the State of Religion Report to the 1931 Baptist Convention in Peterborough. It articulates the pros and cons of being a small denomination; on one hand is a sense of brotherhood impossible larger communions, but

On the other hand we lack a national organization and the sense of having a concerted voice on some great problems of social conditions and governmental policy, and the fact

³⁰See, for example, Shields' articles in *The Gospel Witness* in which he advocates defence of doctrinal fundamentals as the prime duty of Christians ("Contending for the Faith," May 31, 1923). Moreover, his evaluation of the state of the BCOQ continually ignored the Convention's social agenda and concentrated on doctrinal issues. See "Jarvis Street and the Convention" (September 7, 1922) for a criticism of Convention doctrine as "out of balance" and "The Convention of Ontario and Quebec" (September 14, 1922), which describes for new members the workings of the Convention; the article makes no mention at all of the Social Service Committee or its work.

³¹Despite the assertions of those involved in the Fundamentalist/Modernist controversy and those who would try to perpetuate a theological debate today, I assert that this particular disagreement – the most serious schism in Canadian Baptist history – is essentially ideological, not theological. See my paper, "Edicts from the Baptist Pope: T. T. Shields and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy at McMaster University," (unpublished paper, Toronto School of Theology, 2000).

that our churches are relatively small in various communities tends sometimes to discouragement or else to the rather self-conscious assertion of superiority.³²

The Baptist inability to speak denominationally with a unified voice should not, however, be seen as an indication of the lack of a social agenda nor as the impotence of the Baptist social agenda. As the following will indicate, Baptists have played significant roles in social service and politics as individuals, members of interdenominational organizations. As a regional denomination, the BCOQ has a meaningful history of concerted social effort which should not be overlooked. Stewart Crysdale, not overly sympathetic to the Baptist programme, nevertheless acknowledges its internal consistency.

The traditional stress upon individual regeneration, the intense belief in personal liberty, the congregational basis of authority, and the doctrine of strict separation between church and state have prevented the Baptist denomination from playing an active and creative part in the process of social reform. Indeed, its reluctance to favour any one group in the power struggle has tended to dull its witness in concrete situations, and thus it has failed to defend the weak at critical points of struggle against the combinations of the strong.

On the other hand, Baptist churches have been zealous in an imperative and pure witness to the absolute separateness of the Gospel and at the same time its basic relevance to all human relationships. Their distrust of all earthly orders has deterred the churches from becoming identified uncritically with any humanitarian configuration. It remains to be seen whether the Baptist convention churches will be able to solve their own dilemma and bring a positive social witness to bear upon the serious remaining problems of Canadian industrial society.³³

I disagree with his assessment of the Baptist role in social reform, but point to his seemingly grudging recognition of Baptist accomplishments. I believe that his assessment of Baptist social reform does not properly appreciate the formative influence of Baptist theology (and to some extent, polity) on development of a social platform, though his critique is worth heeding. Ultimately, however, Crysdale does seem to grasp the paradoxical manner in which

³²*1931 Baptist Year Book*, 69.

³³*The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada*, 124-125.

Baptist core values both helped and hindered social service.

Baptist Cooperation with Larger Social Service Bodies

Despite doctrinal differences with other groups, Baptists demonstrated a generally irenic and cooperative spirit which belies their reputation. Baptist obstreperousness was generally reserved for engagements with other Baptists of differing convictions, although even in these surroundings, Baptists were usually willingly cooperative. Robert Wright seems to show lamentable lack of appreciation for the significance of doctrinal distinctiveness in Baptist circles when he says that "Baptists in Canada showed a remarkable willingness, given their historic isolation, to provide leadership in the Baptist World Alliance."³⁴ Willingness to provide this leadership was entirely unremarkable given the desire of BCOQ executive members to prominently exert their influence and reputation as respectable, consistent Christian leaders. Moreover, in more ecumenical surroundings, Baptists similarly cooperated to the limits of their convictions, taking a significant role in the Lord's Day Alliance, Prisoner's Aid Association, National Committee for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, Prohibition Federation of Canada, the Ontario Prohibition Union, Ontario Temperance Federation, Quebec Temperance League, League of Nations Society, Canadian Welfare Council, and Community Welfare Council of Ontario, Social Service Council of Canada (later the Christian Social Council of Canada), Social Service Council of Ontario, among others.

Baptist cooperation was possible because of the belief that agreement needed only to concern the scope of the cooperation and not issues peripheral to it. For instance, Baptists

³⁴Robert A. Wright, "The Canadian Protestant Tradition: 1914-1945," in George A. Rawlyk, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience: 1760-1990* (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing Co., 1990), 156.

cooperated with other denominations in the crusade for prohibition because of the mutual belief that alcohol was dangerous. Other doctrinal disagreements over issues such as baptism were unrelated to this effort and so posed no impediment. This irenic posture was decidedly different from that of fundamentalists, as I indicate later in this paper.

Baptists and Government

The traditional Baptist distinctive of the separation of Church and State is important almost as much because of the misconception about Baptists to which it has contributed as because of an understanding it has fostered. It is true that Baptist church history is squarely in the stream of churches who dissented from the generally accepted magisterial Church ecclesiology due to doctrinal conviction arising from, among others factors, the impact of the Reformation doctrine of *sola scriptura* as well as the separatism of Anabaptists. What is not always true, especially in the context of our Canadian Baptist survey, is that separation of Church and State denoted separation – i.e., abstention – from activity in the affairs of the State. Baptist conception of this doctrinal essential was that whereas churches, individually or collectively, ought to be entirely free from government control or interference, government was not to be presumed to be free from the lobby of church or churches. Baptist churches lobbied government vigorously on the issues of the clergy reserves, land set aside by the British government for the use of “a Protestant clergy” but which principally benefited the Church of England. Baptists led the campaign against not only the clergy reserves, and also refused to accept money from the colonial government when the lands were sold, the proceeds to be distributed among the various denominations. In the end, the money was given to the municipalities. Later, Baptists fought for education reform because they perceived that the government was again improperly

demonstrating favouritism toward the Church of England in the granting of a charter for King's College, which though sectarian, would be supported by public funds.³⁵

As Christians, though, they saw it as their divinely given mission to extend the influence of the Kingdom of God into all areas of life, including the political sphere, insofar as they were able to do so in non-sectarian manner. This was the foundation of, for example, the temperance crusade, which was seen as one facet of the pursuit of universal morality which would contribute to receptivity toward the evangelical Gospel and a better world. Although the term "separation of Church and State" has come to be associated most often with the Baptist belief about their interaction with government, "religious liberty" would be a more accurate term, describing the fact the freedom from lobby is intended to be one-way. An example of this is seen in the following statement taken from the 1844 meeting of the Canada Baptist Union in Montreal. Political interference in religious affairs is inherent in the bias toward the Church of England, and the mandate for political action by Christians is inherent in the fact that the statement was drafted at all.

... the great principles of Religious Liberty ... have been grievously violated in the manner in which the Episcopalian sect of Christians have been allowed to divert a large portion of the funds set apart for the education of the youth of the Province, from their original purposes, and to obtain an undue influence in the distribution of the benefits and management of the affairs of the University of King's College in Toronto.³⁶

In their political action, Baptists did not all subscribe to the same ideology, nor did they expect one another to do so. What was important was involvement as concerned citizens, not membership in a particular party. A pamphlet by F. W. Waters, though published later,

³⁵G. Gerald Harrop, "The Canadian Baptists – An Historical Sketch," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 6 (April 1964), 32-33.

³⁶Cited in "The Canadian Baptists – An Historical Sketch," 33.

succinctly enunciated the historic Baptist sentiment that “no political organization can claim to be distinctively Christian; it is the character of a social order which makes it Christian rather than its organization.”³⁷ Further, a 1945 resolution on Social Service, among other things, condemned identification of the Christian church with any political party.³⁸

Official Baptist statements were careful to express that Baptists were not to try to use political influence except as a means by which to further their ultimate cause, the Kingdom of God. They saw political power as something to be used not for gain or to impose values, but to help in evangelism and mutual edification.

Baptists were among the first to recognize the priesthood of the believer, the liberty of the ordinary Christian, the democratic aspect of the Christian Church, the separation of Church and State and on the authority of Christ in the life. We must proclaim these principles just as we preach the power of the cross and the gospel. Our mission is not to rule the people and make them conform to our standards and rules of life, but to teach them to find their own life in Christ and in the fellowship of God.³⁹

Convention Baptists were quick to express both approval and disapproval of government policy. A 1902 resolution voiced opposition to use of public tax money for support of any religious cause, whether for hospitals, schools, or clergy.⁴⁰ A similar resolution in 1935 against separate schools condemned them as unnecessary, contrary to separation of church and state, and redirecting public money away from public schools.⁴¹ On the other hand, Baptists

³⁷F. W. Waters, *Protestantism – A Baptist Interpretation* (The Commission on Principles and Policy, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and the Literature Committee, the Baptist Federation of Canada, 1958), 59.

³⁸1944-45 *Baptist Year Book*, 52-53.

³⁹1943-44 *Baptist Year Book*, 56.

⁴⁰1902 *Baptist Year Book*, 17.

⁴¹1935 *Baptist Year Book*, 85.

commended government actions which they saw as positive. A resolution from the 1919

Convention stated

That we express our great appreciation of the work of the Department of Immigration and Colonization of the Dominion Government in so revising the laws regulating immigration and colonization as to remove Female Labor Bureaux from the control of profiteering agencies; and that we heartily commend the action of the said department in establishing well-kept and well-inspected hostels in the chief centres from coast to coast to assist female immigrants to get established in suitable situations under proper safeguards.⁴²

Baptist support for governmental work was neither uncritical nor propagandist; the 1921

Convention passed a resolution in support of League of Nations which urged

the pastors of our Convention, from their pulpits, and the members of our Churches, in their various activities, to use every means to arouse interest in the work of the League of Nations, and of the League of Nations Society for Canada, to give their enthusiastic support to the same, and to encourage in every way the study by our people of international relations from Christian point of view ...

but continued by declaring that

In passing the above resolution we do not necessarily approve everything contained in the League of Nations Covenant, but support it as a growing instrument calculated to establish international relationships more in harmony with the mind of Christ and that regard to the fundamental claims of humanity which He taught.⁴³

In sum, Baptist relations with government seemed to reflect hopes for a mutual benefit, but also maintained a careful distance in view of the real potential of human nature to manipulate relationships for selfish gain. This selfish capacity was recognized in both Church and State.

VARIABLES AND CONSTANTS IN THE BAPTIST SOCIAL AGENDA, 1900-1945

The Baptist agenda was both variable and constant between 1900 and 1945. In general terms, their approach evolved over time, affected by changes in social awareness, doctrinal

⁴²1919 Baptist Year Book, 34.

⁴³1921 Baptist Year Book, 56.

controversy, denominational vitality, and public mores. Sadly, the trend which seems to present itself is one of decreasing denominational vigorousness, especially after the T. T. Shields debacle and Convention split in 1927. More and more attention seemed to be devoted to maintenance of denominational infrastructure and less to expansion. On the other hand, Convention Baptists maintained a voice on behalf of several consistent causes throughout the period in question. Evangelism was always in view as a beneficiary of any social project; temperance and Sunday observance were unchanging objectives even though the articulated reasons for their validity changed.

