

GEORGE BRYCE,  
MANITOBA SCIENTIST, CHURCHMAN AND HISTORIAN  
1844 - 1931

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of History

by

Catherine Logan Macdonald  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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## ABSTRACT

Rev. George Bryce (1844-1931), Presbyterian educator, churchman, scientist and historian, came to Winnipeg to found Manitoba College in 1871. As a member of the elite group of businessmen and professionals who came to dominate Manitoba society after 1870, he participated in the creation of many of the basic social and cultural institutions of the Province. Using his history books, pamphlets, sermons and papers, this thesis analyzes his attitudes, mores and convictions in an attempt to reconstruct his worldview. Since this was a worldview shared with others of his class, this study is intended to be a contribution to the social history of the Winnipeg elite, 1871 - 1920.

Bryce's personality was characterized by a pragmatism which imposed a certain order on his values. Progress, both material and spiritual, was the ultimate value. The order and stability which were the necessary preconditions of progress could only be assured by a strong Protestant church, a strong public school, British values and institutions. Science and technology were seen by him as the best tools for speedy advancement. This belief gave him a powerful incentive to set aside his religious qualms with regard to the Darwinian theories and the new science.

British values and British people as the carriers of those values were the heroes of Bryce's history. The Hudson's Bay Company was cast in the role of guardian of British interests, law, order and morality in opposition to the moral and social anarchy of the fur-trade life. Later in his life, Bryce would champion British imperialist sentiment as the touchstone of a Canadian identity.

"AND THERE WERE GIANTS IN THOSE DAYS."

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This is the man whom you all know to be  
The father of the University,  
A man in every faculty so keen  
That he's the very "pulse of the machine."  
Politician, soldier, educator  
And like the earth, he's largest at th' equator.  
Of his great deeds the half hath not been told  
How he kept the Fenians back in the brave days  
of old.

Full well we laugh with counterfeited glee  
At all his jokes (for he hath two or three).  
Him all the students love and praise and bless,  
And pray his shadow never may grow less.

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My co-worker, Margaret McPherson, typed drafts for most of the ensuing chapters and gave valuable editorial advice. I could not have done without her typing skills or her friendship during the past two years. -

My husband has become a surprisingly cheerful expert on the care and feeding of the thesis writer. While professing firm confidence in my skills, he wisely refused to read any drafts until the final copy. His belief in my ability has given me the confidence to complete this project. For this and many other things, I am deeply grateful.

## PREFACE

Recent developments in the historical discipline have made historians more conscious of methodological concerns than ever before. Pirating concepts, frameworks and research methods from the social sciences has become an accepted parlour game. In approaching the mind of George Bryce, I have drawn on a diverse assortment of concepts from the sociology of knowledge, literary criticism and social theory. This background reading is not always explicit in the text and, therefore, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge some intellectual debts.

For reasons outlined in Chapter one, the thought of George Bryce does not lend itself to the traditional methodology of the history of ideas. An intellectual history of a non-intellectual is as useless as it is paradoxical. For this reason I turned to the sociology of knowledge whose main and, indeed, only undisputed insight is that consciousness is, in some way or in some degree, determined by the social milieu.

My approach to this problem has been greatly influenced by the work of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, notably their The Social Construction of Reality.<sup>1</sup> According to Berger and Luckmann, everything that passes for knowledge in society is the legitimate province of the sociology of knowledge, especially the "taken for granted" thought of the man in the street.

This is a particularly fruitful approach to Canadian intellectual history since Canada has produced few intellectuals of international calibre. Canadian intellectual history, if it is to be done at all, must concentrate on the crucial conjunction of consciousness and social context. This is the kind of intellectual history advocated by Brian McKillop in his article, "Nationalism, Identity and Canadian Intellectual History".<sup>2</sup> McKillop encourages would be intellectual historians to stop bemoaning the limits placed on their subject matter by the colonial mentality and to devote themselves to an analysis of the everyday mental framework of Canadians. It is only in this way that real insights about that elusive bug-bear, the Canadian identity (or identities), can be gained.

I have tried to take his advice as well as that of S.R. Mealing in his 1965 article, "The Concept of Social Class and the Interpretation of Canadian History".<sup>3</sup> Here Mealing advances a plausible explanation for the neglect, on the part of Canadian historians, of class as a conceptual tool, and a hope that his colleagues would, while ignoring the extremes of social determinism, integrate class as a factor in their analysis.

In this spirit, I have assumed Bryce's middle-class status to be of fundamental importance in analyzing his worldview. Following Berger and Luckmann, I have proceeded from the premise that most of Bryce's social attitudes had the covert purpose of legitimating the status quo and, by extension, his own position in the status quo.

## CHAPTER I

## BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

Judged by the quality of his historical writing, modern scholars have been amply justified in their neglect of Rev. George Bryce. Yet his nine full-length books and over forty-five pamphlets as well as his sermon manuscripts afford a unique insight into a set of values, attitudes and mores that he shared with a whole generation of canny angloceltic protestant entrepreneurs in the late nineteenth-century Canadian West. These largely Ontario-born businessmen dreamt of Winnipeg as the hub of a vast industrial and agricultural hinterland. Beginning in 1870, they very quickly gained a dominant position in Manitoba in terms of economic opportunity, political power and cultural influence.

Ministers along with other professional groups were very much a part of this elite. Although there were traditional Presbyterian strictures forbidding ministers to engage openly in commerce, Bryce and others of his clerical brethren took part in discreet real estate investments and other financial schemes to supplement their often meagre salaries. Their close ties to businessmen through church, fraternal associations, cultural and philanthropic work and friendships are easy to document. That Bryce and other

ministers worked so well with the commercial men through all these associations is evidence of the shared nature of their vision of the future and of the kind of society that ought to be created in the West.

Although some scholarly work has been done, notably by Alan Artibise<sup>1</sup>, to identify this elite and document its hegemony of Winnipeg society in the post 1870 period, not much attention has been paid to the content of their view of the world. The values, social attitudes and mores which informed their daily lives, taken together, provided the rationale for their behaviour. The stolid virtues of the Ontario farm, the belief in progress through technology, and the conviction that they knew what was best for society, Bryce and his colleagues brought with them from Old Canada. They were soon in a position to press western Canadian society into the mold of these values.

This thesis represents, through an analysis of the worldview of George Bryce, a contribution to the social history of the Winnipeg elite of the period 1871-1920. It will document not only the sources and interrelationships of his ideas, but the way in which these ideas found expression in his work as a science teacher and promoter, churchman, and, especially, as a historian of the western region. It is understood that Bryce's ideas and his actions formed a closely related whole from which neither part should be artificially abstracted.

Born 22 April 1844 on a farm near the village of Mount Pleasant in Brant County, Ontario, George Bryce was the eldest of four sons. His Scottish parents, George and Catherine Bryce, had come to Ontario from Dunblane, Perthshire in 1843. Little is known about Bryce's parental home. His father must have been well regarded in the County, having been appointed Justice of the Peace. It would appear that the family was neither desperately poor nor comfortably prosperous.

His parents had at least an elementary education and instilled in their sons a love of learning that was to pay off in their future lives. Their household was supplied with a sober array of books on Scottish theology, travel, Christian biography, and english literature. When the time came, money was found to send George and his younger brother Peter to university; George in Arts and Theology and Peter in Medicine. Alec later inherited the family farm and Robert became a partner in a Winnipeg dry goods firm.

After spending his early years in local schools and the Brantford High School, Bryce entered University College of the University of Toronto in 1863. A high achiever throughout his school career, he was the winner of numerous medals, prizes and scholarships, including the university silver medal in Natural Science. He was elected President of the College Metaphysical Society and President of the College Table. He was also secretary of the Natural Science Club

and a keen football player. In 1867 he graduated with a B.A. and in 1868 with an M.A. In 1868 he spent a term as a teacher and school inspector in Scotland, Ontario.

It was during his university career that he would experience his only taste of military action. In 1866, as a member of the Queen's Own Rifles, the militia regiment of the University of Toronto, Bryce was present at the Fenian raid at Ridgeway. As ensign of the regiment, he was responsible for compiling the list of wounded and dead. This raid was a miserable comedy of errors in which the Canadian military staff parlayed lack of preparedness and errors of judgement into a complete retreat at the hands of the Fenians.

One might have expected a veteran of this skirmish to view it with a jaundiced eye. It is, perhaps, a measure of Bryce's romantic nature that he would relate the event to his students, painting it in such stirring martial colours that the students could have been forgiven for assuming it to have been a resounding Canadian victory. He had a more candid view of the raid, as he showed by fictionalizing it in his novel, but he grew more nostalgic about it as the years passed.

Having decided on the Presbyterian ministry as his vocation, he entered Knox College in 1869. He continued to impress as a student, taking five out of the six prizes open to him in the final year. One of his student mission fields

was the town of West Gwillembury, where he met the descendants of those Selkirk settlers who had left the Red River Colony in 1814. It was a prophetic meeting for his subsequent historical interests.

On his graduation, he was sent to be assistant minister at Chalmers Church, Quebec City. He had hardly arrived when a directive came from the General Assembly in August of 1871 that he was to go to Winnipeg to found a college among the settlers at Kildonan.

For all his attainments, he had not been the first choice of the Assembly. Rev. John Thompson, an older more experienced man had first been approached.<sup>2</sup> Thompson declined the appointment leaving the Assembly to turn to Bryce. At just 27 years of age, Bryce was a surprising second choice. However, it was probably felt that he could sustain the tough physical demands of starting and administering a college, teaching, and taking part in home missions ministry.

The Assembly's decision to found a college in Manitoba at this time is equally surprising. The Canada Presbyterian Church was not noted for bold initiatives in outreach. It is true that Rev. John Black and a delegation of Presbyterian settlers had pushed hard for this scheme at the Assembly and had done so for several years prior to 1871. Black, who had arrived at Red River in 1851 had the traditional Presbyterian conviction that education, both

spiritual and secular, was the responsibility of the churches. One of his first acts was to set up a primary school at Kildonan where the children of Presbyterian settlers, who had hitherto attended the Anglican schools, would obtain the basics of elementary education as well as instruction in the Presbyterian faith.

By the 1860s it became obvious that secondary education was a necessity. On application to the General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church, David Whimster was sent to teach preparatory courses. In 1869, with change in the air and contact with the outside world growing, Black began to solicit support for a college in Manitoba. He was aware of the future need to prepare men for the professions and wanted Presbyterians to be in the forefront of post-secondary education. The fact that the Anglican College of St. John's had been involved in higher education, albeit fitfully, since 1849 aroused Black's denominational jealousy.

Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine John Black, even backed by the wealthiest settlers of Kildonan, having much influence at the General Assembly when it came time to contemplate the expense of raising a college among a sparse population with dubious prospects for growth. It is possible that the Canada Presbyterian Church, whose numbers had a strongly marked tendency to support the liberal party, had been swayed by the expansionist rhetoric of George Brown's Globe. It is, perhaps, also true that the college

Bryce was sent out to found was more in the nature of a high school with the equivalent of two years of university study tacked on. This would explain why the relatively callow Bryce could be seen as an acceptable candidate to head such a school. It is regrettable that the earliest records of the College have been lost and can not, therefore, shed any light on the intentions of the founders.

The Manitoba that Bryce found in 1871 was picturesque enough to suit even his romantic temperament. It was a society in transition from fur-trade economy to agricultural hinterland. The often fractious elements that had comprised that older society--english and french Métis, Kildonan settlers, Hudson's Bay Company officers and employees--still retained their factional character though they were being tugged and pulled by the increasing number of Ontario-born and British settlers. The gradual erosion of these factions, with their delicate alliances and fragile coalitions, took place through the 1870's. As Gerald Friesen has rightly pointed out, "The era of the fur trade and cart trail and buffalo hunt did not end as suddenly as the Riel Provisional Government because the habits of a half-century changed very slowly."<sup>3</sup>

As he went about the difficult task of finding classroom space, recruiting students, and finding text-books in the late fall of 1871, Bryce became fascinated by the vestiges of this culture. He spent the little spare time

available to him talking to old settlers like Andrew McDermot and ingratiating himself with the Hudson's Bay Company officers. The St. Andrew's Society was founded shortly after his arrival and he became an enthusiastic member. This Society allowed him to meet with both the older Scottish settlers and with fellow Ontario-born honorary Scots like J.F. Bain. Information gleaned from conversations during these early years provided much background material for his later histories.

The next thirteen years of his life afforded little time for the writing of history. College administration, teaching English literature and natural science, preaching on Sundays, convening the Presbytery Home Missions Committee, helping to set up the Winnipeg school system, and participating in the founding of the University of Manitoba and the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba took up all his time. The catalogue of his activities during this period is all the more remarkable in that much of his time was spent outside the Province on fund raising expeditions on behalf of the College. As if this were not enough, he somehow found time to read externally for a Bachelor's degree in Law at the University of Toronto which he obtained in 1878. Although he never joined the Manitoba Bar, he was able to use his legal knowledge to good advantage as financial agent for the College and the Home Missions Committee. On at least one occasion, as well, he

acted as proxy in the Manitoba real estate transactions of two eastern speculators, Martin Heaton and William G. MacWilliams.<sup>4</sup>

The first test of his authority as head of the College came two years after his arrival. Bryce had become convinced that the village of Winnipeg would be the centre of population and hence the best place for the College to be located. In this he was vehemently opposed by John Black. In a desperate attempt to keep the College at Kildonan, Black made a representation to the General Assembly in June 1873. In response a committee was struck to investigate the situation. To Black's regret, the committee agreed that Winnipeg was the most advantageous location for the College. Bryce tried his best to smooth ruffled feelings as he supervised the relocation of the College from its stone building in Kildonan to a large house on the corner of Main and Henry streets in Winnipeg.

He regretted the rift between himself and Black initiated by this dispute. Black was in late middle age by this time and Bryce perceived him to be out of touch with the times. It was certainly true that Black's sympathies rested with the old order of things. The brash young men from Ontario had cities, railroads, and the wage economy and agricultural expansion on their minds. Black, who had measured time by the position of the sun and the change of seasons, whose mixed-blood wife had come from one of the

best families in the settlement, recoiled from this headlong rush after progress. The College, he thought, should remain a small denominational institution physically as well as spiritually close by the Kildonan church.

His loss of this struggle was significant. It indicated that churchly power had transferred from Black to Bryce and the younger ministers of the Presbytery. Henceforth the Church and the College would move away from the Red River patterns and affiliations and towards the urban ideal of the newcomers.