Variables

Moral Reform – 1900's, 1910's

Examination of records of the early denominational endeavours of the BCOQ quickly illustrates that while the larger vision of societal moral reform was obviously in view, not all of the means by which to attain that goal were well thought out. In 1905, the annual Convention passed a resolution mandating the appointment of a committee whose primary concern was moral reform through temperance, hence the name Temperance and Moral Reform Committee. Even at this, however, the committee was given latitude to “outline a plan of co-operative work ... and ... authorised to appoint one person in each Association, whose duty it will be to interest its churches and people in this work”.⁴⁴ Evidently the course which needed to be taken could be plotted along the way by people whose wisdom was trustworthy.

Several other key points about the attitude of Baptists toward society reveal themselves in the initiation of the work of this committee. The first and most obvious is that society was in

⁴⁴*1905 Baptist Year Book*, 17.

need of a stern rebuke and of the imposition of Christian morals by the Church so that people would be both enabled to realize their need to improve their moral condition and revitalized so that they would want to do so. The work of the Church would be analogous to that of a parent disciplining a wayward child; this typified the Victorian attitude toward moral reform, and in this Baptist context, such work cleared the way for evangelism to redeem lost individuals. Despite this concern for souls, however, one senses that in spite of the prospect transformation of lives, the task is still distasteful to some Baptists who prefer an adversarial posture toward to world around them. In fact, this sometimes hostile detachment was often seen as a confirmation of the type of other-worldly orientation which was equated with godliness and which necessarily emphasized the confrontational and negative aspects of the Gospel. It is thus not surprising to read the following excerpt from the 1903 Home Mission Board report which hammered away in support of this militant agenda.

We need not remind you of the plausible way in which the advanced thinkers are constantly telling us that their Christianity is the same as that of the past, only that its expression is different, nor of the fact that this expression is so radically different that it seriously obscures and in many cases completely obliterates the old fundamentals of the Gospel. Its smothers the atoning value of the Christ-work by giving us glowing eulogies upon the self-effacement and the selflessness of the Christ life as being the chief thing in His character and work. It gives us beautiful and high-sounding phrases about "transformation of character" and "imitation of Christ," instead of saying plainly to man everywhere "ye must be born again."⁴⁵

Baptists realized the need to address social problems in a caring manner but this paragraph illustrates their desire to distance themselves from those who would equate such social service with the sum total of Christian duty. It also hints at the conviction that while important, social ills were not the root problem in and of themselves, but rather symptoms of a greater spiritual

⁴⁵ 1903 Baptist Year Book, 163-164.

malady which was to be addressed through evangelism.

The second key point that the formation of the BCOQ's Temperance and Moral Reform Committee reveals is that the link between temperance and the moral improvement of society was assumed to be self-evident. Despite the fact that personal salvation was seen as the ultimate means by which to transform society, intemperance was seen as the paramount obstacle to efforts, evangelistic or otherwise, to help people. Over the next few years, though, the scope of the campaign grew as Baptist social vision grew, and with it the name of the committee. An indication of the increasing awareness of the manifold causes of social moral decay, the Temperance and Moral Reform Committee was renamed the Moral and Social Reform Committee in 1908. It then became the Social Service Committee in 1911; the changes demonstrate that the depth and breadth of Baptist social concern was growing.

Despite this, some the key points in the Baptist social agenda still addressed modification of behaviour and elimination of vice, often to the neglect of economic and political issues. Resolutions condemning alcohol, cigarettes, and opium dominate early year books. Baptists supported the crusade to eliminate liquor advertising (an "immoral use of [the] columns" of newspapers),⁴⁶ and the Moral and Social Reform Committee reported the following year that "[good] work as already been done in the prosecution persons displaying in selling obscene and immoral literature, picture cards and theatrical advertisements and posters."⁴⁷ Cleaning up and drying up were a large part of the key which would open the door to social renewal.

⁴⁶1908 Baptist Year Book, 207.

⁴⁷1909 Baptist Year Book, 199.

Social, Economic, and Political Reconstruction – 1910's, 1920's, 1930's

The era after World War I saw Baptists participate in the movement which, shocked into notice not only by the war but also by the influence of the Russian revolution and communism in Canada, gave new attention to the social, political, and economic causes of societal decay. This was the period during which Baptists and others gave considerable attention to issues of political and social justice, health and welfare, and labour relations, as outlined later in this paper.

Information deepened and strengthened social crusades already under way. It was during this period that Baptists mounted their most organized lobby in support of issues such as Local Option campaigns, prison reform, and overseas relief. In these cases, the effect of the broadening of social awareness was to provide a new and more informed impetus for existing social service efforts. The temperance lobby gained from the increasing body of knowledge about the medical and social effects of alcohol; prison reformers gained sociological evidence about rates of recidivism. News from overseas reminded Canadians of the ongoing need there and also of the reason so many were immigrating to Canada. With this new awareness, it is no wonder that the 1922 annual reports money going from the BCOQ to needs as near as northern Ontario and as far as Armenia, China, and Russia.⁴⁸

The rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe taught Canadian social activists that the fight for social reconstruction must address political realities, and also reinforced the Baptist conviction that politics could not provide the ultimate answer to human problems. Baptist resolve to be agents of social change through evangelism and social service was strongest during this time.

⁴⁸1922 Baptist Year Book, 58.

Denominational Retrenchment – 1930's, 1940's

The period of Baptist retrenchment really began in 1927 with the fundamentalist-led fracture of the BCOQ; almost fifteen per cent of the Convention churches and membership left, and it was more than thirty years before the Convention grew back to its former size.

Denominational self-preservation began to become noticeable in the late 1930's. The 1937 State of Religion and Convention Welfare report asserted that greater attention was going to be given to Convention welfare than the overall state of religion because to do the latter would be too difficult.⁴⁹ I believe this signalled a shift in attitude among many. As the 1920's and early 1930's were an era of great organization of Baptist social effort, the late 1930's and 1940's became a period of great bureaucratization and stagnation of Baptist structure. As I will illustrate, greater energy was devoted to maintaining the denominational machinery and less energy was given to practical denominational social service work. I do not believe this was unique to Baptists, but it remains that Baptist vitality diminished noticeably.

Constants

Evangelism

A truly distinctive characteristic of Baptist social concern is the nature of its relationship to evangelism. Indeed, it is the uniqueness of this relationship that could lead one to question whether or not Baptist social service could actually defined as a form of Social Gospel at all. "The novelty of the social gospel movement (and its difference from 'religious social reform'), according to [William R.] Hutchison, lies in its contention that 'social salvation precedes

⁴⁹1937 Baptist Year Book, 51.

individual salvation both temporally and in importance.⁵⁰

A defining characteristic of the Baptist social service agenda is that unlike that of many other major church groups in Ontario (most notably the Methodist Church), social service was always regarded as a contributor to the greater project of evangelism for the conversion of souls. Whereas in some other circles the priority of souls over social reform gave way after World War I to a progressive agenda aimed at regeneration of the social order rather than individual persons, Baptists never relinquished their mission to bring the power of the "Cross of Christ" to bear on the lives of lost and sinful people. In fact, while the 1918 Methodist General Conference issued "the most radical statement of social objectives ever delivered by a national church body in Canada",⁵¹ one which shunned not only the idea of individual conversion but virtually the entire capitalist economic system,⁵² the 1919 *Baptist Yearbook* records their Social Service Committee as situating service in a role definitely subservient to evangelism, reporting that

Economic theories and social legislation are not the Church's primary concern, although she cannot be indifferent to any legislation that will protect the weak and defenceless against the unscrupulous and vicious. ... The Divine Master has made the Church the custodian of this message, and she must not seek in this critical day to evade all the implications of her great commission. The Church should relate herself sympathetically and helpfully to all the conditions and movements that have for their aim the improvement and uplifting of the industrial, commercial, social and religious life of the people. The Committee, therefore, recommends that while *added emphasis is given to the preaching of the "Cross of Jesus Christ" as the only remedy for the sin of the world*, pastors and people should have increased concern for all that affects people in these directions.⁵³

⁵⁰Phyllis D. Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 104.

⁵¹Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 71.

⁵²Allen, 74.

⁵³1919 *Baptist Year Book*, 223. Emphasis added.

Although it must be noted that the theological diversity within the Methodist and Baptist denominations precludes viewing either of these statements as definitive, it should also be noted that both were read and approved by majorities of their respective denominational meetings and so are indicative of substantial denominational sentiments. Further, as Methodists increasingly came to associate evangelistic conversion with the revivalism which had fallen into disrepute, conversion itself, centred around individual regeneration, came to be viewed with growing scepticism.⁵⁴ Evangelism came to take on a new and different meaning, “not so much a method but a way of life”⁵⁵ that was distinct from revival meetings with their calls for repentance. What seems to have emerged was a theological and methodological strain that blurred the previously clearly defined line between conversion and service, and came to emphasize the latter to the exclusion of the former. Indeed, as Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau indicate, the Methodist definition of evangelism evolved from conversion to a commitment expressed through service.⁵⁶ It is consequently no surprise to encounter the position espoused by R. Edis Fairbairn, which, though controversial then, had significant support. Fairbairn held that the “popular view of church membership, which saw conversion as its prerequisite, was neither biblical nor Wesleyan ...”⁵⁷ While the issue here is not to try to discuss or debate the nature of Methodist attitudes and evangelistic techniques, what I believe this small sampling shows is a divergent evolution of thought relative to both what people thought

⁵⁴ Airhart, 185, note 133.

⁵⁵ Airhart, 188, note 26.

⁵⁶ *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada*, 70.

⁵⁷ Airhart, 131.

evangelism was and to the interconnection between evangelism and social service.

In contrast, regenerate (i.e., converted, in the traditional evangelical sense) church membership was always a Baptist distinctive, and evangelism was always the paramount task.

Moreover, evangelism in Baptist circles always entailed presentation of the Gospel for the purpose of winning lost souls (conversion), as can be seen consistently over the years:

We have greatly stressed the evangelistic side of our work during the past year. We have ever sought to keep before our pastors and churches the importance of soul-winning. ... Evangelistic work was central in our Lord's message and commission and in the mission of the apostles and of the early church. We must not allow the evangelistic passion to languish for the sake of the lost ...⁵⁸

Jesus Christ is the only solution for the moral, spiritual and social needs of the world. Men must be changed before other changes for the better can take place. We must major on the task of giving Christ to our country. This is stressed in our Master's commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature". We see no real solution for the world ailments in evolution, education (sic), moral and social reform, human effort and developments, important as the things may be. The only solution for troubles is the redeeming grace of the Lord Jesus. He is the supreme and the superlative need of the world today.⁵⁹

The need for personal and individual evangelistic conversion was in no way incompatible with the social service aims of the Convention. Rather, social service work, done by Baptist believers, opened the door to evangelistic efforts, paving the way for the Gospel message to be presented.

Social Service is the handmaid of Evangelism. It often prepares the way for the Gospel message. It is for many the evidence that the gospel message is true. More than that, Social Service is one of the ways of carrying out the clearly expressed will of Christ. ... Let it be repeated – Social Service is feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, caring for the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting those who are sick or in prison. And Jesus said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done

⁵⁸1926 Baptist Year Book, 101.

⁵⁹1944-45 Baptist Year Book, 134.

it unto me.”⁶⁰

The same held true for Baptist mission work overseas. It may even be argued that overseas missions are a better example of Baptist social service and evangelism in cooperation than their work in Canada. Although Baptists cooperated with other denominations and in larger social crusades on the Canadian scene, it is really only overseas that we see a solely Baptist organized and executed project involving most or all of the aspects of the social agenda. As P. Lorraine Coops notes, all charitable work pointed toward the evangelistic goal. For example,

Without exception, the female and male missionaries agreed that the primary goal of the mission was to bring the gospel message to the Telugus of India. All services they rendered, be these medical or educational, were entirely designed to facilitate the acceptance of and conversion to Baptist evangelical ideals.⁶¹

But social service was seen as more than remedial charity work and Christian education, whether overseas or in Canada. It was the proactive address of destructive social problems, such as “protecting the child from industrial exploitation.”⁶² While Baptists did not espouse a particular political or economic system as ideal, they certainly realized that fidelity to their biblical mission required extension of the implications of the Gospel message into all areas of life without sacrificing the integrity of the evangelistic mission. In this, the cycle of social service leading to evangelism, leading in turn to more social service and more evangelism, reveals itself most clearly.

We believe in making the social and spiritual ideals of Jesus our test for community as well as for individual life. ... And we believe that churches are neglecting an essential part of their mission unless they foster the zeal for social righteousness and disseminate the

⁶⁰1926 Baptist Year Book, 234.

⁶¹Coops, 221.

⁶²1926 Baptist Year Book, 234.

knowledge by which such zeal may be made effective. In our Christian social program we are not setting a social gospel over against an individual gospel. All that we work and plead for is the extension of the power of Jesus to a larger area of life ...⁶³

Given the closeness of evangelism and social service, it is not surprising that the BCOQ united them in a new board, the Board of Social Service and Evangelism, which first reported to the Convention in 1942. Also telling is the fact that this board issued reports in two parts, the first regarding social service, the second, evangelism. This seems to reinforce the notion that the two were considered interdependent yet distinct. While it must be conceded that the close connection of social service and evangelism by Baptists was by no means unique, in Baptist circles, the nature of the relationship between the two was certainly distinctive. In addition, in distinguishing between evangelism and social service, Baptists never reduced performance of one to performance of the other. The goal was always to engage in social service in order to facilitate evangelism, producing regenerate individuals who would then engage in further social service and evangelism.

Temperance

A second constant in the BCOQ's effort to extend their Christian values into all areas of life was their steadfast opposition to liquor and "the liquor traffic" in Canada. Baptist participation in the temperance cause predated the turn of the twentieth century. Every single Baptist Convention for more than sixty years, from before 1900 until at least 1960 (the last year book I consulted) included at least one temperance resolution. This amply demonstrates the continuity of Baptist support for this campaign.

Another facet of the struggle that remained constant was the goal of Baptist temperance

⁶³ 1930 *Baptist Year Book*, 214-215.

efforts, which was to bring about total abstinence from liquor and “Dominion-wide prohibition.” This goal was articulated specifically in resolutions in 1916, 1917, 1926, 1927, and 1938, and alluded to in several other years. Baptists were active participants in the Ontario Temperance Federation and the Quebec Temperance League, among other groups. Although the nature of the fight against alcohol changed over the years (which I will address later), the Baptist opposition to alcohol as a hindrance to church work and a well-ordered society remained.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Baptists saw the moral condition of their nation inextricably linked to its sobriety. The social consequences of alcoholism had long been recognized, and the interdenominational temperance crusade was already well-established, dating in British North America back to the late 1820's. The reasons for the rise of the temperance movement go beyond the scope of this paper;⁶⁴ for our purposes, it is sufficient to note that by 1900 it had become widely known and fairly influential. The main reasons for this were based on the observations that alcohol consumption was economically detrimental to the plight of many working-class people (mainly men) who were susceptible to the temptation of spending their wages at the public house rather than bringing them home. Another more gripping concern was that drunkenness was the cause of a multitude of varieties of moral decay, from the prostitution which often centred around taverns to the deceit employed by housewives to conceal their vice. To a significant degree, booze was seen as the root of all kinds of evil. For example, a *Canadian Baptist* editorial from 1902 cited prohibition as the key to ending child abuse.⁶⁵ It is interesting

⁶⁴Glenn J. Lockwood identifies ethnicity as a key factor in the rise of temperance in Upper Canada. See “Temperance in Upper Canada as Ethnic Subterfuge,” in Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, ed., *Drink In Canada: Historical Essays* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 43-69.

⁶⁵John S. Moir, “*The Canadian Baptist and the Social Gospel Movement, 1879-1914*,” 153.

to realize that even in Baptist circles, with their respect for the authority of the Bible, alcohol abuse was seldom seen as an issue which Scripture addressed in and of itself. Rather, alcoholism contributed to excesses in other areas of one's life. There was much about society that required the diligent and self-controlled efforts of Christians, and alcohol impeded the use of one's faculties to this end. Alcohol thus became the enemy.

As the name implies, temperance was the goal, and in the mid 1800's, pursuit of temperance did not necessarily include prohibition. Indeed, temperance does not even require abstinence, but as temperance leaders realized the impotence of the agenda of moderation, teetotalism became the desired norm. Initially, moral suasion was the primary means used to prevent drunkenness, and from this evolved an institutional approach to the treatment of inebriates.⁶⁶ While this might sound initially progressive, similar to the modern notion of substance abuse rehabilitation, the reality was that publicly-funded inebriate institutions were as punitive as therapeutic, in intent and execution; they were really a cross between prisons and insane asylums. It is no wonder, then, that the BCOQ year book resolution for 1903 which mentions a desire to see a "provision for the medical treatment of inebriates" is one concerning the Prisoners' Aid Association which addresses the need for legislated prison reform measures.⁶⁷ Baptists also supported the Society for the Reformation of Inebriates, calling attention to and asking support for its work.⁶⁸

⁶⁶This history is well documented by Jim Baumohl in "Inebriate Institutions in North America," in Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, ed., *Drink In Canada: Historical Essays* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 92-114.

⁶⁷1903 Baptist Year Book, 29.

⁶⁸Canadian Baptist (July 26, 1906), 5.

Over time, though, controversy over the fundamental cause of alcoholism, the requisite approach to rehabilitation, and the expense involved in rehabilitation contributed to the decline of institutional inebriate treatment. This coincided with the popularization of prohibition as a way to prevent alcohol abuse rather than try to treat it. Baptists embraced this cause wholeheartedly, and although treatment was a part of their agenda, this crusade for temperance through prohibition was the catalyst for Baptist social reform efforts. In 1905, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec passed a moral reform resolution which exhorted Christians to exert their moral influence in support of prohibition and local option endeavours, but which also appointed a Temperance and Moral Reform committee which was the forerunner of all subsequent Baptist social service committees.⁶⁹

CAMPAIGN FOR PROHIBITION

After much effort, temperance leaders secured the Canada Temperance Act of 1878, which provided for local option. Baptists and others waged many local option campaigns to ban alcohol one municipality at a time, but their ultimate goal was “the ultimate and utter annihilation of the liquor traffic.”⁷⁰ To this end, the BCOQ leaders not only organized local option campaigns, they worked to raise public support for the prohibitionist cause.⁷¹ At first, the aim was to achieve prohibition one municipality at a time through local option initiatives, as mentioned in the 1907 report of the Committee on Temperance and Moral Reform.⁷² Not only

⁶⁹1905 *Baptist Year Book*, 16-17.

⁷⁰1901 *Baptist Year Book*, 21.

⁷¹For example, see 1904 *Baptist Year Book*, 19.

⁷²1907 *Baptist Year Book*, 207.

did they support local option campaigns, Baptists also cooperated in efforts to reform local option legislation itself. Reform of the legislation would aid local campaign efforts where campaigns failed to secure enactment because they did not win the requisite three-fifths majority.⁷³ This type of push continued for several years, but the prohibitionist cause gained new life with the outbreak of World War I. Public support for the war effort was high in English Canada and prohibitionists tapped into public loyalty by successfully characterizing liquor as a dissipating foe of the war effort, a "menace alike to our soldier and civilian population" which would need to be eliminated.⁷⁴ What is more, Ontario Premier William Hearst was himself a friend of the prohibitionist cause.⁷⁵ The unanimous passage of the Ontario Temperance Act of 1916 came as no great surprise, when activists had collected over 850,000 names in support of the legislation. Liquor was banned from all public establishments and businesses for the duration of the war, and could legally be sold only for "medicinal, mechanical, scientific, and sacramental purposes."⁷⁶

Despite this success, Baptists were not satisfied. For them, only permanent, Dominion-wide prohibition was adequate. In the reports of the 1916 Convention meetings, the Social Service Committee related the conviction that the time for such legislation had come, stating,

⁷³Local Option campaigns secured a majority in 83 of 96 new contests in 1907, but only 41 brought a large enough majority to pass the by-law. *1907 Baptist Year Book*, 207.

⁷⁴*1915 Baptist Year Book*, 29.

⁷⁵Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, "'John Barleycorn Must Die': An Introduction to the Social History of Alcohol," in Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, ed., *Drink In Canada: Historical Essays* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 15.

⁷⁶Sharon Anne Cook, *"Through Sunshine and Shadow:" The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 44.

"We also believe the time has arrived when we may reasonably ask our legislators at Ottawa for the total prohibition of the liquor traffic in Canada."⁷⁷ The Convention delegates agreed with this sentiment, approving the following resolution, "On Dominion Prohibition.:"

Resolved, That inasmuch as the sentiment of the people of Canada is overwhelmingly on the side of the total abolition of a liquor traffic, as is evidenced by the action of eight of nine provinces of the Dominion, we call attention to the manifest injustice that enables one province to frustrate the expressed will and legal enactments of other provinces by the shipment of large quantities of liquor into those provinces, and we urge most emphatically that the time has come for our Government at Ottawa to provide legislation prohibiting the importation, manufacture and sale of liquors for beverage purposes throughout Canada.⁷⁸

This was the beginning of a steady stream of resolutions, conferences, and campaign drives in aid of this one goal, one which Baptists and other prohibitionists would never achieve. The temporary wartime Ontario prohibition law was replaced by a permanent one in 1919, and that same year the Dominion Temperance Act was amended to allow provinces to hold referenda regarding importation of liquor.⁷⁹ Despite a subsequent provincial referendum in 1921 to ban the importing of liquor into Ontario, public consensus was beginning to fragment. A second referendum was held in 1924; the *Canadian Baptist* published several articles in the summer and fall to try to rally Baptist support for defence of the Ontario Temperance Act, but even at the height of the campaign, the sense of urgency among Baptists did not seem as strong as it had been previously. Whether this is an indication of a high level of confidence that the push would succeed or a faltering conviction about the appropriateness of prohibition is unclear; what is clear

⁷⁷1916 Baptist Year Book, 230.

⁷⁸1916 Baptist Year Book, 30. The "manifest injustice" referred to is an allusion to the fact the Quebec never passed prohibition legislation, and because provincial laws outlawed liquor sales and manufacture for local consumption but not interprovincial distribution, Quebec became an alcohol supplier to the rest of Canada and a source of extreme consternation to prohibitionists.