After its removal to Winnipeg, Manitoba College's student population continued to grow. The cost of running the College kept pace. In 1872, the Synod of the Church of Scotland in Canada sent Rev. Thomas Hart, then teaching classics at Queen's University, to assist Bryce. The small community of Presbyterians in Manitoba found it difficult to support two full-time professors, the cost of building maintenance, and the other expenses involved in keeping a small college financially solvent in an economy which necessitated a high cost of living. The result was that Bryce was to expend more effort in fund-raising in eastern Canada and in Britain. Even at that, the lion's share of College operating expenses was borne by the General Assembly.

The buoyant economy of the 1880-1882 period encouraged Bryce to contract for the erection of a commodious new building for the College. This turned out to be premature

when the economy went into a depression, the looked for subscription money did not materialize, and the building cost came in at one-third more than originally planned. No doubt the worry arising from this situation contributed to Bryce's break-down in health of 1881-1882.

Perhaps the tenuousness of the College finances contributed to Bryce's decision to build support for a provincial university. Except for tax exemptions, St. John's, Manitoba and St. Boniface Colleges were without government assistance. Having experienced the system of a provincial university in action at the University of Toronto, Bryce felt that the Provincial Government should have a role in post-secondary educational development. He and Rev. James Robertson, also a University of Toronto graduate, spoke in favour of a provincial university on the University of Toronto model as early as 1875.

Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Morris was strongly in favour of the notion and it was his firm sponsorship which resulted in the adoption of legislation to create the University of Manitoba in 1877. The way had not been completely smooth. Morris's assurances to Archbishop Taché that the University Council was intended to be a true forum for all shades of opinion not an avenue for the protestant colleges to override the wishes of St. Boniface did little to quiet Taché's apprehension. Nonetheless, he agreed to the plan, as did Bishop Robert Machray of St. John's, after guarantees

that the granting of theological degrees would be the domain of the colleges and that each college would retain absolute autonomy.

Bryce felt that post-secondary education was the legitimate province of the churches provided there was this kind of provision for the mediation of the state. His views on church involvement in the public school system were quite different. Almost from his arrival in the Province, Bryce was involved in the controversial evolution of the public school system. He was the first inspector of Winnipeg schools starting in 1877 as well as trustee of the north ward in the same year. An early advocate of the creation of a Normal School, he was a long-time examiner in the certificate examinations. In the late 1870s he was a member of the Winnipeg School Board and was on the Provincial Advisory Board for ten years starting in the late 1880s. In 1898, when the finer points of the school legislation were being worked out and the catholic schools in Winnipeg were perceived to be tardy in conforming with the standards required, Bryce acted as a virtual secret agent for Laurier and Sifton. He kept them informed about the negotiations over such things as the certificate standards for french-speaking teachers, the question of whether teachers in orders would be allowed to wear ecclesiastical garb in the classroom, and the choice of text-books for french-speaking schools. These matters were considered so controversial

that Bryce and Sifton communicated by telegram in cipher.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately the telegrapher often garbled the code, lending a comic opera aspect to the proceedings.

Bryce's participation in public school issues was undergirded by his firm convictions about the nature of education. Education, he believed, should be as widely available to all sectors, classes and geographic areas as possible. As he said in 1897, "If the remarkable school discussions of the last seven years have done nothing else, they have led the people to regard education of the young as the primary necessity in a progressive Province."<sup>6</sup> This system should be unified, preferably english-speaking, non-sectarian and subject to control by the government through the Department of Education. He was to push hard for just such a system of education as found in the School Act of 1890.

He opposed the dual system of education that had obtained in the Province since 1870 because he felt that it was inefficient and tended to promote divisions in society. According to Bryce, the catholic schools had no standards for teacher education, were poorly inspected, used questionable text books and devoted time to religious instruction that would have been better used for secular learning. No doubt his concern for efficiency was genuine but he showed an automatic suspicion of french catholic motives and strategy which revealed no little measure of traditional

Presbyterian anti-catholicism.

There was a definite distinction in his mind between religious exercises and religious instruction. The latter, he believed, was the responsibility of the church and should have no place in the public school. Religious exercises, as sanctioned by the Schools Advisory Board of which he was a member in 1890, consisted of a list of approved scriptural passages, a short form of prayer, and the Lord's Prayer. To Bryce, these exercises were admirably non-sectarian in character and provided the right tone for public schools: non-denominational but not "Godless". They were, moreover, held entirely at the option of the trustees and no pupil was compelled to attend them.

Archbishop Taché objected that when protestants said they wanted non-sectarian schools they really meant schools run according to protestant ideas of education. He rightly pointed out that the non-sectarian religious exercises were protestant in character. Bryce felt this to be an unfortunate quibble on the part of a retrogressive minority. He had come to feel that the public school must do more than give children basic skills. It must be the prime agent of "Canadianization." At the same time, there was no doubt in his mind that "Canadian" meant British values, British parliamentary tradition, and the english language. It was unity, not pluralism that was required to build Canada.

Although an ardent liberal, Bryce was wary and dis-

appointed at the character of the Laurier-Greenway compromise. As a pragmatist, he realized its political necessity. Nevertheless, the "national" character of the public school system was seriously weakened in his eyes. The 1897 amendment to the Act provided for religious instruction by a clergyman of any denomination to pupils of that faith for the last half hour of the school day. It also provided for the hiring of catholic teachers in schools where the number of catholic children merited it and for bilingual instruction in a school where a proportion of the pupils spoke french or any language other than english. Bryce doubted that these provisions would allow the public school system to instill those values he thought were necessary with a population becoming more diverse with each passing year.

The Presbyterian Church had made its own response to the increasing population of the North West. The General Assembly had designated Manitoba a Presbytery in 1874. The coming of the railroad connection to St. Paul in 1879 and the promise of the completion of the C.P.R. seemed to give the Assembly more confidence in the viability of settlement in the North West. In 1884, the Presbytery was raised to Synod status, an acknowledgement that the North West had passed through the formative stage and would now participate in the affairs of the Church as an equal partner with other synods.

Significant changes were also being made in Manitoba

College. Theological instruction on a limited basis had been carried on at the College since 1875 but the Assembly had refused to allow the College to develop a full theological degree program. In 1883, however, the financial crisis over the new building caused a re-evaluation of the entire situation of Manitoba College at the General Assembly. A committee was struck to look into the matter and issue a report. This report recommended that Manitoba be raised to full theological college status and that a Principal and Professor of Theology be appointed. The Assembly decided to implement the report and to choose its current Moderator, Rev. John Mark King, to be the first Principal of Manitoba College and Professor of Theology.

This was a significant event in Bryce's life. He had been head of the College since 1871 and had campaigned vigorously for theological training. Naturally, he had hoped that the Assembly would choose him as Principal. Unfortunately, the financial crisis that had spawned the report was at least partially Bryce's fault; a fact known to the committee if not to the Assembly at large. King's scholarly gifts were widely acknowledged but finance and administration were said to be his long suit.

For Bryce, it was the end of an era. To give up the reins of power, even to an older and vastly respected man, must have been very painful for him. Although they had known one another since Bryce had attended King's bible

study classes as a student, his relations with King were often strained. The older man thought Bryce had altogether too many outside interests and tended to neglect his College work. Bryce was only forty in 1884, but although he would yet hold many offices including the Moderatorship of the General Assembly, he turned his attention increasingly to activities outside the College.

After writing a series of short articles for church periodicals, Bryce published his first full-length book in 1882. Manitoba, Its Infancy, Growth and Present Condition<sup>7</sup> had taken shape during the winter of 1881-82 while Bryce was regaining his health in Britain. It was a book dedicated to the bright future of Manitoba--so much so that the last chapter was devoted to information required by prospective immigrants. The themes that would be elaborated in his later books made their first appearance here: the sterling qualities of the misunderstood Selkirk, the ruthless conniving of the North West Company, the fairness of the Hudson's Bay Company, the adventure and romance of the fur-trade.

This first book was typical of his published work. It was hurried unceremoniously into print with typographical errors and numerous errors of fact intact. Although his stated aim was to make history picturesque, his writing style was ponderous and he seemed unable to communicate his fascination with the past. Many of his later books were

reworkings, with few additions, of material already covered in previous volumes. He took some care with The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company<sup>8</sup>, published in 1900. With justice, he considered it his best book. A Short History of the Canadian People<sup>9</sup> was his contribution to the nation building theme and seems to have been aimed at the school book market.

Bryce believed, with all the steadfastness of his optimistic being, that the Scottish people were a superior folk whose personal qualities had been the main factor in the successful conquering of the North West for Canada. In the second volume of The Scotsman in Canada<sup>10</sup>, he was able to indulge himself in an examination of Scottish contributions to western Canada. His naive faith in the Scottish myth did nothing to improve the quality of the book. Without a critical examination of the reasons for the success of the Scot in Canada, the book became simply a tiresome and shallow catalogue of men and accomplishments. It was a distinct contrast to the first volume of the series, written by the poet Wilfred Campbell, which dealt with the Scottish contribution to eastern Canada. Campbell's literary gifts and his sardonic skepticism with regard to the myth of Scottish superiority produced a much more readable book than Bryce's. Campbell may well have had his co-author in mind when he said, "...no people has been dealt with so often, in so childish, so shallow, and so claptrap a manner as has

Scotland at the hands of orators and writers innumerable throughout the world."<sup>11</sup>

It is not difficult to make an assessment of Bryce's literary output by the standards of twentieth-century historiography. At his best, he was capable of arousing some feeling about the events he described. At his worst he was ponderous and even incomprehensible.

Unfortunately, he was more often at his worst than at his best. His intentions in writing history were essentially literary. "To make history picturesque must be the aim of the modern historian," he said in a circular for his Short History of the Canadian People, "The time has gone by when mere compilation of facts, however accurate, and collections of undigested material will be taken as history. History must be a picture of the working out of human life under conditions of infinite variety and complexity."<sup>12</sup> In short, Bryce was involved in investing the past with meaning, a meaning that could be felt with the emotions as well as the intellect. It is this intention in his historical work, however inadequately it was carried through, that merits attention.

The other intellectual love of Bryce's life was natural science. Indeed, even in the age before specialization, his range of scientific interests was notable: ethnology, geology, botany, zoology, chemistry, forestry, agriculture, and archaeology. As in Church and educational affairs,

Bryce was nothing if not enthusiastic. He promoted the interests of science just as he did the Presbyterian faith and the public school system and was instrumental in persuading the British Association for the Advancement of Science to meet in Winnipeg in 1909.

The Darwinian theories were still hotly contended in Canada during the 1880's. Convinced that science and technology were essential to Canada's advancement, Bryce satisfied himself that these theories did not affect the basis of his religious faith. He was unsure of the moral implications of the edict of survival of the fittest but thought that natural selection was a plausible theory for the evolution of the species. As first Chairman and virtual creator of the Science Faculty at the University of Manitoba, he fought to have the curriculum modernized along with the equipment and facilities.

Bryce's interest in ethnology, his belief in natural selection, combined with popular notions of racial stereotypes had an interesting conjunction in his mind. He believed that races could be characterized not only by their physical features, but also by their qualities of temperament or personality. Race or ethnicity--concepts used interchangeably by Bryce--marked a person indelibly and placed certain limitations on his achievements in life. A person could overcome this racial imprinting, but only with great difficulty.

It is not surprising to find that his historical works abound with ethnic stereotypes that reflect this determinism: the charming but unreliable Métis, the canny hard-working Scot, the priest-ridden French Canadian, and the bumptious American. His novel, "The Great Camerons; A Tale of Fort Garry" began with the line, "Blood will tell."<sup>13</sup>

In view of his remarkable literary output and his personal consciousness of the momentousness of the events witnessed during his lifetime, it is surprising that Bryce left no autobiography. An attempt to publish a posthumous biography at the urging of his brother, Dr. Peter Bryce, floundered in the early 1930s. Candid assessments of Bryce as a person are few. The official tributes speak of him as being resourceful, genial, indefatigable, irrespessible, undaunted and uncomplaining.

In person he was of medium height and wiry frame. Bald by his late twenties, he wore a short, well-trimmed silver beard throughout his life. His most noteworthy physical characteristic appears to have been his walk which was described as bouncy or jaunty.

He liked to think of himself as calm, moderate and rational. Yet James Robertson is known to have said that Bryce's strident expression of his opinions often made him difficult to deal with. He acknowledged, himself, a wide streak of Scottish stubbornness in his make-up. There is no doubt that, behind the jaunty exterior, Bryce could be some-

what aloof. He lacked the warmth and benign kindness so often remarked on in his colleague, Prof. Thomas Hart. In spite of this the students liked him well enough to publish a cartoon and poem satirizing his foibles in the College Journal in 1904.<sup>14</sup>

Though his remaining papers give evidence of many acquaintances and professional associates, there seem to have been few close friends. He was fond of his family and took his position as eldest brother very seriously. At one point, he wrote directly to Laurier to secure a job for his brother Peter in the civil service. This kind of brashness and his well developed sense of his own importance made him a great many enemies during his life.

His companionable relationship with his wife may have made up, in part, for the lack of close friends. Marion Samuel Bryce was born in Kirkliston, Scotland, 19 February 1839, the daughter of a prosperous farmer. Following a private education, she emigrated to Toronto to become Head Mistress of Mrs. Birnie's Ladies School. It was there that she and Bryce were married in 1872. They had only one child, George Norman Bryce, who died in 1873 shortly after birth. Following the death of her son Mrs. Bryce became no less active in the world than her husband. She took a leading part in the development of charitable institutions in Winnipeg, having been on the boards of the General Hospital, the Old Folk's Home and the Childrens' Home. She

associated herself with the familiar constellation of causes of the reform-minded middle class woman of the period: temperance, child rescue, improved sanitary and medical care, and christian missions.

Mrs. Bryce possessed a modest private income which enabled them to live more comfortably than Bryce's salary would have allowed. Living for most of their married life in a large yellow brick house on Colony Street, their employment of servants enabled Mrs. Bryce to engage in her outside activities with relative freedom. Bryce may have felt uncomfortable about his wife's income. His frequent attempts to make extra money through writing or investment become more understandable in this light. At the same time, it is also true that the Church's pension scheme was a rather primitive one at this time.

Marion Bryce was acknowledged to have been a woman of intelligence and leadership ability. It is clear that she often did research on his behalf at many archives during their trips abroad. No doubt at her husband's urging, she gave two papers herself to the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba reflecting her particular interests in charitable activities and the social life of the Red River Colony.<sup>15</sup> While doing research at the Public Archives of Canada, she discovered an obscure eighteenth-century play by John Dennis called "Liberty Asserted" set during the Iroquois wars in New France. This she edited for publica-

tion with a commentary for the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada.<sup>16</sup>

After 1883, the Bryces continued their busy lives, punctuated by frequent trips to Britain, France, Italy and the New England States. Having been one of the prime movers behind the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Bryce remained a stalwart member and frequent president of it, intensifying his activity as that of the other founders waned. In all, over thirty papers from his pen can be found in the published transactions of the Society.