⁷⁹Cook, 199.

is that even at its peak, articles about prohibition in the *Canadian Baptist* were vastly outnumbered by those concerning evangelism. As important a cause as overthrow of the liquor traffic was, it paled in comparison to the task of spreading the Gospel.

Although a referendum which repealed the Ontario Temperance Act eventually ended prohibition in Ontario in 1926, the fight for Dominion-wide prohibition continued for many years. The struggle took various forms; in addition to proposing direct legislation, Baptists helped fight successfully against liquor advertising on radio and in print.⁸⁰ As late as 1938, the BCOQ passed a resolution which not only sought to ban liquor but also acknowledged the hindrances which political patronage and financial gain through lucrative taxation were to prohibition.⁸¹ By this time, however, the tide of public opinion had turned against prohibition, and Baptists and other temperance advocates retrenched their efforts.

EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND AWARENESS-RAISING

Baptists had long viewed education as a potent weapon in the war against alcohol. In 1900, a BCOQ resolution affirmed confidence in a law mandating "the teaching in the Public Schools of this province of the nature of narcotics and stimulants, and their influence upon the various parts of the body" according to "a prescribed course of study known as 'Physiology and Temperance,'" and protested proposed changes to the curriculum.⁸² Education continued to be a part of the overall effort throughout the years, and in the 1930's became the most prominent technique by which Baptists sought to influence young people in particular to abstain from

⁸⁰ 1941 *Baptist Year Book*, 63.

⁸¹ 1938 *Baptist Year Book*, 65.

⁸² 1900 *Baptist Year Book*, 23.

alcohol. The BCOQ had already acknowledged that “Temperance is not only a legislative problem, but is more fundamentally an educational, moral, and religious problem”⁸³ which the Convention attempted to address through materials published by the Social Service Committee and also through the educational work of the Board of Religious Education. The work of the latter more directly addressed the issue of indoctrinating children. The education programme of the BCOQ lasted well into the 1940’s.

The educational programme itself was meant to take full advantage of both biblical truth and scientific advances. The perception seemed always to be that ultimate faith rested in the authority of Scripture, but that science was not necessarily to be ignored as a resource. The 1912 report of the Social Service Committee reassured readers that “We will be careful not to enter upon any kind of work which will be in any way out of harmony with New Testament teaching”.⁸⁴ Later teaching materials bolstered the traditional evangelical temperance arguments by pointing to statistics about alcohol-induced highway traffic accidents⁸⁵ and workplace accidents, and sociological information about the effects of alcohol on community life and economic output.⁸⁶

During the 1930’s and into the 1940’s, the BCOQ reports that talked about temperance began to sound increasingly repetitive and less fervent. I believe that the educational campaign began to lose momentum when it became clear that those within the BCOQ were generally

⁸³1925 *Baptist Year Book*, 55.

⁸⁴1912 *Baptist Year Book*, 237.

⁸⁵1934 *Baptist Year Book*, 75.

⁸⁶1941 *Baptist Year Book*, 62.

already on side while the majority of those outside were not and would not be. Temperance movements had long since declined in popularity. In resolutions, glimpses of hopelessness began to emerge. For example, where Baptists once attacked liquor interests with confidence in their ability to effect change, the Social Service and Evangelism Board report for 1943-44 concluded that "the scope of the social service undertaking to-day, however, is far beyond the reach of the individual worker or even of the individual denomination."⁸⁷ Rather than suggest specific solutions, reports began to speak more in the abstract. The 1941-42 report of the State of Religion and Rural Church Committee noted the rise in drinking and gambling, and it acknowledged the need to raise awareness, stating that "[we] would do well to awaken our own consciences on all social issues."⁸⁸ Unfortunately, further, committees such as this one did not often suggest more concrete suggestions. This was after over forty years of education, resolutions, and political campaigning! I believe that this evidence more evidence of the trend toward retrenchment which was taking hold of the BCOQ. Looking back toward its days of influence, looking ahead fearfully at the future, Baptists were beginning to think more about simple survival than social reconstruction.

Sunday Observance

Baptist participation in the Lord's Day Alliance was small in comparison to the presence of Presbyterians and Anglicans who formed the majority of its leadership, but Baptist support was nevertheless continuous and faithful for all of the era being examined. In fact, it rivalled participation in temperance organizations in terms of longest cooperation around a single

⁸⁷ 1943-44 *Baptist Year Book*, 183.

⁸⁸ 1941-42 *Baptist Year Book*, 74.

issue. Formed in 1888, the Lord's Day Alliance was organized around an initial goal which was "to ensure that existing laws against pleasure excursions, illicit tippling in bars, and other such violations of the sabbath were rigorously enforced."⁸⁹ Having become acquainted with the harshness of urban working conditions and influenced by a movement which had arisen in Europe to ameliorate the conditions of the working class by protecting Sunday as a day of rest,⁹⁰ the leaders of Lord's Day Alliance took their place as part of the larger, worldwide movement of the time which sought to enshrine global Sunday observance; a congress on Sunday rest, held in Chicago in 1893, articulated the following goals, which reflected both religious and labour underpinnings for the Sunday rest platform.

1. A more general and intelligent appreciation of the Sunday rest and of the duty of protecting it by wise and just laws:
2. A wider appreciation of Roman Catholics and Protestants in maintaining the Sunday rest:
3. A fuller appreciation on the part of wage-earners of the efforts which Christian men and philanthropists are making to secure to them, as far as practicable, their right to Sunday rest:
4. A better understanding of the peril to the weekly rest from such use of it on the part of wage-earners as robs others of their equal right to its benefit:
5. The manifested agreement of Christians of different denominations as to the divine authority of the institution, and the duty of so using it as to promote the spiritual and physical well-being of man and society.⁹¹

At the second International Congress on Sunday Rest in St. Louis in 1904, a prominent member of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, later president of the BCOQ, Toronto mayor Thomas Urquhart was among the many notable Canadian politicians serving on the advisory council for the

⁸⁹Brian Clarke, "English Speaking Canada from 1854," in Terrence Murphy and Roberto Perrin, eds., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 326.

⁹⁰Ontario Law Reform Commission, *Report on Sunday Observance Legislation* (Toronto: Ontario Department of Justice, 1970), 39.

⁹¹*Report on Sunday Observance Legislation*, 39-40.

meetings.⁹² Urquhart was later personal legal counsel to T. T. Shields,⁹³ who was himself active in the Lord's Day Alliance much later, and was one in a series of Baptists involved individually in the movement to reinforce Sunday observance.

While it must be acknowledged that the emphasis on the various reasons presented for keeping Sunday a day of rest fluctuated somewhat with time, the ultimate principle of keeping one weekly day of rest remained consistent. Legislation to that effect had been in force since well before Confederation, but with the constitutional changes in jurisdiction associated with the new roles of provincial and federal governments after Confederation, the Ontario Lord's Day Act was declared *ultra vires* in 1903.

Following this decision was the feverish work of the Lord's Day Alliance to draft new legislation; this legislation, which became the Lord's Day Act, was eventually passed, becoming law in July, 1906, and came into force in March, 1907. The Act remained particularly stable, not staying unamended until a minor revision in 1948, but remained essentially unchanged for many more years.

During the many years of our survey in which the Lord's Day Act was in force, the gist of the many Convention resolutions regarding the Act and Sunday itself was to reaffirm faith in the sanctity of Sunday as a day of rest and encourage enforcement of the Lord's Day Act to protect not only the day itself but also the health and welfare of people who might otherwise be forced to work excessively. Reflecting developments in social science, though, articulations of support changed over time to appeal less on religious grounds and more on humanitarian

⁹²*Report on Sunday Observance Legislation*, 40.

⁹³T. T. Shields, *The Plot That Failed* (Toronto: The Gospel Witness, 1937), 274.

grounds. Consider the following citations:

Whereas, there is a growing tendency on the part of Canadian people to make use of the Lord's Day for pleasure, or profit, for travel, and so to neglect the proper purpose for which the Lord's Day is given: therefore be it resolved, that we, as the Convention repeat our conviction, that as a body we should discountenance all secular uses of the Lord's Day, and hold ourselves loyal to the attendance upon Divine worship, and a reverent observance of the sacred day.⁹⁴

Recognizing that the practical and theoretical difficulties arising out of the necessities of industry and of public services; the presence in our country of many people not dominated by any profound religious convictions; and the honest difference of opinion among serious men as to the relation of some restrictions, applicable to the ancient Jewish Sabbath, to the observance of the Christian Sunday; yet we affirm our conviction:

FIRST: That the provision of one day of rest in seven and of leisure in which to worship God is a right to be recognized in fact as well as by present laws.

SECOND: That every endeavor should be made by us and those who represent us and by other Christian bodies to discourage and restrain movements designed to disturb hours and habits of worship.

THIRD: That we should by example, as well as by precept, so respect the Lord's Day as to help form and maintain a public opinion favourable to the quiet observance of Sunday.

FOURTH: That we re-affirm our loyalty to the work of the Lord's Day Alliance, mindful of the problems involved in its task through changing of social habits, the complexity and occasional obscurity of the law, and the difficulties attendant upon the application of sound principles without giving the appearance of a bad sense of proportion, and mindful also, that its chief aim is to protect rather than to enforce the use of Sunday for religious observances and duties.⁹⁵

By 1938, according to the Social Service Board report, the emphasis of the Lord's Day Alliance was to resist intrusions into Sunday rest in the form of against Sunday shopping and Sunday commercial radio broadcasting,⁹⁶ and BCOQ statements during the Second World War allowed for the need of patriotic Christians to work on Sundays, but only as far as was required

⁹⁴1905 *Baptist Year Book*, 18.

⁹⁵1937 *Baptist Year Book*, 56-57.

⁹⁶1938 *Baptist Year Book*, 176-177.

to contribute to the war effort.⁹⁷

I believe that the underlying sentiment for support of the Sunday as a day of rest did not change, but the articulated emphasis shifted to remain effective in swaying popular opinion. The ultimate aim of the efforts was to protect the vitality of as many as possible by providing an opportunity to worship as well as rest from the normal work routine. Consideration was given to those of different religious convictions (e.g., Jews, Seventh Day Adventists, and even Muslims) when the Lord's Day Act was being drafted in 1906,⁹⁸ and the 1937 resolution in particular seems to reflect sensitivity to religious diversity. This sensitivity, especially in light of the aforementioned evidence of the Baptist desire to evangelize, reinforces the argument that Baptists desired to maintain positive relationships with members of all religious and ethnic groups because of their conviction that they were to broadcast the Gospel to them. The obvious intent to evangelize should not be thought antithetical to the diplomacy required to do so appropriately. Further, Baptist evangelistic thrusts have been attributed to fundamentalist thinking, but I assert that the sensitivity demonstrated here, for example, belies that this presumption was universally true. At its heart, the Baptist effort was "rather one of persuasion than one of force."⁹⁹

SOME OTHER ISSUE-SPECIFIC SOCIAL SERVICE EFFORTS

Anti-Drug Endeavours

Closely tied to prohibition within the Baptist social service framework were the related

⁹⁷1940 Baptist Year Book, 225.

⁹⁸Report on Sunday Observance Legislation, 48-49.

⁹⁹1934 Baptist Year Book, 216.

evils of tobacco and opium, both of which were the targets of attack and the subjects of resolutions. In a 1903 resolution which seems ahead of its time, Baptists sought to have the “sale, manufacture, and importation” of cigarettes prohibited because of “the injurious effects from the use of cigarettes, especially among boys under age”.¹⁰⁰ Cigarettes were doubtless far more commonly used than opium, but for some reason, opium seems to have attracted even more attention – at least if the number of *Baptist Year Book* resolutions in the first decade of the 1900's referring to it is in any indication – as a potentially disastrous societal evil. Evidence of the effectiveness of efforts by Baptists and others toward changing the law regarding opium is seen in the report of the Moral and Social Reform Committee in the *1908 Baptist Year Book*, which includes acknowledgment of the “action of the Dominion Parliament prohibiting the manufacture, importation, and sale of opium.”¹⁰¹ I also take this as an indication that although some of the resolutions of Baptist social reform committees can be interpreted as nothing more than so much moral drum-beating, many efforts were practical and effective.

Further evidence of this lies in later resolutions which, more than simply denouncing drugs as an evil, addressed the problems of education, rehabilitation, and production. For example, the 1926 Convention passed the following resolution:

In view of the considerable increase in the consumption of Narcotic Drugs in Canada during the past few years,

Resolved:

- 1. That this Convention recommend to the pastors and members of the churches the importance of disseminating information from time to time concerning the danger of the use of narcotics.**
- 2. That this Association calls upon the Provincial, Dominion and Imperial Governments to employ the utmost of their power and influence to repress the production, manufacture and**

¹⁰⁰ *1903 Baptist Year Book*, 17.

¹⁰¹ *1908 Baptist Year Book*, 207.

sale of opium, cocaine and their derivatives for other than medicinal and scientific use.
 3. That the principle of the Golden rule demands that those who have become drug addicts should be cared for, and, if possible, cured, and we urge the Government of Ontario, in co-operation with Social Agencies, to provide adequate institutional care and treatment of these unfortunate persons.¹⁰²

Other statements about the question of drugs and drug abuse demonstrated a similar concern for the human cost of drug use, realizing that drug policies needed to be restorative rather than simply punitive. This again is in keeping with the larger evangelistic context.

Gambling

Baptist sentiment was always opposed to gambling, at first as a moral evil, but later also as the cause of economic and social decay. Because of this conviction, and as regarding many issues, Baptists urged governments to invoke their right to act in defence against the human propensity toward self-destruction. Of particular concern was the suggestion that government might not only allow gambling, but sanction it officially in an attempt to harness its energy for what could be argued to be noble purposes. Baptists supported "making illegal the business of gambling on horse races, lotteries at church bazaars and the use of wheels of fortune and other gambling devices at agricultural fairs."¹⁰³ They also called attention to the fallacious thinking surrounding the effectiveness of sweepstakes as fund-raising tools, pointing out that based on the findings of a British Royal Commission, hospitals received only about one seventh of what was wagered, the rest being taken up in prizes and expenses.¹⁰⁴ While some accommodation to a sort of pluralism could be evinced at times (as regarding Sunday observance), gambling was harmful

¹⁰² *1926 Baptist Year Book*, 54.

¹⁰³ *1927 Baptist Year Book*, 219.

¹⁰⁴ *1934 Baptist Year Book*, 212.

as well as evil and so could not be tolerated.

In view of the widespread increase of the means of gambling and having in mind the grave social, economic and moral consequences of gambling, be it resolved that we place on record our united and emphatic opposition to any proposed legislation legalizing sweepstakes in Canada and be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Prime Minister of Canada and to the Prime Ministers of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. And be it further resolved that we urge upon our people as Christian stewards to refrain from participation in games of chance.¹⁰⁵

What sets Baptist interest apart, however, is that it is expressed in a strong context of personal accountability. Gambling was not seen as an external source of evil which, the avoidance of which could contribute in and of itself to the strengthening of moral character. Rather, the availability of vices such as gambling was seen as a catalyst for the evil already present in the human psyche. Noting the lamentable increase in drinking and gambling, the State of Religion and Rural Church Committee asserted that

The sense of personal wrong-doing, of individual sin seems to be lost and in its place has come a sense of corporate sin, or rather a placing of blame upon institutions rather than individuals. Social drinking is on the increase, but the individual is not challenged, but the government. There is too much tendency to say, "the government is rotten", "Capitalism is a fault", etc. ...¹⁰⁶

Despite the temptation to attack social issues at the corporate scale, Baptists consistently held to the need to effect personal regeneration on a large scale in order to bring about widespread social change. Social vices were invariably addressed as impediments to personal, not social, righteousness.

Prison and Penal Reform

Although annual Convention records list prison reform resolutions dating back to the

¹⁰⁵ 1938 Baptist Year Book, 64.

¹⁰⁶ 1941-42 Baptist Year Book, 74.

turn of the century, the most significant evidence of Baptist involvement in prison reform efforts is in the *1933 Baptist Year Book*, where it is recorded that the BCOQ Social Service Board participated as part of the special Penitentiary Committee of the Social Service Council of Canada. This committee had pled for better conditions based on reports of the Royal Commission of 1914 and the committee report on the revision of penitentiary regulations under the government of Prime Minister Arthur Meighen in 1921. These reports recommended increasing emphasis on the educational and reformatory side of prison life, remunerative work for prisoners for the support of their families, the limitation of wardens' powers to inflict harsh and severe punishment permitted under the criminal code, and greater care in the training and selection of prison officials. The Honourable Hugh Guthrie, Minister of Justice, issued a report which instituted the following reforms:

1. Stated periods are to be set apart in which the of rule silence shall not be obligatory.
2. The lights of the cells are to be of such power that prisoners can read without eye strain.
3. Some check is put on the power of wardens to order the infliction of corporal punishment.
4. Greater facilities are to be allowed prisoners for keeping in touch with their families and business by correspondence.¹⁰⁷

Baptists were not at the centre of the prison reform movement, but were active in Prisoners' Aid Associations, which were instrumental in the implementation of such correctional innovations as the parole system. The role of Prisoners' Aid Associations was noted in The Dominion Parole Officer's Report of 1916.¹⁰⁸

A further significance was the fate of prisoners released back into society, both because

¹⁰⁷ *1934 Baptist Year Book*, 202.

¹⁰⁸ Michael D. Wittingham, *The Role of Reformers and Volunteers in the Advance of Correctional Reform in Canada, since Confederation* (Ottawa: Montreal of the Solicitor General of Canada, 1984), 9.

of concerns regarding recidivism and because of genuine concern for individuals. The members of the Baptist Social Service Board reported in 1929 their participation in the formation of the Citizens' Service Association, formed to address this issue.

One of the most outstanding advances in Social Work this year has been the establishment of the Citizens' Service Association. This organization was formed through the efforts of representatives of Service Clubs and Churches, including your Board members, and its purpose is to assist prisoners upon their release from provincial penal institutions to regain a respectable position in Society. Very often a prisoner when released is without money, without work and without friends, and consequently find it easy to drift again into the paths of crime. If employment and a sympathetic welcome back to his community awaited him upon his release many a first offender would be saved from the life of crime.¹⁰⁹

This Association's primary task was placement of newly released inmates and arrangement of employment for them, but one other project being tackled was a proposal for the appointment of a public defender to provide legal counsel for those lacking financial means.¹¹⁰

Baptists, Politics, Influence and Credibility

Although Baptists resisted any and all perceived intrusions by government into religious affairs, they were not unfavourably disposed to cooperation with government agencies. They also saw it as their responsibility to take part in political activity in order to accomplish their social agenda, both as government lobbyists and as elected officials. Resolutions continually referred to efforts to introduce or revise legislation, or at least to urge governments to draft or revise legislation. Baptists were represented in government and as conscientious Christians were expected to exert a Christian influence in governmental affairs while avoiding using their positions for sectarian purposes.

Additionally, because Baptists were at the fringe of the Christian mainstream, being the

¹⁰⁹ 1929 Baptist Year Book, 22.

¹¹⁰ 1929 Baptist Year Book, 203.

smallest and most doctrinally distinctive of the mainline denominations, they were eager to make the most of political connections which lent credibility to Baptists. It was the combination of money and political connections which enabled Senator William McMaster to orchestrate the establishment of McMaster University. Baptists had long sought the prestige associated with a full-fledged denominational university. Baptists doubtless enjoyed the fact that Thomas Urquhart was simultaneously president of the Convention and mayor of Toronto. In 1938, Albert Matthews, a member of the McMaster Board of Governors, became Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.¹¹¹ It is interesting that Baptist annuals dutifully record the attendance of the Lieutenant Governor at annual Convention meetings each of the years of Matthews' term, but make no mention of no other during the period under examination.

While Baptists were urged to be active in shaping public policy, the BCOQ was deliberately non-partisan. For example, political advertising in the *Canadian Baptist* gave equal time to Liberals and Conservatives.¹¹² More important to Baptists than trying to choose a correct ideological stance was avoiding the incorrect. Totalitarianism was the most significant evil to be avoided, whether of the left or right. This was the subject of an article in the *Canadian Baptist* by Carl V. Farmer entitled "Church and State," part of a series presenting the Baptist position on different issues. Acknowledging that state control had its advantages, Farmer nevertheless cautioned against the dangers of extension of state powers in the extreme, as in the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy, especially where such powers would interfere with Church mission. Where this occurred, "[the] church becomes the tool of state rulers." This was particularly problematic

¹¹¹ *1938 Baptist Year Book*, 127-128.

¹¹² *Canadian Baptist*, September 16, 1937 and September 30, 1937.

given the essential contradiction between the model and agenda of the New Testament church, upon which Baptist polity tried to imitate, and those of a totalitarian state. Farmer called upon the Church to do three things. First, it had to proclaim and reveal the reality of its central faith. Second, it had to realize that while man cannot live by bread alone, without bread he cannot live at all. "The church must produce a community of persons resolutely set on making human brotherhood a reality in business, social and political life, or realizing their faith in action and courageously challenging every denial of it in the system and practice of modern society." Third, it had to be willing to suffer to bring about a better world.¹¹³

In sum, the Baptist political agenda centred more around renewing the political system than advancing a particular ideology. This likely disconnected some Baptists from the possibility of adopting a practical agenda, but it also prevented the denomination from becoming overly politicized and losing its primarily spiritual focus.

Preservation of the Family

Aside from alcohol, probably the great threat which many religious Canadians saw to the integrity of the family was sexual temptation due to lowered public morals, so it is not surprising that an early reform initiative attacked the evils of prostitution, known then as "white slavery" because it usually involved the abduction of white (usually eastern European) immigrant women who were forced into prostitution. Working as part of the Social Service Council of Canada and the National Committee for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, members of the Baptist Social Service Committee helped secure amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada which specified

¹¹³*Canadian Baptist*, May 27, 1937.

severe penalties for “procuring,” “white slavery,” “living on the avails of prostitution,” “leasing premises to be used for immoral purposes,” making “wife and child desertion a crime” authorizing arrest ... without warrant of suspected white slavers and procurers, and several other amendments of far-reaching significance.¹¹⁴

The report is vague about the meaning of “severe penalties” and it can certainly be argued that tough legislation is not the answer to a problem like prostitution, but this report seems to imply that previously there had been no criminal consequence for these actions. In that case, this legislation would seem better than none at all. In an attempt to supplement these amendments with a preventive measure, the National Committee for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic published a pamphlet called “Warnings to Girls” for distribution to both immigrant girls and Canadian citizens.¹¹⁵ The educational crusades launched by the aforementioned committees were no small part of the overall drive to raise public awareness regarding the social evils of the day and to sway public opinion about how to address them.