Bryce was an inveterate joiner. At one time or another he held memberships in the Institution Ethnographique of Paris, the American Historical Association, the Archeological Association of America, the British Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The crown of his efforts was his election to the Royal Society of Canada in 1902 and his election to the Presidency of that Society in 1910. He thought of himself as a man of letters, a thinker who was still involved in the affairs of the world at large.

To buttress this image and, no doubt, to fatten his pocket book, he felt obliged to become something of a self-promoter in his literary work. Circulars for his books and lecture tours never failed to mention his various memberships and honours. Unfortunately, this left him vulnerable to charges of pomposity, charges he often richly deserved.

Bryce retired from the Science faculty in 1904 and from Manitoba College in 1909. Obviously searching for something constructive to do in his retirement and a source of steady income, he pressured Laurier and Sifton persistently throughout 1909 for an appointment to the Senate. As a consolation he was appointed to the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education in 1910 and to the permanent Committee on Conservation. He sold his Colony Street house and moved into an apartment on Broadway. The next ten years were spent in travelling, lecturing, and following his many interests. He was often away from Winnipeg for long periods during this time. When the first World War broke out, he returned to Winnipeg to help fill pulpit vacancies, preaching sermons full of martial enthusiasm for the allied cause.

Following the death of his wife in 1920, Bryce's health deteriorated markedly. By 1923, he had sunk so far into senility that he was judged to be incapable of living alone and was taken to Ottawa to live with his brother Peter. He lived another eight years; long enough, it would seem, for the world to forget about him. His death occurred in August of 1931 and was passed by without much general notice. Even the obligatory obituary in the Transactions of the Royal Society was absent.

Until recently, there has been very little attention paid to Bryce as a historian and even less to his other

roles. L.G. Thomas included a short analysis of Bryce's historical work in his survey essay "Historiography of the Fur-Trade Era."<sup>17</sup> Thomas rightly points out that the distinguishing feature of Bryce's work, as distinct from that of Ross, Gunn, and Hargrave, was its Ontario progressive point of view. Although amazed at Bryce's output, Thomas disparages the rather uncritical, romantic nature of his history. In terms of the quality of Bryce's work, this is undoubtedly a true assessment.

However, though Bryce did study history at the University of Toronto, it is doubtful that he was aiming at "academic" history. From the literary structures and allusions in his texts, it is apparent that he intended his books to be read as popular histories. He was working within the nineteenth-century amateur tradition. It would be more productive of insight to judge Bryce's work in these terms than to use the scholarly standards of the present day.

This is the approach taken by Douglas Ooram in Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900.<sup>18</sup> Ooram uses Bryce's historical works as a buttress to his main argument. Disenchantment with the post-expansionist West, Ooram believes, led the Ontario-born dominant group to develop a regional consciousness. The annexation of Manitoba to Canada had failed to bring about the material progress and unprecedented growth promised by

the expansionists. The broken promises and the manipulations of the Federal Government and eastern business interests made Bryce, among others, wonder whether their gains balanced their losses in entering Confederation. This disenchantment resulted in the turning inward that produced a regional consciousness.

Owram sees Bryce's historical work as an example of this turn inward. Bryce attempted to emphasize the separateness of the western past, to say that this past was as adventurous and illustrious as anything in the annals of central Canada. The utopian vision of the Red River settlement found in Bryce's later books, Owram sees as a nostalgic retreat into a golden past motivated by disenchantment with the present.

While it is certainly right to categorize Bryce as an expansionist, the ensuing pages will point out certain weaknesses in Owram's view of Bryce. Taken together, these weaknesses must disqualify Bryce as a disappointed regional historian. He had reasons of his own for writing as he did but none of them had anything to do with the desire to create a viable regional history to set over against central Canadian views of the western past. An analysis of Bryce's work over time suggests that there was little change in his point of view from his first paper in 1875 to his last book in 1911. His faith in the rightness and fittingness of Canadian expansion never wavered.

This study will centre on the way in which Bryce thought about the world he lived in and, even more important, the ways in which he felt that world could be improved. He was not an intellectual nor could anything in his training, background or make-up have inclined him in that direction. Though he could be like a bulldog in argument, his debating style was more distinguished for its energy than its mental adroitness. When he wrote or preached, he was more concerned with affirming the values he felt to be good and true than analyzing them. These cherished values and the sometimes difficult rationalizations required to maintain and extend them will be the main concern of this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

## NATURAL THEOLOGY AND THE NEW SCIENCE

## I.

The evidence of Bryce's thought upon which this paper is based -- books, pamphlets, sermons, and correspondence -- does not reveal a rigorously systematic worldview characterized by well delineated arguments and carefully thought out categories. His life was too active and his personality too impatient for that kind of intellectual approach to the world. At the same time, certain strongly marked personality traits gave form and direction to his way of thinking as well as his behaviour. These traits were as evident in his writing as they were in his teaching and political activity. His character -- optimistic, restless, stubborn, romantic, self-important -- dictated the way in which he rationalized his behaviour and put its stamp on the intellectual underpinning of his worldview. In examining his ideas about the nature and role of scientific inquiry in the opening of the West, it will be necessary, first of all, to set out the basic features of his outlook.

Bryce's being was rooted in the secular. Though his passionate commitment to Christianity was genuine, his interest, energies and anxieties were focused on the accomplishment of the Christian vision in this world, not the

next. In this he cannot be said to have been much different from other Canadian Presbyterians of his generation. The Calvinist doctrines of the corruption of mankind and pre-determined election had come under heavy fire during the Enlightenment. The rise of evangelical theology with its strong missionary thrust had considerably softened these grimmer aspects of Presbyterianism. Bryce tended to think of mankind as, if not perfectable, then vastly improveable, and of human society as set on a course of progress under the guiding hand of a benevolent creator. If Bryce doubted his salvation and his possession of God's grace, this doubt is not reflected in his ebulliently positive attitude to the world.

He believed that the Church had a mission to preach the Gospel and to be an agent for the conquest of evil in the world. Whether they were really related or not, Bryce tended to think of this Christian mission and the material progress of the young Canadian nation as part of the same process. He was capable of distinguishing the two but it was a measure of his secularity that he seldom did.

This passionate belief in, and desire for material and spiritual progress was the strongest feature of Bryce's worldview. He assessed everything according to its tendency to promote or retard progress. What promoted progress was good and should be retained. What interfered with progress or slowed it down was bad and must be changed or done away

with. The institutions to which he devoted his remarkable energies; a non-sectarian public school system, a literate but evangelical Church, and a modern university, were designed to be the conduits of this progress. The order and stability they imposed were necessary pre-conditions to development. Dangerous pluralism and volatile social arrangements were to be replaced by uniformity and social order.

The special nature of the North West was something of which Bryce was very conscious. He believed the western country to be a new place. Methods and institutions that had prevailed in old Canada would not work in the west. Influenced, perhaps, by his ethnological studies, he believed that the frontier placed special stresses on its inhabitants. Situations that would never be countenanced in a country further along the developmental road, had to be tolerated temporarily as necessary feature of the raw young country. New ways of dealing with the western environment had to be found. The Christian religion, for example, had to be stripped of its theological niceties. Settlers could not be interested by "theological" sermons filled with Biblical criticism and disquisitions on the nature of the Trinity. Instead, the rich marrow of the Gospel in simple, forceful preaching was more suitable to prairie conditions.

In all likelihood, Bryce's notion of nation-building was clearly formed, at least in an embryonic state, when he

arrived in Winnipeg. During his childhood and young adulthood, his own home country near Brantford had become transformed from rude outpost to agricultural domesticity. The University of Toronto, during his attendance, was still just a collection of fractious colleges. It seemed natural to him that a new frontier should be opened up as a continuation of that process so recently begun in the east.

Nor was his belief in the necessity of mastering the environment unrelated to his religious training. The diminution of the doctrine of election in Canadian Presbyterianism, under the forces of secularization and evangelical fervour, had forced that other pillar of Calvinist structure, free will, to assume a more important role. Bryce would have heartily agreed with Thomas Chalmers, the foremost theologian of Free Church Presbyterianism, when he said that the world is like a gymnasium in which man exercises his moral capacity under the divine gift of free will. In this world we may earn, according to Chalmers, "...if not the triumphs of virtue, at least some delicious foretaste of that full and final blessedness for which the scholarship of human life, with its manifold engagements and duties is so obviously fitted to prepare us."<sup>1</sup> For Bryce, the taming of the North West was a giant contest in which he and his peers would prove their metal, struggling against the formidable challenges of an environment that was, if not overtly hostile, then passively resistant to their efforts.

God wanted his creatures to strive and learn and to hasten, in their limited way, His Kingdom.

In this struggle, it was necessary to use all available tools. Always the pragmatist, Bryce had decided early in his career that science and technology were indispensable tools in the pursuit of progress. This belief became a powerful incentive for Bryce to reconcile the confusing and conflicting demands of the post-Darwinian science on his Christian faith. The lack of personal records to document the more intimate workings of his personality make it impossible to know whether this reconciliation entailed an agonizing struggle for him. It may well have done but, if so, he did not allow this struggle to be reflected in the face he showed to the world. His public face was extremely outer-directed, positive, and energetic. Doubt of any kind was never reflected there. His sermon, "Lost and Found, or the Pathetic Story of George Romanes,"<sup>2</sup> undated, but probably preached in 1894, is revealing of Bryce's own feelings about the effects of scientific advance on faith. Romanes was a disciple of Darwin who, in an agony of spirit, rejected Christianity but later regained his faith. Bryce felt pity for Romanes, but clearly no sense of fellow-feeling. He compared the overwrought Romanes unfavourably with Henry Drummond, the bright and cheerful Professor of Natural Science at the Free Church College, Glasgow. Drummond had made an energetic attempt to make natural

selection agree with the traditional argument from design. Though Bryce did not agree entirely with Drummond's views, it is clear which personality was the more attractive to him.

Bryce's early influences at the University of Toronto and elsewhere inclined him toward a rejection of natural selection. No champion of Darwin of the eminence of Asa Gray of Harvard emerged in Canada during the early period of the controversy. Indeed, Canada's most eminent scientist, John William Dawson of McGill, gained an international reputation as an opponent of Darwin. While not so dogmatic in his rebuttal, Daniel Wilson, who taught history and literature at University College during Bryce's student days there, found it difficult to believe that a benevolent God would ordain a natural world with no moral content in which the ability to survive was the main determining factor. God's special plan for man, his lordship of nature, his creation in God's image, his possession of a rational soul, were all cast into doubt by Darwin's theories. Unlike many Canadian scientists of the period, however, Wilson was not a devotee of Baconian methodology and felt that scientific inquiry should be free of its constraints. He was already turning away from the traditional scientific methodology.

The science taught at the University of Toronto during Bryce's tenure was, for the most part, untouched by the challenge of Darwinism, however. Natural science continued

to be presented within the framework of the two theologies: Biblical revelation and Natural Theology. As well as being an apologetic weapon in the Christian arsenal, Natural Theology was the theological ground for the prosecution of scientific enquiry. It was concerned solely with the study of the way in which the will of God was revealed in the works of nature. All nature functioned according to a divinely ordained plan. As such, nature tended to be characterized as static, harmonious, and orderly. According to the Westminster Confession of 1647, to which all Presbyterians, at least nominally, subscribed, God brought the world into being from nothing and created man with a reasonable and immortal soul. Though God, as first cause, brought everything to pass, "immutably and infallibly,"<sup>3</sup> the ways in which He worked His will in the world could be infinitely complex and mystifying. As the Confession continued, God ordered all things "to fall out according to second causes, either necessarily freely or contingently... God in his ordinary Providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure."<sup>4</sup>

The very inscrutability of God made it impossible for man to know the whole of His divine plan. Small revelations of it were available to him through patient observation of nature, but it was arrogance of the worst sort to theorize beyond the limit of known facts. This was the heart of the

Baconian method of induction which had become, since the seventeenth century, the accepted method of scientific investigation. As Thomas Chalmers said, "what we discover by observation is the product of divine imagination bodied forth by creative powers into a stable and enduring reality. What we devise by our own ingenuity is but the product of human imagination. The one is the solid archetype of those conceptions which are in the mind of God. The other is the shadowy representation of those conceptions which are in the mind of man."<sup>5</sup>

William Paley's Natural Theology, first published in 1802, was a triumph of the Baconian method and became the basic text for Natural Theology in most English speaking Universities. In this book, Paley set out in great detail and with a wealth of illustration from the natural world, the argument from design which was the main argument in Natural Theology for the existence of God. A careful observation of nature reveals ample evidence of a design, according to the usual formulation of the argument. Since a design implies a designer, the inescapable conclusion is that God is, "A wise and powerful Being (the author, in nature, of infinitely various expedients for infinitely various ends)".<sup>6</sup> Through observation of the physical structure of animals and plants, Paley tried to show that God had given every living thing exactly the kind of structure it required to survive in its habitat.

The effect of this kind of Natural Theology was to tie scientific investigation to rather circumscribed limits; to place it very definitely under the suzerainty of theology. It imposed a conservative ethic on scientists that discouraged audacity and aggressive investigation. There was certainly evidence of tension and restiveness under this ethic even before the publication of the Origin of Species in 1859. Though orthodox protestants continued to say that there could be no truth that was not of God, and that therefore there was nothing to fear in the advance of science, a palpable unease developed in religious circles. This unease was the more understandable in that practitioners of science during these years were often, like Bryce, clergymen as well.

In Canadian higher educational circles, with their twin orthodoxies of Natural Theology and Scottish Common Sense philosophy, the tension between the new science and traditional faith was extreme. Brian McKillop, in his book A Disciplined Intelligence<sup>7</sup> has documented the gradual breakdown of these orthodoxies in the Canadian universities. George Bryce was a participant in this process, and his life reflects the tensions that were, in part, responsible for the change.