A further step toward raising public morals was the quest for stricter laws governing sexual conduct; in 1916, a BCOQ resolution praised the federal government for considering social issues and urged amendments to the Criminal Code in this area.

Resolved, That this Convention records gratification at the increasing interest being shown by our Government in the immoral problems of our civilization, and at what they have already done toward the solution of these. That we register our conviction that additional legislation is needed ... for raising the age of consent for girls, for making adultery a crime with prohibitive penalties, for protecting all female employees against seduction by a fellow-employee or foreman ...¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *1913 Baptist Year Book*, 222.

¹¹⁵ *1913 Baptist Year Book*, 223.

¹¹⁶ *1916 Baptist Year Book*, 28.

Political Corruption and Patronage

Likely arising from their history of political dissidence, Baptists were keenly aware of the potential for the political system to operate in a manner antithetical to the democratic approach they valued so highly, so it is not surprising that they early on their social service agenda made a point of responding to perceived political corruption and patronage. One of the few tasks completed by S. Edward Grigg during his brief tenure as secretary of the Social Service Committee of the BCOQ was presentation of a report on political corruption at the Social Service Congress in Ottawa in March, 1914. The Convention of 1916 passed the following resolution regarding political patronage:

Whereas, the system of political patronage now in effect in Canada is unjust in its fundamental conceptions, and prejudicial to public morals, because inviting and protecting numerous abuses in public life and trust, and wasteful of our countries wealth and resources, Resolved, That the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec hereby record its uncompromising opposition to this system, and strongly urged by the consent and action of all parties in the Parliament of Canada and in the Legislatures of the Provinces, patronage be abolished,
And that copies of this resolution be sent to Sir Robert Borden, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Social Service Council of Canada.¹¹⁷

Baptists sought for all Canadians the ideal of pure democracy, even though their aforementioned conspicuous display of political connections leads me to believe that they were not always a perfect example.

Human Rights

Health and Welfare

The Convention Social Service Committee lamented in 1918 that "Canada has no bureau of child welfare, and no department of health. It is hoped that at the coming session of

¹¹⁷1916 Baptist Year Book, 29.

Parliament a general department of health will be established, and that a child welfare bureau will be created for Canada."¹¹⁸ Throughout the 1920's, Baptist social activists worked with other church leaders toward the establishment of government departments of health and welfare as well as legislation, particularly to protect children. The Social Service Committee recorded some progress as the Adoption Act, the Boys' Welfare Home and School Act, the Children of Unmarried Parents' Act, the Children's Protection Act, the Deserted Wives' and Children's Maintenance Act, the Juvenile Courts Act all passed in 1927, consolidating and improving previous legislation.¹¹⁹

Mothers' Allowances and Unemployment Benefits

Pursuit of financial benefits for mother and the unemployed was part of the overall concern about public social welfare. The 1920 annual noted that the provincial government passed a bill providing support for widowed mothers with dependent children after the Convention had passed a resolution to the same effect the previous year.¹²⁰ In 1922 the Mothers' Allowance Act was widened, and in 1928 the Social Service Committee noted an amendment to the Children of Unmarried Parents' Act, further money to the mother, administered by the Public Trustee and Provincial Officer.¹²¹

Baptists were definitely among those concerned with the day-to-day welfare of others, and in addition to cooperative ventures, individual Baptist churches took initiative to provide for

¹¹⁸1918 Baptist Year Book, 220.

¹¹⁹1927 Baptist Year Book, 224.

¹²⁰1920 Baptist Year Book, 221.

¹²¹1928 Baptist Year Book, 210.

community needs. Most notable among these was Walmer Road Baptist Church's Memorial Institute, described in the *1920 Baptist Year Book*. Note the mention that sympathetic service provided greater opportunity for evangelism; this was always the goal of Baptist social service.

This socialized Church operates in a poor and densely populated district of Toronto, and in addition to all the regular activities of a Church and Sunday School carries on successfully a social programme of education, recreation and relief. There are clubs for men and women, girls and boys, which provide wholesome recreation and opportunities for mental and spiritual development. There are classes for industrial and literary instruction, clinics for children and adults, Bible classes and missionary study groups, a Daily Vacation Bible School, community gardens, a large fresh-air camp, at which three hundred were given a two weeks' outing during the past summer. Such a programme, under the direction of earnest Christian leaders, offers an opportunity for religious influence in the downtown section such as no other form of organization provides. The various clubs, classes and other groups before excellent opportunity for contact with the people, especially the non-English citizen, while sympathy with them in their problems and sorrows inclines them to hear respectfully the message from the pulpit. Other churches and Sunday schools are promoting social welfare by means of summer camps for boys and girls, by providing recreation under the best auspices and conditions for these people.¹²²

Native Rights and Land Claims

Baptist perspectives on native rights and land claims are difficult to explore because of the usual Baptist diversity. More than in many other contexts though, there is the additional problem that history has changed perspectives and attitudes rather dramatically over the years, leaving some statements from the period sounding oddly both ignorant and progressive. At first glance, the one significant Baptist reference to this topic in the first half of the century appears odd in this way. A resolution of the 1915 Convention, I believe it should be taken as an ignorant but well-intentioned attempt; it cannot be interpreted apart from its context without doing great violence to the meaning of the authors. At the same time, though, it illustrates the sad cultural myopia exhibited by the majority of white, Protestant religious leaders of the early twentieth

¹²²1920 *Baptist Year Book*, 221.

century.

This Convention wishes to express its warm appreciation of the honorable way in which Canada, in general, has recognized and adjusted the aboriginal land claims of the native races. We at the same time regret that British Columbia is an unhappy exception, and that her Government denies the existence of any such rights, and refuses the reasonable request of the Indians that the question be referred to the Judicial Committee of His Majesty's Privy Council for decision.

We therefore would urge our people to support, by their influence and contributions, the Social Service Council of Canada in its efforts to induce the Government of Canada to do its utmost to secure the reference to the Privy Council that a just and permanently satisfactory settlement of this very serious question may be reached.¹²³

The issue of native land claims is well beyond the scope of this papers, but it is interesting to note that Baptists had decided that the British Columbia government had fallen short of a recognized standard regarding land claims. This seems a somewhat anachronistic sensitivity which, while admittedly not unique to Baptists nor representative of the denomination in toto, is nevertheless a credit to its supporters. The important principle to derive from this statement is its implicit commitment to a Christian standard of honour to guide negotiations with natives (or any other group), essentially a practical application of the Golden Rule.

Labour Relations

The Baptist position on labour and capital shared many of the same advantages and disadvantages as their political policy. By concentrating on principles rather than specifics, Baptists steered clear of controversy over difficult situations such as the 1872 Printers' Strike or even the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. On the other hand, authors such as Stewart Crysdale point out that Baptist priorities caused them to fail to take advantage of the opportunity to speak forcefully to specific issues, dulling their witness. I would maintain that the Baptist agenda was

¹²³ 1915 Baptist Year Book, 28.

well served by Baptist statements of the period, and that the witness that Crysedale sought for Baptists was not what they sought for themselves. Again, the Baptist social gospel agenda, especially of the 1910's and 1920's, was intentionally different, even unique, reflecting heartfelt conviction rather more than apathy.

While the BCOQ did not issue an official statement about the 1919 General Strike, the 1919 resolution "On Labor Problems" is an obvious reaction to it.

Resolved, that this Convention record its deep interest in the struggle between employers and labor now become so general, and in some instances so critical. With this struggle, in so far as it is one for the application of principles of righteousness and justice, we declare our sympathy, cherishing as we do the following ideals: the conduct of industry and commerce on the basis of service rather than profit; the equitable distribution of the proceeds of industry; the substitution of the principle of fraternalism for selfish individualism; the realization of the aims of labor embodied in the peace treaty, namely, a shorter work week, the right to organize, and the right of collective bargaining; the fact that work being a divine law of life, each should live on the fruits of his own toil, and not on labor of others.

Further, that we deprecate the use of methods of violence by either of the contending parties, and command the proper regard for the general interest of the public and adherence to the Christian and reasonable method of conference and arbitration in the adjustment of disputes.¹²⁴

The content of the resolution is typical of both of a baptistic labour policy (I use this term advisedly; it would be improper to speak of a representative Baptist labour policy) and the desire of the Convention to rise above the vagaries of individual traumatic events.

K. W. Taylor, a McMaster University faculty member, wrote "The Church and Capitalism: The Church's Attitude Toward Society," one of the 1937 series published in the *Canadian Baptist*. This article articulated the Baptist emphasis on the worth of the individual and individual rights over property rights and reminded readers that the Church had an obligation

¹²⁴ 1919 Baptist Year Book, 33-34.

to denounce obvious evils of the industrial system, but it also pointed out that the ultimate test of a society was not an economic one but rather a spiritual one. "Christianity does not and cannot sponsor any final or absolute form that the economic system must take, but it does demand the acceptance of certain great spiritual principles, and it does set up certain moral standards by which any form of society can be judged." Although official documents and resolutions were intentionally abstract, individual concern was to be practical. Taylor was careful to articulate that "[it] is the duty of Christian men and women earnestly to search for practical ways and means of dealing with the underlying causes of poverty, of social degradation, of economic exploitation."¹²⁵ To this end, the 1920 Convention outlined a platform of labour principles which called for fair wages, safe working conditions, protection from exploitation (especially for women and children), and reasonable hours and conditions. It underscored that industry "is primarily for the service and benefit of mankind and only secondarily for personal or corporate gain," and that it "is a partnership of investors, managers, workers and the community, and all parties to production should participate equitably and responsibly in its direction."¹²⁶ Baptists were advocates of minimum wage standards, collective bargaining, and state-supervised elimination of unemployment.¹²⁷

While aware of the need for change and the specific scope of the change needed, the authors of this platform shared the optimism of the era that solutions to social problems were not only achievable, they were imminent, relating that "we are in a transitional stage. One order is

¹²⁵*Canadian Baptist*, April 29, 1937.

¹²⁶*1920 Baptist Year Book*, 220.

¹²⁷*1937 Baptist Year Book*, 57.

dying; another and a more humane, we trust, is about to be born.”¹²⁸ Although the optimism of the 1910's and 1920's faded during the Great Depression, the call among Baptists to effect change remained constant. All Christians were called to transform the economic system as they were the political system. It is worth noting that Taylor's final statement in “The Church and Capitalism” was that the Church should *proclaim*, rather than establish, the Kingdom of God on earth. To proclaim the Kingdom emphasized its spiritual nature; to establish the Kingdom could have led to its identification with a particular ideological system. Such would have not fit Baptist distinctives.