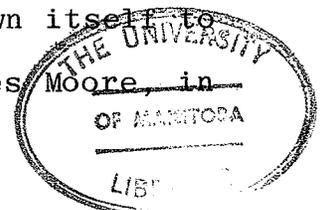
As a 25 year old theological student in 1869, he placed himself comfortably within the embrace of Natural Theology when he said, "Human knowledge in so far as it is true and

real is always formed to agree with scripture."<sup>8</sup> Under his influence, the first Library Accessions Register of Manitoba College, compiled in 1878, lists 122 volumes under the heading of "Science." Of these 122, fully 31 titles were concerned with mental and moral philosophy or Natural Theology.<sup>9</sup> But his absorption in the progressive ethic, the increasing liberalism and eclecticism of his theology, and his increasingly secular worldview caused him to reject the strictures of the Baconian method, and to radically alter, though never reject, his formulation of Natural Theology. By 1906, absolute freedom of scientific inquiry had become his ideal. At that time, he said of the British Association for the Advancement of Science:

In the British Association there is the freest expression of opinion. The most treasured notion is attacked without remorse. In this liberty lies the hope of succeeding in the search for truth... There is no attempt to form a dogmatic science. If a thing is false, if evidence has been given to an ill-considered judgement or opinion, it is without the slightest regret abandoned.<sup>10</sup>

Bryce's championing of this new ideal meant that theological inquiry and scientific inquiry tended to become separate and compartmentalized in his mind. In order to understand why this had come about, it will be necessary to examine his career as a teacher of science and an enthusiast for scientific advance more closely.

The Scottish Presbyterian tradition had shown itself to be very friendly towards scientific study. James Moore, in



his book, The Post-Darwinian Controversies, has remarked on the ease with which traditional Calvinist theology accommodated advances in scientific theory.<sup>11</sup> The universities of Aberdeen, St. Andrew's and Edinburgh were known, particularly, for their programs in Mathematics and Physics. This taste for science was found in Canadian Presbyterianism as well. Part of a well-rounded education was thought to be a basic knowledge of scientific principles. Even from the isolated Red River Settlement in 1855, Bryce's predecessor, John Black, could lament to his brother, "How are you in Natural Science, Astronomy, Geology etc? These and such like branches we would need to study nowadays if we would not be despised by every smattering mechanic. I am far behind in these as in almost everything."<sup>12</sup>

When Bryce founded Manitoba College in 1871, botany, chemistry and physics were added to the curriculum with Black's blessing. It was not long, however, before the inadequacy of the facilities for teaching scientific studies, even at this basic level, began to frustrate Bryce. The poverty of the new college made it difficult to allocate any money at all beyond building maintenance and Professor's salaries. The lack of library books and materials did not affect the study of the Classics and Humanities so much, since students could rely on lecture notes and text-books. But proper teaching of the scientific subjects, with their important practical and observatory

component, required microscopes, laboratory glassware, chemicals, geological and botanical specimens, dissecting equipment and numerous other kinds of hardware. Nor was there much hope of funds becoming available. The penury of the College became more acute after 1882 when all financial efforts were devoted to the reduction of the debt incurred with the completion of the new college building.

Bryce began to feel that the only hope for the advancement of scientific education in Manitoba College and the other colleges was for the Provincial University to begin the teaching of science in addition to the task of examining and granting degrees, which had been its only functions since its inception in 1877. His numerous trips during the summer months to universities in Britain, Europe, and the United States had made him keenly aware that scientific teaching and investigations were beginning to be prosecuted with a new sophistication. In the United States, Daniel Coit Gilman<sup>13</sup> had first reorganized the Yale science faculty, then in 1875 founded Johns Hopkins University and Medical School, which became the prototype for North American science faculties. In Canada, the universities of Toronto, McGill and Queen's were devoting more energy and funds to their science and engineering faculties. Bryce became anxious that Manitoba, with even more need for scientific training and expertise than the older provinces, would not be able to compete with the eastern universities. Mani-

toban students would find it necessary to go to the east in order to get training and, once there, would never come back.

Having been a member of the University council since 1877, Bryce was able to put his views on science teaching very directly to the Council. As a result of his pressure, the University of Manitoba began to offer classes in science under the university banner. Bryce of Manitoba College, Prof. Kenrick of St. John's, and Prof. Laird of Wesley College would each teach half-time for the university and half-time in the colleges. The centralization of expenses and the building of a library collection were the main benefits of this arrangement.

Although this was a modest step forward, Bryce was far from satisfied. Through the pressure of various exigencies, the science taught at the University of Manitoba was a rather conservative and limited science. Lack of money was a perennial problem. The other limiting factor was the necessity of making compromises in curriculum planning and examination standards between the various shades of opinion on scientific matters found in the affiliated colleges. It must be remembered that, even by 1889, the post-Darwinism controversies were still hotly contended issues in Canada, though the process of accommodating these notions into scientific practice and religious worldview was well advanced. It is evident from the University of Manitoba

Syllabus for this period, however, that Darwin was not yet acceptable as bed-rock knowledge. No book of his nor any book with a Darwinian perspective appeared on the list of acceptable textbooks for science examinations until well after 1915.<sup>14</sup> The life sciences were taught on the Paleyite model, with no apparent change in orientation until 1900. The basic texts for Geology continued to be Lyell's Geology and Dana's Handbook of Geology. Agassiz and Gould's Principles of Zoology, with its pre-Darwinian taxonomy was standard until 1910. Asa Gray's How Plants Grow was listed on the elementary Botany syllabus, but this book was written before Gray's conversion to Darwinism. At the same time, the examination syllabus for Mental and Moral Science featured Ontology, Cosmology and Natural Theology prominently. The psychology of the Scottish Common Sense school ruled at the University of Manitoba, as it did in major eastern universities until the end of the nineteenth century.

To be fair, it is difficult to know what may have taken place in the classroom. It is possible that controversial issues were debated enthusiastically during lectures. Certainly, the examination questions occasionally dealt with contentious issues. The Comparative Physiology examination for 1888, for example, listed the question, "What are the claims for recognition of the theory of spontaneous generation?" But spontaneous generation (the notion that organic

life could be created by artificial means) was hardly a current debate. It had been refuted by Huxley and Pasteur, among others, almost twenty years before.

Bryce must have chafed against the conservatism of the curriculum as much as he rebelled against the meagre funding of the Science department. Perhaps at the cost of some inner turmoil, he had decided that the process of natural selection, with its implication of a struggle for survival, was still consistent with God's plan. What he could never believe, was that there was no moral imperative in nature, only chance. God could never have created so cruel a world. A way out of this dilemma was offered to Bryce with the publication of Benjamin Kidd's book, Social Evolution in 1895. He admired this book so much that he mentioned it in a sermon preached in about 1897. Kidd accepted the validity of survival of the fittest as the mechanism by which species adapt. But he modified the harshness of the survival imperative by positing another instinct in man as powerful as the instinct to survive. This he called the belief in a supra-rational power. According to Kidd, this belief was itself a powerful adaptive force. The religious instinct forced man to be concerned with society beyond himself. It ensured that a high value would be placed on altruism as opposed to the selfishness imposed by the survival instinct. Society needed this sense of altruism in order to progress.

This notion held a powerful appeal to Bryce. He had

always felt that religion and Christianity, in particular, made sense and that it had only to be explained forcefully to open-minded men in order to be rationally acceptable. His sense of Christian apologetics had been somewhat invaded by Spencerian rationalism. The social utility of religion was, for him, a prime justification for Christian belief. As he said in a sermon on the text "Search the scriptures" (John 5:39) preached in 1869, "In all the morality of the Bible we see what makes human society safe, what protects the family and the individual, what regulates the buyer and the seller, what robs war of many of its horrors, what adds dignity to the law and makes it the messenger of God, instead of the instrument of Man's revenge."<sup>15</sup> To have at least some quasi-scientific verification of this principle by Kidd was another proof to Bryce that the argument from design had withstood the onslaught of modern science.

This half-hearted endorsement of natural selection put Bryce's views considerably in advance of the University of Manitoba Syllabus. In 1890, in an inaugural address to the Manitoba College Literary Society entitled A Modern University, he set out his program for the radical improvement of science teaching. Equipment and personnel were totally inadequate and should be updated and augmented. The curriculum must be modernized (although the diplomatic Bryce did not specify which areas were deficient). If Manitoba was to compete with the eastern universities and provide training

for her own doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, engineers and geologists, she must begin to found professional faculties. He noted that many of the most important books and articles in all scientific fields were written in French and German. Teaching of these languages must be improved. Lastly, a spacious new building should be built to contain, "chemical, physical and biological laboratories, a museum of mineralogy and geology, another of biology and ethnology and be well provided with apparatus."<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the 1890's, however, Bryce could make little headway with his recommendations. In fact, the science department was actually forced into even more cramped quarters when a fire in the McIntyre Block in which the department had been housed, forced them into makeshift quarters in the Davis Block. The whole question of a science building became tied up in the seemingly endless struggles to find a site for the University; a struggle that continued to embroil the Federal Government, the Provincial Government, and the University until 1901 when a parcel of crown land on Broadway opposite the Legislature was finally deeded over to the Province and through the Province, leased to the University.<sup>17</sup>

The construction of the Science Building on the Broadway site shortly thereafter meant the partial fulfillment of Bryce's dream for a modern Science Faculty. Not wishing to let the momentum die, he drew on his old acquaintance with

Lord Strathcona for an endowment of \$5,000 per year for four years. On the basis of the Strathcona donation in 1904, chairs were founded in Botany (combined with Geology), Physics (with Minerology and Crystallography), Chemistry, Mathematics and Physiology (with Zoology).<sup>18</sup> All these chairs were filled by non-ordained young men with post-graduate training in their specialties.

This was the fulfillment of Bryce's ideal. At the same time, rather sadly, the need for his own teaching in the faculty was at an end. Certainly, his teaching schedule, his involvement in educational problems, and his publication interests had not left much time for updating his knowledge in Geology, Botany, Zoology, Chemistry, Physics or any of the other amazingly numerous branches of science in which he had been an official examiner for the university in the 1880's and 1890's. He retired from science teaching in 1904, while continuing to teach literature and history in the College.

His early retirement from the Science faculty was an acknowledgement that his own interests in science belonged to an earlier era and not to the modern one for which he had doggedly prepared the way. He had begun his career in an age in which the practice of science was not given overwhelming public support. It was necessary for men of Bryce's generation to adopt a promotional stance in relation to their disciplines. In Bryce's case, this took the form

of being active in professional associations, using his influence with governments at strategic moments to increase government support for the scientific enterprise, and giving talks and lectures on scientific topics in terms simple enough for the intelligent layman to understand.

Of the numerous professional associations in which Bryce held membership, the British Association for the Advancement of Science was, perhaps, the closest to his heart. It was founded in 1831 in order to stem what was felt to be the decline of British science and technology following the Napoleonic wars. The lack of government support for science and the poor quality of science teaching in British schools and universities were the particular concerns of the Association. The Annual Meeting also became the forum for the many scientific controversies of the day. The famous debate between T.H. Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce on Darwin's Origin of Species was a prominent feature of the British Association Annual Meeting in 1860. More significant, to Bryce's mind, was the effort made on the part of the Association to include the Empire in its deliberations. The Annual Meetings were often often convened outside the British Isles, including Montreal in 1886 and Toronto in 1897.

Nothing could be more natural to Bryce, than that the premier learned society in the pantheon of imperial science should convene its Annual Meeting in the metropolis of the

North West. As life member of the Association and permanent member of its General Committee, Bryce was well placed to bring this about. Not for the first time, he was able to call in his political debts with Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In his capacity as member of the Royal Society of Canada, he asked Laurier to accede to the Society's request for a special grant of \$25,000.00 to enable the City of Winnipeg to extend an invitation to the British Association for the summer of 1909. The Prime Minister quickly shepherded the request through the Cabinet and matters were set in train for the organization of the meeting.<sup>19</sup>

It was not the last time that he was to use his personal influence with the Prime Minister to further government support for science. It had long been a source of frustration to him that there was no agency of the government devoted to the documenting of the lifestyles and habits of the Canadian Indian and Eskimo. These peoples were undergoing a process of civilization that was, to Bryce's mind, absolutely necessary and irreversible. Yet no effort was being made to preserve evidence of their original way of life; evidence that was of much interest and importance to the study of ethnology.

The prototype for this government agency was the Bureau of American Ethnology, established in 1879 with John Wesley Powell at its head. Following the meeting of the British Association in 1909, which coincided with his Presidency of

the Royal Society, Bryce led a move to establish a counterpart of the Bureau in the Canadian government. Once again, Laurier gave his support to the plan and the Department of Ethnology was established as a sister department of the Geological Survey of Canada under the Department of Mines in 1910.<sup>20</sup>

Though he did much to stimulate the improvement of scientific and technical education in Canada, it was never Bryce's wish that science become so remote and specialized as to be completely inaccessible to the average person. On the contrary, a well informed public was as necessary to the successful support of scientific enterprise as technical knowledge was to the support of industrial progress. With this in mind, he devoted several of his lectures to the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba to simplified accounts of the geology of the prairie region. As with his historical works, he received some criticism for the inaccuracy of his facts. So annoyed was J.B. Tyrrell with the deficiencies of Bryce's paper on the Older Geology of the Prairie Provinces, that he fired off an acerbic letter to the Free Press, detailing the errors. As usual, Bryce was undeterred. As he said to Laurier in another connection, "One has to make up one's mind to accept the buffeting if he does his duty."<sup>21</sup>

He continued to give popular lectures and, in 1907, published a useful book entitled Everyman's Geology of the

Prairie Provinces of the Canadian West,<sup>22</sup> which was a collection of lectures he had given in his university Geology course between 1891-1904. It was a book of general geological information intended for settlers, explorers, teachers, travellers and farmers and included chapters on coal formation and water sources. The appendix contained a section on the importance of forestry in soil conservation.

This chapter on forestry was evidence of the main promotional preoccupation of Bryce's last active years: a concern with the proper development of natural resources and the advancement of technical education to provide the expertise for this development. No doubt as a sop to his blighted senatorial ambitions, he was appointed to the Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education which delivered its report in 1913. In addition, Sir Clifford Sifton had given him an appointment on the permanent Commission on Conservation of Resources in May of 1909.<sup>23</sup>

As a result of the information gathering process of both these Commissions, Bryce was in a position to form certain conclusions as to the state of Canadian industry and resource management. He was cruelly disappointed by what he saw. Technical education was not training workers for the factory. Apprentices were changeable and unreliable. "The employer and foreman are poor judges and poor purchasers of the material needed; the management of the offices and the

shops is careless; the quality of labour is poor; the business as a whole is badly managed; and the waste is enormous."<sup>24</sup>

It seemed almost criminal to Bryce that a country like Canada, with vast resources, should not know how to use them. It was a touchstone of his approach to the world that resources exist to be exploited; and exploited as efficiently as possible for the benefit of the whole society. Each person in the hierarchical structure of society had a role to play in the exploitation of resources and the subsequent manufacturing of goods, whether entrepreneur, manager or labourer. Inefficient resource management, poor technical training, lack of industrial research, and technical obsolescence, made Canadian industry uncompetitive. That Canada should waste the opportunities held out to her by a benevolent creator at the beginning of the century that was to belong to her seemed to Bryce to imply a failure of the will that grated sadly on his Presbyterian sensibilities.

Optimistic to the end, however, he and the other members of the Royal Commission set out their findings and made recommendations for the improvement of technical education and training. But Bryce's plans for increased government funding to technical schools and more industrial research gained no immediate foothold with the Government. Shortly after the tabling of the Commission Report, War was declared. These concerns, like many others, were shelved

for the duration as the War preoccupied the resources of the country. When it was over, Bryce was no longer able to participate in the world of affairs with his old vigour. The themes touched on in his pre-war articles and addresses on Canadian industry, the "brain drain", the lack of expertise, and short-sighted resource management, remained to haunt a new generation.

## II

The notion that qualities of temperament were racially inherited and that, through this process, the British "race" was inherently superior, was a common popular idea in nineteenth century Canada. These ideas did not have their origins so much in scientific investigation as in some primitive tribal chauvinism. Irrational roots aside, however, one could find much that seemed to empirically justify such a feeling, since Britain was clearly in possession of the balance of power militarily and had the economic advantage over other less industrialized nations until the last quarter of the century. From this basic fact, it was an almost irresistible jump to conclude that this state of affairs had been brought about by the inherited genius of the British race for constitutional government, for industrial innovation, and for the advancement of trade all over the world.

The idea of the superiority of the British race was a

cherished cornerstone of Bryce's secular faith. References to "blood" "stock" "race" and "descent" abound in all his published works as well as his sermons. These ideas are of particular interest in Bryce's case because he was familiar with the contemporary research into race, civilization and culture. Especially during his early years in the North West, he cultivated a scientific interest in the ethnology and archaeology of the region. His study of primitive peoples and the nature of civilization had a very direct bearing on his attitudes to Indian peoples and their education by the churches and on his concept of the civilizing and developing mission of the British race.

Having originated in the rational humanism of the French Enlightenment, ethnology was, until the late nineteenth century, considered to be allied with the biological sciences. Man was to be studied as a species instead of as a collection of individuals. Languages, religions, customs and material cultures of different peoples were to be documented and compared to one another. It was thought that, just as the study of nature would reveal the operation of natural laws, the study of human society would reveal common laws that governed its structure.

The development of the British empire had given certain spurs to the study of ethnology. The necessity of making contact with, trading with, occasionally clashing with, and sometimes taking charge of peoples of radically different

cultures had made it necessary to develop knowledge of primitive peoples. That these people were foreign made it all the more natural to develop a new methodology for studying them. As in so many disciplines, ethnology was prosecuted by interested amateurs, many of them missionaries to the people whom they observed.

Rousseau's theory of the "noble savage" had been one manifestation of the Enlightenment fascination with the nature of man in relation to civilization. According to Rousseau, man in his natural state, with the artificial attachments of civilization stripped away, was possessed of intelligence and free will, living in harmony with the rest of nature. However, this opinion of primitive man was not shared by many early ethnological thinkers. A far more common attitude was expressed by the Scottish jurist Lord Kames. In a book on the nature and character of savages written in 1778, Kames described the typical savage as having a violent propensity to intemperance and indolence. He was unable to conceive a plan for a future, had no skill at perceiving relationships between objects and was unable to invent. Ignorant of cause and effect, he had a moral nature but it was poorly developed. Naturally, the hallmarks of civilized men were implied in this characterization as well, being the other side of the coin. In the Enlightenment scheme of things, the races, both primitive and civilized, had their set places; the primitive with their

limited and marginal existence and the civilized with their wider opportunities for power, learning and conquest.

Even before the disclosure of Darwin's theories, this rather static model of anthropological relationships had begun to be challenged. The Chevalier de Lamarck, in a book translated into English in 1830, suggested that species, rather than being immutable, changed and adapted in response to environmental pressures. The geologist Charles Lyell eventually adopted Lamarck's theory and was a significant influence on the young Darwin. Darwin himself took Lamarck's theory a giant step farther when he suggested that all species sprang from a common progenitor and had gradually evolved through progressive adaptation.

It had been the conventional wisdom to think of the races of man as separate species, created at the beginning of the world, like the rest of nature, by an all-knowing God to some as yet undisclosed ultimate purpose. But Darwin suggested that the races, having sprung from the same progenitor, were really much more closely related to one another than had been previously thought. The ensuing controversy between monogenists and polygenists, while extremely technical and abstruse, had far reaching implications for ethnology and for the attitudes of the white race to the subjugated primitive people with whom they were coming increasingly in contact. It would have been much more difficult, for example, to justify slavery if it were proved

that the "negro race" had sprung from the same origin as the "white race" and that progress was as possible for blacks as it was for whites. The idea that races were separate species was also called into question. If races were, in fact, separate species, then offspring of parents from different racial backgrounds would not be viable. That is, they would not be able to reproduce themselves. On the other hand, if races were merely varieties of the same species, hybridization would be possible and new varieties could be evolved.

It became necessary for those ethnologists holding to the traditional theory to prove that human hybrids were infertile and genetically defective. The imperial outreach of the European countries had, by this time, produced numerous hybrid peoples to observe in this connection -- Eurasians in the far-east, South American half-breeds, the mulattos of the Southern United States, and the metis of the Canadian North West, to name a few. The French anthropologist Paul Broca, in conclusions based mainly on observation of the mulattos in the American south, produced the standard polygenist argument in 1856.<sup>25</sup> According to Broca, mulattos were physically inferior to their parents. They were weak, short-lived, less intelligent and morally intemperate. As if to put a cap on it, they were also seldom fertile with each other, though they could be fertile with a member of one of their parent races.

Bryce's mentor, Canadian ethnologist and archaeologist Daniel Wilson, had reason to doubt the polygenist argument. He had been influenced by the taxonomic work of Agassiz and Lamarck and felt that the races were varieties rather than separate species. Although he was as much of a British chauvinist as anyone of that era, he could not avoid the knowledge that the British "race" was anything but pure and unmixed. On the contrary, part of the genius of the British people, as Wilson saw it, was their ability to absorb and incorporate other peoples and to use the knowledge and gifts of the incorporated people for the advantage of the whole. As he said, "The very elements of Britain's greatness seem to lie in her slow maturity, in her progressive collision with races only a little in advance of herself, in the natural transition through all stages from infancy to vigorous manhood."<sup>26</sup>

As for the qualities of human hybrids, Wilson saw no evidence to support Broca's conclusion that they were inferior. His own observation of North-American half breeds had been that, physically at least, they tended to be stronger and fitter than their parents. Of their moral qualities he was less sure, but he noted that english speaking half-breeds from the Red River colony had successfully pursued University studies and had entered the professions. He saw no real harm in human interbreeding and, perhaps, some good, if the process was a gradual one which

resulted, not in the creation of a new hybrid, but in the slow absorption of the non-white into the white population.

So fascinated was he by this problem, in fact, that he included an entire chapter in his Prehistoric Man, published in 1861, on the Red River métis and half-breeds. For Wilson, the creation of these hybrid peoples was part of a larger moral dilemma for the advanced European peoples. Why must the advance of the strong be at the expense of the weak? As a Christian, Wilson finally had to say that there was much in this "dark riddle" that he did not understand. God's purpose was as veiled here as it was in much of the rest of nature. If he could not discern the purpose, however, he thought he could observe the process by which lesser civilized peoples were displaced and extinguished by more advanced people.

The creation of these half-breed populations was a part of the process. As Wilson saw it, at the edge of the white advance, there is a transitional territory in which the whites interbreed with the indigenous population: "... all along the widening outskirts of the newer clearings, and wherever an outlying trading or hunting post is established, we find a fringe of half-breed population marking the transitional border-land which is passing away from its aboriginal claimants."<sup>27</sup> The half-breeds reject as much of their maternal Indian culture as they can in order to fit into the dominant white society. They intermarry with the whites and

are gradually absorbed. The half-breeds can survive in the border-land, with its transitional economy, but when the border gives way to a more settled way of life, the half-breed, like the native population, must either adapt to white ways and be absorbed, or leave.

These ideas can be found, reflected or amplified in the ethnological writings of George Bryce. His conception of primitive peoples and their capacities was already well formed under the influence of Wilson by the time he arrived in Winnipeg. The concept of the border-land, which in certain respects bears a resemblance to the frontier concept later used by Frederick Jackson Turner, was further developed by Bryce. For him, the border-land became a powerful metaphor for the uniqueness of the frontier environment. At this cutting edge of civilization, one had to expect certain modes of behaviour to develop that would not be tolerated in a more civilized environment. The fur-trade economy promoted an unsettled, irregular way of life. Man had to adapt to this environment in order to survive.

In a letter written to Charles N. Kessler, the subject of which was the common law marriage of a certain fur-trader to an Indian woman, Bryce said, "Of course you ask about matters before my arrival in Manitoba in 1871. However, I actually know something of all - the white, red and mixed coloureds here ... Of course you are aware that the hard sleepless and trying life of the fur-trader led to weak

friendships and somewhat reckless habits. I have no doubt of the intellectual power and ability of the old trader and of the peculiar social conditions of some fifty years ago. That period was to say the least primitive. The conditions of the frontier were unique."<sup>28</sup>

It was the romantic in Bryce that drew him to write about the fur-trade era that preceded his own experience of the west. The border-land, with its freedom from constraints and temptations to immorality, was certainly far from the stable society he wished to build up. But, perhaps for that reason, he was fascinated by it. In a paper to the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba in 1887, The Life of John Tanner; A Famous Manitoba Scout; a Border Type, he tried to analyze the effects of the frontier environment on its inhabitants. As he said, "Life in a new country is a strange medley. The noblest character is seen developed at times in the trials and struggle of the border, but the dark shadow of an irregular and wayward life is a far commoner thing."<sup>29</sup>

The son of an American clergyman, John Tanner was kidnapped as a child by Indians and was raised by a band of Ojibwa in the Rainy River area. Eventually he found himself at Red River and became famous as a scout, leading the Des Meurons regiment to Fort Douglas. Lord Selkirk took an interest in him after this episode and succeeded in finding his real family. After regaining contact with his family,

Tanner was determined to rejoin white society. His Indian wife having died, he married a white woman. Unfortunately, he was unable to shake off the effects of his upbringing. He could not adjust to the regular habits of white civilization, took to drink, murdered a man, and shortly thereafter died himself under mysterious circumstances.

What fascinated Bryce about Tanner's life was his tragic suspension between two cultures; his inability to belong either to his adopted Indian culture or to the white culture of his parents. The border-land put its stamp on Tanner and formed his habits at such a young age that he was unable to survive outside that environment. Indeed, the moral vacuum of the border-land could infect white traders who had come from civilized backgrounds. As Bryce said, "Contact with border life tends to lower men to the level of savage. In dealing with our Indian question we shall fail completely to understand the problem, unless we take into account the large influence wielded over the redman by the daring and unscrupulous white men who live upon the border."<sup>30</sup>

Even though Bryce could speak of the power of the environment to shape behaviour with some sophistication, he brought to the study of ethnology the solidly entrenched values of bourgeois protestantism. The qualities that upheld and advanced the society from which he came, and which he wished to replicate in the west were self-restraint,

self-discipline, regular habits, hard work, and the ability to master and transform the environment. His assessment of the lifestyle of primitive peoples in general and the native inhabitants of the west in particular, was coloured irrevocably by this value system. According to his knowledge of ethnology, there existed an ascending scale of social advancement for peoples of the world. At the lower end of this scale were the pre-literate peoples, who had a hunting and gathering economy, a language limited in its capacity to express complex ideas, and limited ability, need, or desire to transform their environment. At the top end of the scale was the white European, with a settled agricultural and industrial economy, a written complex language, and progressive ability to transform and exploit his environment.

Leading ethnologists of the period had different interpretations of this developmental model. Pritchard, the leading British ethnologist, thought that the first human inhabitants of the earth were negro and that the species had evolved to white. In 1871, the American Lewis Henry Morgan posited three main stages of progress: savagery, barbarism and civilization. The general trend of the human race was forward, according to Herbert Spencer, although regrettably, the possibility for a particular people to regress and degenerate was all too real.

Bryce had the opportunity to put his theoretical knowledge about Indian peoples to use during the early part of

his career. The process of making treaties with the tribes of the North west took place throughout the 1870's and early 1880's. The establishment of Presbyterian Indian schools on the plains began under the aegis of the Foreign Missions Committee of which Bryce was a member and Thomas Hart the Convenor.

Whether their way of life was interesting and exotic or not, there was no doubt in Bryce's mind that the Indians had to make a quantum leap on the developmental continuum in order to fit in to civilized society. They could never do so if they continued to live in the plains. In any case the buffalo, the staple on which their whole way of life depended, was virtually extinct on the prairie. Nor was he unmindful of the moral problem that had troubled Daniel Wilson. In an address to the Winnipeg Y.M.C.A. in 1884, Bryce said: "The Indian agent found here and there throughout that wide district, in charge of a certain number of bands, is a representative of the wise care taken under British control of the inferior races committed to our rule, while the Indian trade is a very considerable portion of the business done by the merchants of Rat Portage and Fort Frances. It is well for us who have come to the Northwest to take possession of the land to make homes for ourselves to remember that we have dispossessed the Indian."<sup>31</sup> To have one eye on trade and the other on moral uplift was not

untypical of Bryce's approach to the world. Nevertheless, he was quite right in pointing out, in the same paper, that his was a rather liberal attitude to "the Indian problem". There were some, perhaps like Huxley using Darwin as a justification, who thought that nothing whatever should be done for the Indians; that "the weaker should go to the wall."<sup>32</sup>

It was clear to Bryce that, since the whites had taken the Indian lands, they had an obligation to the Indian. This obligation was to educate, civilize and christianize. These terms were, of course, interchangeable for Bryce or locked together in his mind. That the Indian was capable of responding to this mission, he had no doubt. "While I am not among the illusionists, who regard the redman in his savage state as a hero of the Fenimore Cooper type, yet I know from many years hearsay and experience that in intellectual ability the indian is much above average of the savage races."<sup>33</sup>

But neither the Church nor the government had lived up to the obligations required of them. Bryce angrily accused the government of not living up to the terms of the treaties in the matter of the erection of schools on the reserves. To be sure, huge sums of money were paid out annually to feed starving bands. But, in Treaty seven, fully 80 per cent of monies paid out for the year were paid to one wholesale supplier. Bryce hinted darkly at graft and corruption. He was no easier on the Church. Missionaries

to the Indian race were grossly underpaid. As a result, the quality of man in the field was poor: lazy, socially backward, or morally suspect.