Baptists and War

Baptist writings about war seem confusing and even contradictory when viewed in isolation, but when viewed in their historical and theological context, do form a coherent unity. Typically, Baptist writing seemed pacifist during peacetime but militaristic during wartime. For instance, a 1904 resolution on “Peace and Arbitration” supported and urged the resolution of differences by peaceful means under “reign of law and justice among the nations,”¹²⁹ but the 1917 Convention produced a resolution in support of the war effort. Two important factors explain this apparent discrepancy. One is that the war raging in 1917 was seen as the last great war which would “bring victory to our banners and a permanent peace to the world.” The second is that Baptist leaders were convinced of “the Righteousness of the cause of Great Britain and her Allies.”¹³⁰ What the Baptist authors were articulating was that they believed war was an evil to

¹²⁸ *1920 Baptist Year Book*, 220.

¹²⁹ *1904 Baptist Year Book*, 17.

¹³⁰ *1917 Baptist Year Book*, 32.

be avoided if at all possible, but that if it could not be avoided because to do so would have allowed the violation of the nation's sovereignty, it should be waged in such a way as to precipitate the resumption of peace as quickly as possible. This pattern is evident in Baptist annuals leading up to and during World War Two. Note the trends in the following citations from the 1930's:

We, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, heartily endorse the following resolution as adopted by the Baptist World Congress ...
 This Congress affirms its profound conviction that war is contrary to the mind of Christ. ...
 The Congress further urges upon all Christian men and women constantly to bear their personal testimony against the inhumanity and anti-Christian character of war ...
 The Congress would welcome the calling ... of an international conference of Christian churches to avert war and establish peace ...¹³¹

The tone of the following resolution from 1938 is more stridently opposed to war.

Since the peace of the world is being threatened by wars in the Far East and in Europe, by the race for preparedness and armaments, and by a growing sense of insecurity and fear; since war is obviously contrary to the teaching, the mind and the Spirit of Christ and was opposed at the peril of life by the early Christians; be it resolved, that this Convention urge the churches *in the event of war neither to bless nor give support to it as organizations*. Further, be it resolved that we urge upon our people to be constant in prayer to Almighty God to spare us from another world catastrophe while we devote ourselves to loosing the Spirit of our Master upon the World. So help us God.¹³²

By 1940, however, the Convention's attitude had changed markedly. Once again support for the war effort and the confidence in the righteousness of the Allied cause swept aside all previous expressions of opposition to war. Where the former resolution promised to give no blessing or support to war, the BCOQ now urged "all Christian people in Canada with whom our voice has influence to hold fast their confidence in God, to wait patiently for Him, and in the armour of that faith and patience to face courageously the struggle before our Empire and its

¹³¹ 1934 Baptist Year Book, 75-76.

¹³² 1938 Baptist Year Book, 64. Emphasis added.

Allies."¹³³ The resolution the next year spoke in escalated rhetoric.

Be it resolved that we express our gratitude to God for the British Empire, where the love of liberty still burns, and in which the Mother Country, her Dominions and Colonies are associated in the great cause of holding back the onslaughts of barbarism. We recognize the necessity of employing force to restrain the powers of evil that are abroad in the world to-day, and we are confident that God will grant victory to our arms.¹³⁴

That the sentiments herein expressed could be twisted for nationalistic purposes was clear to Baptists who were well aware of the marginalizing tendencies of totalitarianism in particular, as conveyed in K. W. Taylor previously examined article. The preventive to this tendency was to be the work of the Holy Spirit, who would through individual regeneration both help maintain peace as the goal (rather than destruction of one's enemies) and facilitate the continual re-evaluation of the justice of the cause. The resolution continues:

Nevertheless, we are keenly aware that it is not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit that righteousness must prevail ... Our cause embraces more than military victory over the enemy. It includes the establishment of a just and lasting peace, and the ushering in of a world order in which men may live together in concord, where the weak are protected, and all have sufficient opportunity to serve. A task so great requires nothing less than a world-wide moral regeneration for its achievement. Men and nations must be born anew of the Spirit of the Living God. To the cause of that spiritual renewal, as well as to the immediate cause of victory, we ask our people solemnly and whole-heartedly to dedicate themselves.¹³⁵

Immigration and Overseas Relief

Baptist documents about immigration, like those about native rights, are something of an embarrassment because of the prejudices they reveal. Fortunately, these prejudices do not spring from feelings of racial superiority, but they do highlight an opprobrious connection of

¹³³ 1940 *Baptist Year Book*, 360.

¹³⁴ 1941 *Baptist Year Book*, 61.

¹³⁵ 1941 *Baptist Year Book*, 61.

enculturation to evangelism with respect to non-English-speaking people. The first references to immigrants sound bigoted, even racist, in their call for limits on the number of immigrants from non-English-speaking countries, favouring maintenance of a high percentage of immigration from the British Isles. Contrary to appearances, the intention was relatively positive. The inherent concern was that evangelism was difficult enough without the language and cultural barrier between Canadian Baptists and non-English-speaking Europeans, and while there were many public agencies which could assist with the task of enculturation, the task of evangelism remained, and was daunting. The BCOQ was, though, doing mission work among Scandinavians, Russians, Ruthenians, Poles, Hungarians, Italians, Romanians, Czechoslovakians and other groups.¹³⁶ In general, however, Baptists generally favoured immigration of British citizens.

As World War II began to highlight the increasing numbers of refugees needing assistance, Baptists were among those whose attitudes began to change. Despite the reality of lingering suspicions about the national and ideological allegiance of immigrants and refugees fleeing Europe, Baptists recognized the opportunity and need to show compassion to these people, and in 1941 called for a re-evaluation of Canada's immigration policy, also mentioning the benefit Canada could derive from immigration. The same Social Service Board Report described Baptist participation with the Community Welfare Council of Ontario to help overcome distrust of foreign-born Canadians through cultural programmes.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ 1927 *Baptist Year Book*, 114-115.

¹³⁷ 1941 *Baptist Year Book*, 208-209.

OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING BCOQ SOCIAL CONCERN

Fundamentalism

I consider that the Fundamentalist element within the BCOQ, while influential for a time, was not truly representative of the Baptist mainstream. I come to this conclusion after considering that the main influences on T. T. Shields and those contacts which he maintained were not Canadians, but Americans. John Roach Straton, J. Frank Norris, and William Bell Riley, for example, were some of the prominent American Fundamentalists whom Shields invited to minister at Jarvis Street Baptist Church; they are representative of the majority of Shields' contacts. For the most part, the efforts of Shields and other Fundamentalists within the BCOQ represents a largely American incursion into the Canadian Baptist community. The Baptist reputation for doctrinal introspection and factionalism is, at least in Canada, in my opinion most undeserved. As I have illustrated, Baptist respect for social justice has historically been significant even if generally balanced by a desire to maintain doctrinal integrity.

Furthermore, even at the height of his influence, Shields and his supporters devoted much more energy to debate concerning doctrine than social service. Social service as a facet of church mission, as well as the social service work of the Convention, were largely ignored, especially by Shields. For example, in a 1922 article outlining the organizational structure of the BCOQ for the benefit of new Jarvis Street Baptist Church members, the Social Service Committee is not even mentioned.¹³⁸ By 1927, the fundamentalist element had removed itself entirely from the BCOQ and so played no further direct role in shaping the social agenda. In the years after its departure from the BCOQ, Jarvis Street Baptist Church under T. T. Shields was

¹³⁸*The Gospel Witness*, September 14, 1922.

known for its doctrinal rigidity but not social sensitivity. In an article for *Maclean's* in 1949, Gerald Anglin noted that

Concerned more with evangelism than social service, Jarvis Street Baptist today draws its congregation from all over the city and lives largely aloof from its surroundings. The same can be said for its pastor, although he has sounded off many times against the steadily increasing number of liquor outlets in the neighborhood.¹³⁹

In spite of this lack of action, there is some evidence that even fundamentalists did show a level of social concern. The fundamentalist preoccupation with evangelism was not haphazard, and their expression of their commitment to the welfare of individuals must be understood in its proper context. The expression differed from that of mainstream Baptists, but the theological basis and commitment were more similar than dissimilar. Fundamentalist retreat from Social Gospel methodology stemmed from ideological incompatibility. Most mainline Baptists would have differed virtually as much with many of the doctrinal commitments of denominations engaged in traditional Social Gospel work as much as fundamentalist Baptists did, but fundamentalist ideology additionally called for retreat and separation while mainstream Baptists allowed for maintaining cooperative ties. The fundamentalists, however, were not entirely unsympathetic to the aims of social service work, neither that performed by evangelicals in order to further evangelistic aims, nor even that intended to introduce elements of social moral reform. They simply believed that while social service work might ease the temporal situation of the poor, evangelism was the only means that would bring about social transformation.

However much Canadian fundamentalists may have disdained social gospel ideas, they understood the meaning of Christian charity and showed deep sympathy for the plight of the impoverished. T. T. Shields spoke for many conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists in Canada when he said that "no sort of moral reform can take the place of

¹³⁹Gerald Anglin, "The Battling Baptist," *Maclean's*, 15 June 1949, 50.

individual regeneration; but that certainly does not relieve us of the obligation to do what we can to further such reforms as make for righteousness."¹⁴⁰

Stagnation and Bureaucratization

At the fiftieth anniversary Convention meeting held at the Canadian National Exhibition grounds in Toronto in 1939, delegates authorized the Executive Committee to elect a General Secretary for the Convention pending securement of funds. This was despite the fact that the BCOQ had never had (nor apparently needed) one before and that the size of the Convention was no more than it was more than twenty-five years earlier. What had increased in that time was the amount of denominational machinery, and possibly the desire for prestige associated with the need of a General Secretary. Illustrative of the growing level of institutionalization was a significant increase in Convention bureaucracy at the end of the 1930's. For instance, the 1939 Convention acknowledged the appointment of the following committees during the previous year, in addition to the regular standing committees: Relation to Other Denominations Committee, Appointment of the General Secretary Committee, Baptist Brotherhood Committee, Stewardship Committee, Lord's Day Alliance in Canada Committee, Committee on Religious Education in the Public Schools, and the Joint Committee on Evangelization of Canadian Life. In addition, the previous year's Convention had appointed the Convention Enrollment Committee, the National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution, as well as the Committee on Aims and Objects.¹⁴¹ Most of these were formed to do work previously within the purview of the Social Service Board (which became the Board of Social Service and Evangelism in 1941). It is true that the magnitude of the social service agenda could justify

¹⁴⁰Wright, 172.

¹⁴¹1939 *Baptist Year Book*, 56-58.

greater expenditure of time and energy, but committee appointment seems to have been the primary means used to address issues.

More often, as in 1937, reports mentioned that Baptists were not able to do much to solve social problems. The 1943 report of the Board of Social Service and Evangelism stated that government groups were able to do more than Baptists could.¹⁴² This seems a far cry from the strident optimism of much earlier reports of Baptists whose size and influence had changed little during that period, especially considering that Baptists virtually always numbered among members of a larger lobby. The Baptists who composed this report seemed to have forgotten that Baptists were part of the group that help motivate government to begin to address social service issues in the first place. In Baptist documents, words increasingly took the place of practical effort.