That Bryce's ethnological knowledge did not appreciably differentiate his response to natives on the plains from that of others less well informed is not surprising when one examines the kind of ethnological investigation that interested him. His exploration of Indian burial mounds with the help of other members of the Historical and Scientific Society had made him locally notorious. One member of the Society was so dismayed that the energies of the Society were being monopolized by such this esoteric interest that he wrote anonymously to the Free Press; "The fossilized section of the Society whose duty it is to gather these relics are too apt to forget the vigorous demands of the northern intellect for food of a higher class."<sup>34</sup>

Mound exploration was something of a vogue in North America during this period. Daniel Wilson devoted several chapters of Primitive Man to the findings of mound digs along the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. As often happened in Wilson's work, he relied exclusively on secondary sources, notably Dr. E.H. Davis's Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley. It was Davis's contention, a position supported by Wilson, that the burial mounds which are found in these regions were made by a defunct more civilized race than the current natives of the area. The mounds appeared

to give evidence of a certain architectural sophistication and an agricultural way of life. It was clear to Davis and Wilson that the tribes of Indians presently found in those areas were far behind the mound builders on the developmental scale.

When Bryce came to Manitoba, he was extremely interested to find similar mounds in the Fort Frances area and on the banks of the Red River south of Selkirk. He led expeditions to open several of the mounds; the Red River mound, the Great Mound near Rainy River and smaller ones in the Souris country. Aided by other members of the Historical and Scientific Society and under digging conditions that would appal a modern archaeologist, the digs progressed, and unearthed several important pieces of pottery and tools for the Society's museum collection.

Because copper tools and shell ornaments made from marine shellfish were found in the Great Mound at Rainy River, Bryce came to several conclusions about the mound builders. First, they were obviously miners of copper and makers of copper tools. Second, they must have had trade connections with a tribe that had trade connections with Indians of the Gulf of Mexico or the California coast in order to have acquired the shell ornaments. He had already concurred with Davis and Wilson, that the mounds were too cleverly oriented and constructed to have been the product of the present Indians, because, "In constructive ability

our Indians are singularly deficient, just as it is with the greatest difficulty that they are induced even on a small scale to practice agriculture."<sup>35</sup>

Following the lead of Wilson, Bryce decided that the mounds were built by descendants of the peaceable and accomplished Toltecans of Central America who had migrated to the Ohio and Mississippi River systems about 1200 A.D. The Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario mounds were the most northerly evidence of this migration. Unfortunately for the peace loving Toltecans, descendants of the war-like Aztecs had followed close behind. These Aztec descendants -- probably the Sioux and the Iroquois -- eventually destroyed the Toltecans, leaving nothing but their burial mounds as a memorial. For Bryce, this theory provided another small justification, on a rather mythic level, for the appropriation by white Europeans of Indian land. As he said, "The white man but arrived upon the scene to succeed the farmer, the metal worker and the potter, who had passed away so disastrously, and to be the avenger of the lost race, in driving before him the savage red man."<sup>36</sup>

This all seems rather fanciful to modern eyes. In this formative period, Ethnology abounded with theories and methodologies, some of which pointed in the direction that the discipline was subsequently to take, some of which ended up as rather curious culs de sac. It was popular to hypothesize that certain Indian tribes were the descendants of

the lost tribe of Israel, using the parallels of the native language with ancient Hebrew to support the argument. In this vein, Bryce suggested in a subsequent paper, without taking the assertion very seriously, that the Mandans were descended from a party of Welsh explorers headed by the twelfth century Prince Madoc.

With its cavalier field methods, reliance on secondary sources, and strong admixture of romantic flights of fancy, Bryce's ethnology was a different science from the archaeology and ethnology that was to develop from it in the twentieth century. But the flexibility provided by the lack of standardized methodology and the opportunity to find exotic evidence of the antique past was exactly what appealed to him. He shared with Daniel Wilson a tendency to mix scientific and literary interests together. The mound explorations themselves appealed to his desire to be outdoors and on the track of adventure. Having found pottery shards and tools, he would allow his imagination to create a story about them. Significantly, his paper The Mound Builders in which he described the dig at the Great Mound, ends with a poem called "The Lost Race" which is unattributed but almost certainly his own composition.

His interest in ethnology was a leisure-time avocation that seems to have waned after 1890. He seldom published papers on ethnology or archaeology after that date and those few that were published were reworked from previous

articles. Perhaps as ethnology became more scientific in its methodology, it ceased to appeal to the imaginative side of his nature. His increasing interest in writing history seems to have monopolized his literary taste.

This tendency to mix literary and scientific interests is another curiosity to modern eyes. It must be remembered, however, that in the intellectual milieu in which Bryce was nurtured, it was still academically respectable. The departments of knowledge had not yet completed the process of professionalization and specialization that effectively compartmentalized disciplines. Bryce taught both science and literature and found nothing unusual or contradictory in his choice of subjects. If his imaginative faculty sometimes got in the way of sound scientific methodology, it may have helped him to resolve some of the stresses inherent in avidly promoting a science which often seemed to strike at the very root of his faith. In spite of these stresses, he still felt, at the end of his career no less than at the beginning, that truth was one and undivided. But he had come to think that science and religion had different ways of approaching that truth. In a sermon given to the British Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Winnipeg in 1909, he coined a metaphor to describe this relationship: two different roads to the same trysting place.<sup>37</sup> It was the clearest acknowledgement, at the end of a peripatetic career in both science and religion, that,

for good or ill, it had been necessary for their paths to diverge.

## CHAPTER III

## THE PRESBYTERIAN BACKGROUND

Although he was eventually elected to the highest office in the gift of his Church, George Bryce's career in Canadian Presbyterianism was something of a disappointment to him. He had expected the achievements of his school and college days to be succeeded by the attainment of power and respect in his mature years. Instead, he found himself demoted from the first rank of the Church as the West moved out of the frontier stage and into closer relationship with central Canada. His power in the Presbytery of Manitoba was first eclipsed by Rev. James Robertson on Robertson's appointment to the Home Missions Superintendency. Then the arrival of John Mark King crushed his hopes for the Principalship of the College. Blamed for the heavy debt of the College after the depression of 1882, the combined disapproval of Robertson and King insured that Bryce would never again have access to the real positions of power in the Church.

He would attend the General Assembly regularly, would take part in debate on temperance, the School Question, and the Lord's Day legislation, and would be financial agent for the College and for the Presbytery Home Mission Committee. He would have considerable impact on Church policy in all

these spheres. But in spite of the moderatorship which he attained after Robertson and King had both died, he had to content himself with a career in the second rank of the Church.

Evidently his frustration sometime led to friction. With his ally, C.B. Pitblado of St. Andrew's, Winnipeg, he sparred with Robertson and King in Presbytery and College Board meetings throughout the 1880's. His deep resentment of King caused him to take every opportunity to undermine the Principal's authority and to take his own initiatives without King's approval. On at least one occasion these tactics were considered to be serious enough to warrant disciplinary action by the Senate of the College.

In March of 1889, Bryce travelled to a Home Missions Committee meeting in Toronto without King's permission. Robertson wrote to Professor Andrew Baird in Winnipeg:

What can he mean? Is he adopting a course that will sicken the Principal and leave him to resign or is he determined to play the game of worry and [indecipherable] and irritation till human nature refuses any longer to stand the strain? In any case if the Principal and his Senate do not act some member of the Board will. It is simply intolerable that one who has done so little for the Institution should be permitted to play the part he is doing towards the Principal who has done so much.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this continual friction, Bryce became even more isolated in the administrative circles of the Church. He continued to work tirelessly moderating calls for new congregations, preaching opening sermons, champion-

ing the College Missionary Society, but he never again was appointed to the powerful General Assembly Home Missions and Finance standing committees. His ambitions thwarted, he increased his activities outside the Church after 1889.

Nonetheless, the Church continued to be the central hub of his varied life. As the primary teacher of morality in society, the Church had a well established role to play. To Bryce, the danger of obsessive involvement in materialism could only be averted by a strong commitment to the Church. He could envision the Church standing in opposition to popular secular attitudes, as in its campaign against the liquor traffic and Sabbath desecration. More often he pictured the Church marching shoulder-to-shoulder with the better elements in society to steer Canada along the route of pragmatic reform. In his hierarchy of values a more personal involvement with faith seemed to take second place.

An early advocate of church union, his rejection of systematic theology allowed him to see the doctrinal differences between the uniting bodies as of secondary importance when considering the advantages of a united protestantism. Bryce, and people like him, paved the way for a union of protestant churches unprecedented in the world. In 1925, the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches came together as the United Church of Canada. Even without the minority of Presbyterians who chose to continue as the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the new united body became

the largest protestant denomination in Canada and, as its founders liked to think, the first truly Canadian Church.

It had been considered an unprecedented feat, in 1875, to unite all the varieties of Presbyterianism in Canada. Indeed the history of Presbyterianism in Scotland and then in Canada had been marked by schism, faction and tenacious disputes regarding doctrine and polity. Throughout these schisms, the one thing all factions had in common was a deep fidelity, both symbolic and actual, to the Westminster Standards which were the doctrinal basis of Presbyterianism. The Confession, Shorter Catechism and Longer Catechism which made up the Westminster Standards were formulated in 1647 by a two year long colloquium of scholars and divines convened at Westminster Abbey. To a mid-Victorian Presbyterian, the Standards were so time honoured and revered that any attempt to change them was met with fierce opposition.

It is all the more remarkable then, that in 1925 a substantial majority of Presbyterians were induced to let the Westminster Standards and the distinctive polity and traditions of the Presbyterian Church go in order to accomplish a union with two other denominations coming from quite different traditions.

Why Bryce and many of his generation so earnestly sought church union and how it came about that these men and women were willing to leave behind dearly held patterns of worship to embark on the risky venture of a completely new

church, is one of the most intriguing puzzles in Canadian church history. An enquiry into the faith and churchly career of George Bryce will provide a contribution to this puzzle and, at the same time, reveal something of the moral pressures involved in building the new western society.

Though Presbyterianism has received relatively little attention from Canadian secular scholars, from within its ranks the Church has not lacked for historians.<sup>2</sup> More recent secular scholarship has concentrated on particular aspects of Presbyterian history. John Webster Grant placed Presbyterianism within the general framework of Canadian church history in the third volume of A History of the Christian Church in Canada.<sup>3</sup> Stanford Reid<sup>4</sup> examined the relationship between Scottish Presbyterianism and Canadian Presbyterianism. E.A. Christie<sup>5</sup> traced the social and political outlook of the Church as expressed in the actions of the General Assembly. Finally, N.G. Smith<sup>6</sup> tried to account for the erosion of the distinctiveness of the Church as it approached union.

The relative thinness of historical scholarship on the Presbyterian denomination is symptomatic of the poverty of scholarship in Canadian church history as a whole. Of the so-called main-line denominations, Methodism has claimed the most attention, though its impact on the social and political spheres has clearly been the real source of interest for secular historians. Presbyterianism has been perceived as

having been less involved in radical social change; has been identified for example, as taking only a minor role in the Social Gospel movement. That this should result in a virtual dismissal, on the part of secular historians at least, of the role of the Presbyterian Church in moderate social reform is unfortunate and accounts for the curiously defensive tone of A.E. Christie's thesis on the social and political stance of the Presbyterian General Assembly.

The relative neglect of church history results, among other things, in historians treating Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians and even Anglicans as virtually interchangeable in their social, political and economic outlook regardless of the time period under discussion. In the absence of in-depth studies of the history of denominations, the omnibus term "protestant" has been presumed to represent a fine enough distinction for the purposes of secular history. Much basic enquiry remains to be done to substantiate this hypothesis. It is the thesis of this chapter that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist denominations were quite distinct in their social philosophy, worship styles, doctrine, polity and overall ambiance. As the century wore on however, the process of secularization had a homogenizing effect such that, by 1910, little remained of the former distinctiveness. In order to examine this process in the Presbyterian Church, it will be

necessary to delve into certain aspects of the Scottish background of Presbyterianism and its effect on the early Presbyterian churches in Canada.

The church into which Bryce was born was the Presbyterian Church in Canada, usually known as the "Free Church" to distinguish it from the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland from which it had split off following the disruption of the established Church of Scotland in 1843.<sup>7</sup> That this disruption over the issue of civil patronage was mirrored in Canada was a measure of the strong ties between the Canadian Presbyterian factions and their counterparts in Scotland. The Free Church, under the careful guidance of Dr. Robert Burns who was sent out from Scotland to shepherd the young church through the first years, rather quickly became the predominant force, in numbers and vigour, of the various factions.

Like the Scottish Free Church, the Canadian Free Church was born out of a desire to return to Calvinist orthodoxy through a reinvigorated evangelical piety. The established Church of Scotland had seemed mired in complacency following the deistic assaults on the Calvinist system during the Enlightenment. The terrible poverty and degradation of the working class in Glasgow and Edinburgh was being largely overlooked by the Kirk even as the State had begun to be involved in the relief of the poor. Nor did the Kirk seem

to care about the spiritual needs of the unchurched. Wealthy patrons could achieve substantial control of the Church through their nomination of ministers, even prevailing over the express wishes of the congregation.

In reaction to this abuse and the lethargy of the Kirk in matters of evangelism, a faction grew up around Rev. Thomas Chalmers, the brilliant minister of Troon and latterly of Glasgow. Establishment itself was never the issue to him, although certain other factions favoured complete disestablishment. Chalmers believed in the necessity for the civil powers to support and sustain Christ's Church as stated in Chapter XXIII of the Westminster Confession.<sup>8</sup> However, the state had no right to interfere in spiritual matters like the choice of a minister and by so doing deprive Christ of the headship of His Church. It was on this matter of the spiritual Lordship of Christ that Chalmers and his followers left the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May of 1843 to form the Free Church of Scotland.

Since the Church of Scotland in Upper and Lower Canada had never been the established church<sup>9</sup> nor subject to the patronage issue, there was no direct impetus for a schism on these counts. Sympathy with the theological underpinnings of the dispute however, as well as intense involvement with church affairs in the old country produced a disruption in Canada as well. Twenty-three of the sixty Kirk ministers

left the Canadian Synod meeting at Kingston in July of 1844. Within two years the Free Church had founded its own paper, the Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record, had founded Knox Theological College at Toronto, and had expanded to seven presbyteries. Within ten years, it was the largest of the Presbyterian factions in the Canadas.

The theology Bryce encountered on his entrance to Knox College in 1868 was in the conservative Free Church mould. Knox remained aloof from the liberal innovations of the romantic German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher who was to mean so much to the development of protestant theology. When looking beyond Canadian borders for leadership or influence, Knox looked to Edinburgh, Glasgow or Aberdeen in Scotland, and Princeton, Yale and Oberlin in the United States. Neither Oxford nor Cambridge nor the German universities yet held much influence in Canadian Presbyterian circles. At the same time, the Free Church repudiated the "moderate" theology which had made such an impact on the Scottish Kirk. The Calvinist God was ever present and ever concerned in every sphere of human life not, as the Enlightenment would have preferred, standing at a discreet remove while his creatures participated in the self-regulating world he had made.

The Free Church in Scotland, as in Canada, was marked by a new concern with the evils of the world, and with the evils of the industrial city in particular. Urbanization

and industrialization were not as far advanced in Canada, making the social orientation of the Canadian Free Church somewhat different. Nonetheless, the welfare, spiritual and physical, of society was very much the care and concern of the Church. In particular, Presbyterians gave leadership in educational and prison reform, temperance and sabbath reform.

The most pressing problem for Presbyterianism in Canada however, was the struggle to extend itself through the Canadas under very trying geographical and transportational circumstances. The new determination to provide ordinances for Presbyterians on the frontier and to bring the message of redemption to those who were ignorant of it forced the Free Church to confront the difficulties of ministering to a sparsely populated region with few ministers.

In this, the Church was hampered by its insistence on an educated clergy. No compromise could be made on this point in order to provide more ministers quickly. Certainly this was the opinion of S.D. Clark, who said, "The emphasis within the Church was upon a professional ministry--the very nature of the Church made such an emphasis necessary--while the frontier social situation demanded a break from professional standards, in medicine and law as well as religion".<sup>10</sup>

It is hard to imagine how any compromise could have been made on this point, given the nature of the Presbyterian system. The heart of Presbyterianism had always been

its stern fidelity to scripture and to a doctrinal system based on scripture. The Westminster Standards were referred to as the "subordinate standards" of the Church. The primary standard was the Bible itself. At the same time, the Shorter and Longer Catechisms set out a rather sophisticated theological system that was in constant danger of being misinterpreted unless taught under the guidance of a trained, literate clergyman.

It can be easily seen, as well, that Presbyterians placed as high a premium on the literacy of their parishioners as they did on the education of their ministers. The Shorter Catechism, which was recited every Sunday evening as a rule, could and often was, taught orally to the illiterate. But to be truly imbued with the faith Presbyterians had to be able to read scripture. It was this urgent necessity which was behind the opening of parish schools in Scotland. By 1800, Scotland had the highest literacy rate of any country in Europe.

Nevertheless, during the 1850's, some compromises in the system were being made in the Canadas. The Presbyterian factions were tending to cooperate rather than compete in new areas. Missionary outreach was being carried on by unordained theological students and by catechists. Like the Methodists, Presbyterian ministers were forced to itinerate, covering large areas. When an area was populous and prosperous enough, a congregation would be created, a minister

"called" and settled according to Presbyterian custom, and a church built. Until that happened, people in remote areas had to content themselves with mission status, irregular services, and prayer meetings led by a catechist or elder.

Though Presbyterianism struggled in vain for complete uniformity in worship, the basic features of the service and of daily church life could be readily discerned. In 1871, the biographer of Rev. Robert Burns identified them as:

Earnest and untrammelled Calvinistic preaching; the regular habit of pastoral household visitation; the simple celebration of the ordinance of the supper with accompanying week-day services; standing in public prayer; vocal and congregational singing of the praises of God; and the regular though not exclusive use of the authorized metrical version of the Psalms; these are the understood features of Scottish Presbyterianism.<sup>11</sup>

Church architecture was plain, stopping just short of severe, with the neo-Gothic style prevailing as the century wore on. The pulpit, often raised high above the congregation, was the focal point of attention, with a plain communion table in the centre front. Singing and chanting of the metrical Psalms was led by a precentor with only the aid of a tuning fork. Very soon the introduction of the pipe organ would involve the Church in serious controversy. The Sabbath, as it was invariably called, was strictly maintained as a day for worship, rest, and contemplation. No travelling, no visiting, no work and no reading of secular books would be done on Sunday. Pious housewives would prepare the next day's meals on Saturday.

In contrasting the Presbyterian outlook with that of Methodism, it has been customary for scholars to characterize Methodism as emotionally fervent, only marginally involved in doctrine, with an intensely personal approach to salvation. The ambiance of Presbyterianism, on the other hand, has been characterized as emotionally cold, severely intellectual, with a weight of complex doctrine. There is some justice in both these characterizations.

It is a mistake to take the coolness and restraint of Presbyterian outward expression as the real barometer of the Presbyterian psyche, however. The very restraint placed on outward expression made the interior life of the faithful intense and ardent. The minister would be constantly watchful for evidence of a religious awakening, always mindful that conscientious attendance at services was not enough. In the Calvinist universe, the elect could not accept and understand salvation by an act of will. Salvation could only be accepted by God making a change in the sinner's heart. The matter having been taken totally out of the person's hands lent an urgency to Presbyterian piety that is often overlooked by scholars. This is seen very clearly, for example, in John Black's deathbed letter to his brother James:

I past [sic] through a season of terrible doubt and alarm at first, so much of sin, unfaithfulness etc. that when I reviewed the state of my heart and life almost drove me from my hold altogether. Oh James, those terrible hours! At the edge of the pit. But by grace I was able to begin again, plead guilty, confess to the utmost and lay hold of such promises as if we confess, and etc. [sic] and hold fast. When I had done that, God was bound to his word and that in a renewed covenant I was safe [sic].<sup>12</sup>

This was the situation of the Free Presbyterian Church into which Bryce was ordained in 1871: a distinctive polity and form of worship, a Calvinist theology wedded to fervent evangelical practice, a reliance on educated clergy to interpret a systematic doctrine, a sense of responsibility to maintain and extend moral values in the secular world. In spite of close contact with the mother Church in Scotland, the Free Church had become proud of being a native Canadian Church. The Confederation of 1867 had been welcomed as more than a political necessity by the Church. The political ties within the Presbyterian communion were giving rise to dreams of what the country could become.

It is always dangerous to make generalizations about the political affiliations of large groups of people. However, partisan affiliations seemed particularly strongly marked in the Presbyterian churches of this era. The Church of Scotland tended to vote Tory while the Free Church (at this time called the Canada Presbyterian Church) and the United Presbyterians tended to vote Liberal. It was said, in jest, that Presbyterianism had no need for a weekly newspaper of its own since The Globe was fulfilling that function admirably.

As this joke illustrates, the Free Church's political orientation seems to have been towards the reform liberalism which emerged out of the Clear Grit wing of the party. The perceived excesses of the Canada First movement seem to have

held no allure for Presbyterians who always preferred to occupy what they regarded as a moderate position on the political spectrum. These conclusions must remain tentative until more research is done on the relationship of the Presbyterian churches to party politics.

Tentative though they may be, however, they may help to explain the late entry of the Presbyterians into missionary effort in the North West. Other protestant denominations had sent missionaries far earlier in the century--the Anglicans in 1820 and the Wesleyan Methodists in 1840. The Roman Catholic Church was established with the arrival of Provencher at St. Boniface in 1818. The Presbyterians, hemmed in by practical problems as well as a less mission oriented tradition, preferred to minister to incoming Scottish and Irish settlers in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes who already had a Presbyterian affiliation. As already described, the Presbyterian polity was not well-suited to outreach in remote areas. It was not until the 1850's, as well, that the Presbyterian factions were in any sense well established.

It was at this juncture, in 1851, that the Free Church finally agreed to send a minister to the Scottish settlers at Kildonan. Even then, this should not be regarded as an awakening interest in extension to the North West. It was more likely the result of a pricking of conscience on the part of Rev. Robert Burns, that a Presbyterian community in

the midst of the wilderness had waited for over thirty years for a minister.

Colleagues were slow to follow Black until 1862 when Rev. James Nisbet came to found the Indian mission at Prince Albert. He was followed in short order by Rev. George Flett, Rev. John McKay and Rev. Hugh McKellar. There may have been a connection between this sudden burst of interest in the North West on the part of the Free Church, and the fact that George Brown had become an ever more vocal advocate of Canadian westward expansion throughout the late 1850s and 1860s.

The fact that all these men were employed in Indian mission work suggests that the Church did not yet regard the West as an area for large scale white settlement. However, it is not unlikely that thoughts of future development of the region entered into the decision to concentrate, for the moment, on Indian missions. The civilizing of the Indian peoples would have been seen as a process that should be well in hand before the arrival of white settlers.

Dreams of the future aside, when it came to contemplating the expense of sending missionaries to a remote region with the high cost of living such a region always possesses, the Church was somewhat less than open handed. There were enough people at the General Assembly every year with dubious faith in the future of the North West and an eye on the balance sheet to assure that North West missions

remained a marginal claim on Home Mission funds. The college that Bryce went out to found must have been considered rudimentary indeed, and not to be mentioned in the same breath with Knox or Queens. It was first referred to in the Assembly minutes, as a "Collegiate Institute", with little in the way of post-secondary education seeming to be contemplated. The College in its initial five years, could only offer courses up to the equivalent of the second year of an Arts degree program and only preparatory courses in theology. Throughout the 1870's, Bryce could be heard desperately pressing the needs of the College and western missions at the General Assemblies and through articles and letters to the editor in church publications.

In 1875, he wrote a pamphlet entitled The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Northwest which was published by the British American Presbyterian magazine and intended for distribution both in central Canada and in Great Britain. In it, he sounded the expansionist theme, with its great hopes for the future, so familiar in his later writing, "It seems to be the will of Providence that Canada, with her four millions of inhabitants should, with her own surplus population and that of other countries, especially the more populous countries of the Old World, fill up and subdue this magnificent inheritance".<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the decade 1871-1881 the central authority of the Church had less confidence in the viability of

western settlement than had Bryce. The romantic appeal of foreign missions tended to throw the North West into shadow. After the initial burst of enthusiasm in the late 1860's and early 1870's, missionaries were slow in coming to the West and were pitifully underpaid. The union of Presbyterian Churches in 1875 which was heralded as a great step forward, may have had some negative influence on western missions. It is reasonable to assume that factional disputes continued after the union. The Church of Scotland, in particular, had been less enthusiastic in matters of outreach, though they had sent Rev. Thomas Hart to Winnipeg in 1872. The same could be said for the United Presbyterian Church. The necessity for placating these groups may have placed definite limits on the outreach to the North West.

It is certainly true that the Assembly's mounting alarm at the deficit in the Home Missions Committee budget initiated a move to further reduce the salaries of missionaries in 1878--a move angrily protested by the Presbtery of Manitoba, which by then had been granted Synodical powers.<sup>14</sup> It is also true that Bryce's annual reports to the Assembly often occasioned debate about the advisability of consolidating the colleges, of which there were now six,<sup>15</sup> for the sake of efficiency. During the assembly of 1881, prominent churchmen, including John Mark King, spoke in favour of this move. Since the Assembly carried almost the whole financial burden of Manitoba College, with almost no endowment funds,

the question was raised whether such a distant college in an area of sparse population whose prospects of growth were not assured, was worth the investment.

This decade of slow, painful growth in the Presbytery of Manitoba also marked the high point of Bryce's power, both within the Presbytery and at the Assembly level. His colleagues were either of an older generation, like Black, or in distant mission fields, like McKellar, or more self-effacing, like Hart. His prestige as a Professor, and his home base location at Winnipeg helped to reinforce his natural pretensions to leadership. The generational confrontation with Black over the location of the College had ended in Bryce's favour, setting the Presbytery in a course away from the patterns of the Red River Settlement.

The Presbytery was so small at this time that every member was on most of the standing committees and no committee had more power or prestige than another. Still, Bryce's hand was seen most often at the purse strings as frequent Chairman of the Finance and Property Committees. In addition to this, he was financial agent both for the College and for the Presbytery Home Missions Committee, and latterly, for the western section of the Assembly Home Missions Committee. Presumably his intention in studying law at this time was to strengthen his expertise in the area of property law, which was the chief concern of the Home Missions Committee during this period. In addition to his

agency, he was a member of the powerful western section of the Assembly Home Missions Committee, serving with men far more experienced than himself.

He shared the title of "Professor of Manitoba College" with Thomas Hart but by 1875 had begun to call himself "Senior Professor". There was a curious vagueness in the College administrative structure imposed by the General Assembly -- Bryce was called "head" of Manitoba College but his actual duties and authority were left undefined (at least in the Proceedings of the Assembly). This vagueness and his natural desire for authority may have caused Bryce to become overbearing and defensive with regard to his position, alienating some of his colleagues and setting up pro-Bryce and anti-Bryce factions in the Presbytery. In any case, it would appear that in matters of financial planning for the College, Bryce had full authority subject only to the wishes of the Board.

The arrival of Rev. James Robertson as minister of Knox Church, Winnipeg, was greeted by Bryce at first, with gratitude and relief. As leading elder of the congregation, he had also preached there in the absence of a settled minister. This combined with his College work and Home Missions supply duties must have been a considerable strain even on his robust constitution. The two ought to have had much in common. They had been undergraduates at University College together and Robertson was also present with the

university company at the Ridgeway Fenian raid. Robertson's fervent evangelical outlook and his homey practicality with regard to theology would have agreed well with Bryce.

It soon became apparent, however, that in Robertson, Bryce would find not only an ambition rivalling his own but a severe critic of his financial planning for the College. In Robertson's letters to Rev. Andrew Baird, then missionary at Fort Edmonton and latterly Professor of Church history at Manitoba College, are recorded Robertson's candid views of Bryce's character.

In 1882, Robertson dryly observed to Baird, "Professor Bryce is yet away in Scotland. I hear that he is not meeting with much success with his College scheme. Authorship appears to bulk more largely in his mind than College Endowment".<sup>16</sup> Even though they were necessary for the endowment of the College, Robertson greatly resented Bryce's extended summer trips since they left Robertson and his already overtaxed colleagues to provide services for an impossibly large collection of congregations and missions separated by vast distances. He did not think that Bryce could be spared from doing his share of Home Missions work during the only part of the year when travelling was relatively easy.

This is not to say that Bryce and Robertson did not cooperate or work well together. Their substantial philosophical accord on matters like temperance and education made it possible for them to submerge personal antipathies for the

greater good of the Church. Robertson's personal gifts, his capacity for work even rivalling Bryce's own, and his undoubted practical talent for Church extension, soon made him the recognized champion of Home Missions work in the Presbytery. He became a member of the western section of the Assembly Home Missions Committee and, in 1881, with the support of the convenor, Rev. William Cochrane, helped to get the support of the Assembly for a western Superintendency of Home Missions. It is not surprising that the Assembly then turned to Robertson to fill the office.