As well, despite the rhetorical commitment to social service, the corresponding financial commitment did not materialize as social service spending remained minimal. As the budget allocation chart (Appendix 2) indicates, the only designation for social service work went to the committee itself, and this allocation was never more than one per cent of the total budget. It is true that much of the money spent on social service projects went through organizations not represented in the Convention book-keeping, but one would expect a practical commitment to social service to lead to a greater monetary commitment.

Moreover, if numerical statistics are any indication, the BCOQ was in significant decline, especially after the split of 1927 (see Appendix 1). Ironically, despite the reputation fundamentalists have acquired, Jarvis Street Baptist Church was not only the largest but also the

¹⁴²1942-43 *Baptist Year Book*, 167.

fastest-growing church in the Convention before it left, and I believe the steady decline in membership after 1925 contributed to the disparity between the rhetoric of the Convention meetings and the reality of church emphases. Baptists were beginning to be concerned about their own denominational survival more than social service work elsewhere. Social concern the abstract term displaced social service. Even Walmer Road Baptist Church's Memorial Institute was turned over to the Home Mission Board;¹⁴³ although this building was later used for a new Polish Baptist congregation, I consider the abdication of the ministry by the Walmer Road congregation very telling.

Cooperation and Church Union

With the optimism of the early twentieth century came the often critical but sometimes uncritical examination of all aspects of church doctrine and organization. Denominations who came to realize the magnitude of Church mission looked with fresh perspective at the obstacles to cooperation and found them much less significant than previously imagined. As a result, cooperative ventures such as the Social Service Council of Canada formed around the common desire to effect social change irrespective of sectarian differences. Baptists were among the groups who realized that the call to biblical call to the Church to reach a needy world was incompatible with an isolationist stance, so they were relatively quick to respond to the opportunity to work with Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Congregationalists to claim their nation for Christ. In addition to being involved in the early development of the Social Service Council, Baptists were active in the Canadian National Missionary Congress which took place in 1909. Prominent BCOQ leaders J. N. Shenstone (for whom Shenstone Memorial Baptist

¹⁴³ 1942-43 *Baptist Year Book*, 84.

Church in Brantford is named), Thomas Urquhart, and John MacNeill (long-time pastor and McMaster University professor) were among the keynote speakers who help the congress address the question "Will Canada evangelize her share of the world?"¹⁴⁴ This was typical of Baptist cooperation in regional and national organizational efforts.

For some church leaders – Baptists included – cooperation was not enough, however. Denominationalism was a relic of former religious ignorance which was to be discarded as incompatible with the spirit of optimism which characterized the new enlightenment. Robert Wright notes that "[the] urge to cooperation, if not to full-blown ecumenism, had been a characteristic of Canadian Protestantism practically since Consideration", adding that "[even] the Baptists and that Disciples of Christ experimented with cooperative ventures."¹⁴⁵

Denominationalism was widely considered outside Baptist circles to be inefficient and even contrary to the will of God. Within Baptist circles, though, although there was diversity of opinion, the consensus was consistently in favour of the preservation of a distinct Baptist denomination. All Christian churches were identical in mission (i.e., all were called to evangelism and social service), but not all churches were not identical in doctrinal and ecclesiological conviction. Baptists were unwilling to soften their stance on tenets such as believer's baptism by immersion, regenerate church membership, and separation of Church and State, and so after some consideration found organic union impossible. A. L. McCrimmon, chancellor of McMaster University, submitted a report on the subject to the 1921 Convention,

¹⁴⁴*Canada's Missionary Congress: Addresses delivered at the Canadian National Missionary Congress, held in Toronto, March 31 to April 4, 1909, with reports of committees* (Toronto: Canadian Council Laymen's Missionary Movement, 1909), v.

¹⁴⁵Wright, 150.

but it led nowhere. At the 1944 Convention, the Executive Committee reported that “When we use the term ‘Inter-Church Co-operation’ we have no thought of Church Union as a part of its content.”¹⁴⁶

Authors such as Robert Wright have attributed this to the influence of fundamentalism within the BCOQ, and he correctly notes that “[fundamentalists] distinguished themselves, ... above all, by their militant refusal to compromise with modernism.”¹⁴⁷ Closer examination of Baptist records, however, shows that resistance to union remained long after the most vocal fundamentalists had quit the Convention and persisted even as the BCOQ was establishing closer relations with other Canadian Baptist bodies. The minutes of one of the first meetings, in 1945, of the Council of the new Baptist Federation of Canada (BFC), a quasi-union of Canadian Baptists, record that the BFC was receiving overtures from the Church of England and United Church of Canada regarding “united worship and action.” The BFC was interested in cooperation but not organic union; this led to preparation of a statement of the Baptist position.¹⁴⁸ Baptist distinctiveness did not reflect fundamentalist obstinacy but rather doctrinal consistency. Fundamentalism has historically led to an unwillingness to cooperate as the BCOQ did.

CONCLUSIONS

It seems that Baptists tried to walk a fine line concerning social service which some at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum neither appreciated nor affirmed. For those more radical, especially in their political leanings, the Baptist social agenda will seem unambitious,

¹⁴⁶1943-44 *Baptist Year Book*, 56.

¹⁴⁷Wright, 158.

¹⁴⁸Minutes of the Council of the Baptist Federation of Canada, held at the Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, Toronto, Ontario, November 21-23, 1945. From the Canadian Baptist Archives, Hamilton, Ontario.

even lethargic. Baptists were certainly not innovators in creating and carrying out their programme, nor did they cry out as loudly over economic and political injustice. Baptists did play a role in the development of significant social legislation and mounted some meaningful practical projects (such as the Memorial Institute) on the local and regional level, but much of the Baptist energy expended seemed to take the form of oratory which now seems little more than sabre-rattling. This appears true particularly during the late 1930's and early 1940's, and even some Baptist leaders seemed to recognize it. The following excerpt from the 1931 State of Religion report evaluates the scene with surprising candour.

And to some it seems an unhealthy sign that we as a body not alive enough to our duties in the realm of social justice. And individuals we make large contributions of time and money, but as a Convention we confine ourselves too easily to high-sounding resolutions which the genius of our organization keeps from being binding upon the churches.¹⁴⁹

Even within the BCOQ there were those who were dissatisfied with the denomination's progress in advancing social issues. This selection also highlights the effect which Baptist polity had on corporate endeavours. Baptist congregational autonomy and individual liberty may have freed individuals to take a greater personal interest in social service, but they also exaggerated the appearance of Baptist fractiousness by giving greater opportunity for voicing and acting out dissent than in most other denominations. In addition, this local and regional independence hampered efforts to unite Baptists nationally, which diminished their influence as a lobby. It would not be at all unfair to conclude that Baptist social service did not live up to its potential.

On the other hand, it would be highly unfair to regard Baptists as a group devoid of social vision. The sampling of issues tackled by Convention delegates indicates that their social

¹⁴⁹ 1931 *Baptist Year Book*, 71.

vision was well-developed, and while the response to problematic questions was not as vigorous as some might hope, it was moderated by loyalty to dearly-held Baptist distinctives and a desire to maintain a church mission unsullied by human ambition or secondary ideology. Such distractions would have necessarily harmed evangelistic efforts which formed the heart of Baptist cooperative purpose. Socially sensitive Baptist leaders knew that evangelism and social service must work hand in hand to advance the Kingdom of God, but also believed that the ultimate Baptist allegiance was to a spiritual cause, one which transcended ethnicity and governments and political ideology. They struggled to balance the tension between being in the world and not of this world, a struggle which sometimes proved as frustrating as rewarding.

There is the failure of religion to attack and solve the social problems of the time, wither through co-operative effort, or, more seriously, the impact of the lives of it members. While we feel helpless in the face of conditions revealed everywhere by 'probes,' we cannot also help but feel that such helplessness is a fault in our machinery. Allied with that problem, though perhaps not so obviously, is the one of evangelistic efforts, a perpetual difficulty. Perhaps one key can help both problems, in that these two have been divorced when they ought to have been securely and permanently married. Evangelistic efforts **MUST** result in the betterment of social conditions through regenerated lives, and social service that does not originate from spiritual lives will be largely valueless. We have no right to tolerate any longer the evangelistically inclined who say "hands off business," nor the socially minded who have no place for the Gospel of Christ.¹⁵⁰

In each area of life, the subject to which Baptists incessantly returned was evangelism, because it held the key to the personal moral regeneration on which any positive, lasting social reconstruction had to be based. Neither sociology nor socialism had the power to change lives so.

¹⁵⁰ *1934 Baptist Year Book*, 81-82.

Appendix 1

Summary of Numerical Statistics for the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1900-1945¹⁵¹

Year	Number of Churches	Number of Missions	Membership, Present Total	Increases			Decreases			Sunday School Statistics			
				Baptisms	Letter	Restoration Experience	Death	Letter	Erasure or Exclusion	Number of Schools	Scholars Enrolled	Average Attendance	Scholars, Members of Church
1900	454	n/a	42515	2159	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	34570	24144	6487
1905	453	n/a	46000	2388	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	410	36399	25912	8180
1910	507	110	52150	2583	2529	459	568	2502	1667	490	45036	31501	11916
1915	526	75	57883	2752	2137	591	581	2030	1445	495	51455	35407	10333
1920	507	58	61500	2267	2019	483	669	1906	1602	477	45314	29891	8847
1925	502	56	62234	3333	1769	621	615	1885	1349	501	55953	38556	11649
1930	430	52	56386	1614	1365	435	585	1296	967	426	44302	26803	10583
1935	432	57	56922	1827	846	383	578	843	1150	442	49031	32809	14039
1940	427	56	55816	1536	826	312	578	792	920	435	43966	28927	12280
1945	416	44	52175	1541	961	314	637	892	758	424	28789	19571	n/a

¹⁵¹Statistics compiled from the indicated years of the *Baptist Year Book*.

Appendix 2
Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec Budget Assignment of Undesignated Receipts⁺

	1900	1905	1910	1915	1920 [^]	1925	1930	1935	1940	1945
Foreign Missions	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$100,000	\$120,000	32%	32%	31%	31%
Home Missions	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$100,000	\$82,000	32%	32%	31%	31%
Western Missions	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$30,000	\$28,000	10%	10%	9.5%	9.5%
Religious Education (Sunday Schools)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$7,000	\$8,000	3%	3%	4%	4.5%
Church Edifice	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$3,000	\$4,000	1%	1%	1%	1%
Superannuation Fund	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$7,000	\$6,000	2%	2%	4%	4%
Social Service	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$1,000	\$2,000	1%	1%	1%	1%
Grande Ligne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$23,000	\$25,000	8%	8%	7%	6.5%
<i>Canadian Baptist</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a			✱	✱	1.5%	1.5%
Christian Education (Colleges)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$23,000	\$25,000	11%	11%	10%*	10%*
TOTAL BUDGET	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$225,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$150,000	\$120,000	\$150,000

NOTES:

According to records, designated fund contributions generally follow the assignments for their years.

+ Budget amounts are not available before 1920; denominational budgets were apparently not made public.

[^] These amounts are from the 1918 yearbook; the amounts were unchanged from then.

• Christian Education monies marked with an asterisk are designated entirely for McMaster.

✱ The *Canadian Baptist* typically received a fixed yearly subsidy of about \$1500 during this period.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Budget statistics taken from the editions of the *Baptist Year Book* for the years indicated.

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