It is not recorded whether Bryce coveted the office of Superintendent of Home Missions for himself. In any case, in terms of practical power, Robertson now clearly outranked him. Indeed, some traditionalists at the Assembly had been critical of the creation of the office of Superintendency, saying that it smacked of prelacy and compromised the principle of the supremacy of Presbytery. Though Robertson was technically subject to the direction of the Presbytery of Manitoba and accountable to the Assembly Home Missions Committee, his guidelines gave him considerable latitude in the oversight of western missions--a latitude which he usually exercised to its widest limits.

Nor can it be denied that the creation of the Home Missions Superintendency was unprecedented in the Presbyterian tradition. It marked the beginning of a real impact on the central Church authority of Church extension into the

North West. The structures and traditions of the Church were changing, some would say being bent out of shape, to accommodate the special problems of the West. Property and buildings had to be bought and built to service the needs of incoming Presbyterian settlers. It was Robertson's particular genius that he streamlined the often cumbersome administrative procedures necessary to create a congregation, purchase property, and construct churches and manses so much that almost before the settlers arrived in a given locale, the Church was there to meet them.<sup>17</sup> In order to do this however, the Home Missions Committee budget went into even larger deficits.

It was at this critical juncture, when the central Church had begun to mobilize all its resources to achieve a foothold in the West, that Bryce made a substantial error in judgement. He had authorized the erection of a rather pretentious new building for the College at an estimated cost of \$33,000,<sup>18</sup> of which he had already raised \$20,000 through the sale of property and through subscription. The economy suddenly went into depression and many who had subscribed found it impossible to pay. Worse than that, the building cost much more than originally planned, the eventual cost being \$43,000.

It would appear from several candid opinions, that Bryce had not been a careful steward of the College finances; that he had kept the accounts in a haphazard

fashion. Three years after the event, Robertson would write to Baird: "Under his leadership, the College was nearly swamped and his hand must be kept off the management in future, else disaster is ahead. Under his Principalship, the Ladies College went down with a debt of over \$4,000 which is still unpaid. The College had a debt of \$43,000 when Dr. King took hold and for this too Dr. Bryce is responsible. I counselled caution and urged better financial management but in vain".<sup>19</sup>

The official College financial reports, as given by Bryce at the Assembly of 1881, did not indicate any more cause for alarm than usual. But by 1883, with the depression deepening, it was apparent that there was much behind the scenes concern. No doubt worry over the financial disaster had a role in Bryce's breakdown in health during the fall and winter of 1882. At the Assembly in June, he appealed for more help, "if the lives of the Professors are to be saved".<sup>20</sup> It was clearly the opinion of the Assembly that Manitoba College was in a state of crisis. A special committee was convened to deliberate and report solutions.

Under the chairmanship of Principal George Grant, the committee presented its report two days later. Considering that only two years before, the Assembly had been unsure of the wisdom of maintaining a College in Manitoba, this report was to mark a decisive reorientation of policy towards Manitoba College. A rescue mission it certainly was, but

more than that, it foreshadowed the clear commitment of the central Church to the future of the College and, by implication, the West itself.

For Bryce, it was a slap in the face and a warning that he would be allowed less responsibility in the new scheme of things. Perhaps to help him save face, the financial burdens of the College were called heavy but, "-- not too heavy considering the work done --".<sup>21</sup> Financial responsibility, however, was to be increased. The proposal was to create a new theological college. More revenue would be channelled toward Manitoba College by the Assembly. Salaries of Bryce and Hart were to be raised to \$2,000. A financial agent was to be appointed for the College. There were to be additional lecturers in Arts.

The crowning recommendation of the report was left till last--the proposal to appoint Dr. John Mark King, the Assembly's current Moderator, to the Principalship of the College, and as Professor of Theology. The College needed someone with considerable stature in the east and in Britain at the helm. King was an obvious choice, as was the only other serious nominee, Dr. William Cochrane of Brantford. Then at the height of his power, King was a careful and astute financial manager with many wealthy parishioners in his Toronto congregation, St. James Square. Nor were his intellectual attainments any less proven. He had often lectured on a temporary basis at Knox College and his Sunday

Bible study classes were heavily attended by University of Toronto students.

Even if it was not entirely his fault, Bryce's slapdash handling of the new building ended his hope for the Principalship. That aside, he could not equal the qualifications of King either in theological erudition or in eastern prestige. The College emerged from its crisis more clearly tied to the central authority of the Church than ever before. It is perhaps necessary to ask whether this would have happened without the spur of the financial crisis. It is likely that the Church would, in any case, have reacted to influences from outside its purview. The C.P.R. was nearing completion at this time and more settlers were coming into the territory. The crisis may have hastened a reorientation already heralded by Robertson's appointment to the Superintendency.

For his part, King made his acceptance of the Principalship conditional on the continued support both of the General Assembly and of the Presbyterian community in the North West. He was not interested in associating himself with a losing cause. As he wrote to Baird at Edmonton shortly after his arrival in Winnipeg, "I hope you may interest your people in the institution with which my ministry would seem likely to be identified--I say would seem--for I shall not remain here unless the Church supports me and puts an end almost at once to these deficits which have

brought the College to the verge of bankruptcy".<sup>22</sup>

The success of King's Principalship has been attested to elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> Within ten years, he had wiped out the large deficit and established a stable financial endowment for the College. The theological students of Manitoba College became a prime resource for missions in the West especially after King introduced the innovation, in 1893, of holding theological classes in the summer, leaving the students free to minister during the winters.

In its curriculum, Manitoba College reflected the theological conservatism of the rest of the Canadian Presbyterian Colleges, and of King himself. In systematic theology, Calvin, Pictet and Turretine continued to be taught. Charles Hodge's Systematic Theology continued to be the basic modern text. The impress of German liberal theology or the higher Biblical criticism cannot be seen in the curriculum of the 1880's and 1890's though these were contentiously debated in the United States and in Britain during the same period. To be sure, the well established tradition of Canadian Presbyterian students taking post-graduate tours of the Scottish and German universities would surely have exposed them to new theories. Regrettably, not enough is known about the effect of these British and continental connections on the theology, both systematic and practical, of Canadian Presbyterianism.

King was, himself, well informed on all the develop-

ments in Germany and in an article in the College Journal, summed up the liberal tendency in theology this way: "Its professed object is to overcome in a definite manner the perplexing and sterile antagonisms between supernaturalism and rationalism or between Faith and Science and to conquer an independent province for the religious consciousness which is with it, after Schleiermacher, the great source of Christian doctrine".<sup>24</sup>

King recognized the seductive appeal of such a theology but warned his students of the danger of becoming hopelessly lost in that "independent province". As he continued, "It will be readily seen that the system is not without its attractive features for the perplexed thought of the age and thoughtful minds will notice that it contains a dangerous element of subjectivity in relation to the determination of truth".<sup>25</sup>

Because of this thoughtful critique of liberal theology, King would not allow the works of the German liberals to appear on the College syllabus. Whether this policy was, in part, responsible for the chaffing of Manitoba College students against the seeming irrelevancy of their curriculum is hard to establish. It is not unusual for theological students to find that their scholarly curriculum does not readily relate to the practical task of ministry. In the case of Manitoba College students of the 1880's and 1890's however, these doubts were reinforced by

many of their elders.

The attitudes of Bryce and Robertson, both of the same generation, are revealing of the strain between a traditional theology and the practice of evangelism. Faced with the almost insurmountable problems of Church extension in a vast sparsely populated region, they in effect, rejected the unhelpful theology, and concentrated on the practice. There was no time to find a new theology or a new way of interpreting the old. Robertson is known to have complained that he wished his missionaries knew less Latin and more horse. As for Bryce, he was proud to proclaim in 1903 that he had never preached a theological sermon; he had never had time.

In the same sermon, Bryce summed up his belief that the intellectuality of theology was insufficient for touching the average man. What was needed was a simple distillation of the Gospel message. As he said:

There is no cabalistic, no mesmeric power in the Gospels. It appeals to man's intelligence. If you cannot interest men you can not reach them. A group of men, with its Mathew Arnolds, seeking intellectual impulse, comes saying, 'Give us the gospel of culture and we will be satisfied'. 'Culture!' we answer. 'Yes, give us all the culture possible. Paul, Luther, Chalmers, Edwards, were versed in the learning of the schools, knew philosophy, theology, letters, but they used these only as feathers for the arrows which they sent flying into the souls of men . . .'<sup>26</sup>

This should not be read as a complete rejection of higher intellectual pursuits. It is not anti-intellectualism of the Hofstadter variety. Rather, it is a limiting of

intellectual inquiry and cultural knowledge to what Bryce thought was its proper sphere. Systematic theology, biblical criticism, and doctrinal dispute were for the College and the study, never for the pulpit or the pastoral visit. These disciplines were necessary if the Church were not to be a rudderless boat, tossed about by every popular whim or craze. The Church must always be in touch with its doctrinal roots and with the scripture on which this was based. But when it came to the changing of men's hearts, Bryce said, "Brethren, in religion, while the two should not be sundered, yet it must be admitted that heart is more than head".<sup>27</sup>

The subjugation of doctrine and theology to an emotional understanding of the core of the Gospels was to have great significance for late nineteenth-century Presbyterianism. The edifice of Calvinist doctrine, which had been the pride of the Free Church tradition, became for the men of Bryce's generation and certainly for the younger generations trained by him, increasingly irrelevant to their daily experience. The Westminster Standards continued to be taught in the Colleges and revered as the repository of the doctrinal distinctiveness of Presbyterianism. But it would have been hard to imagine Bryce preaching a sermon on the doctrine of election. Bryce professed Calvinism but behaved like an Arminian.

The practice of Presbyterianism was changing as well,

though this is more difficult to document. The uneasiness of the Presbyterian sensibility with regard to beauty, ornamentation, or finery in church architecture and interior appointment is legendary. Plainness to the point of austerity had been the Presbyterian way and any compromise of this standard had been regarded as vanity. After 1865, however, church buildings began to be erected in a more elaborate style. The preference for the neo-Gothic style became strongly marked. As congregations became more affluent, they began to engage in churchly conspicuous consumption without the self-consciousness about material splendour that might have stopped them a generation before. Pipe organs were introduced after considerable contention, and in their wake, a wider range of hymns, gowned choirs, choir leaders, and where affordable, skilled soloists.

Though the Standards required that man be regarded as unalterably corrupt, a mellow view was in the air. In Manitoba, the practice of public admonition of sinners by the church session and the practice of public confession seems to have died out after 1880. The traditional duty of the minister to observe closely the behavior of his congregation and remonstrate with the sinner in the name of Christ had become distasteful. As Bryce said, "how hard it is to be faithful and not censorious. And kind, friendly dealing is far more consonant with the spirit of Christ than ecclesiastical censures, anathemas, and thunderbolts though

they have their place".<sup>28</sup>

The Shorter Catechism, which had been the primary tool for teaching the doctrine of Presbyterianism to the young, and for reinforcing this knowledge in the adult worshipper, had ceased to have so primary a role. It was still taught in Sabbath school, but was used less and less in weekly adult prayer meetings. Bryce found it and the rote nature of learning it represented ill adapted as a teaching method for the conditions of the North West. As he said:

Our forefathers followed the practice of a regular examination of every household in religious knowledge. Our new world life seems not to permit such a thing. There is more freedom and offhandedness needed amongst us but if a minister has a definite religious aim, he'll find the opportunity; and depend on it, the people long for religious conversation.<sup>29</sup>

The Church stood in a dialectical relationship to the social forces of the age. It was being shaped by the middle-class values then gaining ascendancy throughout North America. The social philosophy of the Free Church tradition had itself been formed in the cauldron of the early industrial economy in Scotland. In reflecting this philosophy back to society, the Church had become a powerful agent of social change.

It is unfair to place nineteenth-century views of society in strict comparison to the systematic views of our own age. To do so is almost like comparing apples and oranges. With this in mind, it is perhaps too much to say that there existed a comprehensive Free Church Presbyterian

view of society. However, many of its most erudite leaders, notably Chalmers in Scotland and McCosh in the United States, had reflected at length on social and economic problems and their relation to the Church.

Chalmers had written a study of political economy and a series of discourses called *The Application of Christianity to the Commercial and Ordinary Affairs of Life*. In this book, Chalmers accounted for the alternating booms and depressions of the capitalist economy in this way:

. . . in opposition to the maxim, that the spirit of enterprise is the soul of commercial prosperity, do we hold that it is the excess of this spirit beyond the moderation of the New Testament, which, pressing on the natural boundaries of trade, is sure, at length to visit every country, where it operates with the recoil of all those calamities which, in the shape of beggared capitalists and unemployed operatives, and dreary intervals of bankruptcy and alarm, are observed to follow a season of speculation.<sup>30</sup>

Chalmers wanted to steer a moderate course through the seas of economic activity; to set checks and balances on the natural appetite of man for the accumulation of wealth. His view of economy emphasized the worth, to the whole of society, of prudent investment and the harm of rank speculation. It was no sin to acquire wealth, but to be obsessed with its acquisition to the exclusion of all else would surely earn retribution. Nor was success in economic terms necessarily a mark of God's grace. Wealth was certainly a gift from God but salvation he would give only to the elect. God expected much from those in possession of wealth. In

return for their good fortune, they were required to support the poor in their parish and participate in the improvement of society.

Chalmers's economic philosophy was influential enough in its day to earn the scorn of Marx. Certainly, in Bryce's economic outlook, there are definite echoes of it. To Bryce, man was endowed by God with certain talents and abilities. He would be squandering these gifts if he did not push himself to his maximum social and economic achievement. As he said, "A man is doing right--is following a true course when he derives a reasonable amount of this world's wealth--or honour--or power and is unworthy of the God who created him and of the faculties he is endowed with if he does not with energy work in that field of labour in which he believes Providence has placed him".<sup>31</sup>

It was a view of life that was very congenial to the entrepreneurial capitalism of Canadian business life. In a mind like Bryce's--a mind not careful in making distinctions--the strictures of Chalmers seemed to be easily forgotten. It was so difficult, indeed, for an otherwise upright Presbyterian to distinguish the fine line between a prudent investment and outright speculation, that even clergymen were caught in the fever of the Manitoba real estate boom of 1882. Bryce himself was not above attempting to trade in political favours with Sir Clifford Sifton in order to persuade Sifton to have two pieces of Indian land in the

Okanagan Valley, which were a necessary part of the damming and irrigation scheme designed by Bryce and his business partners, transferred to the ownership of their company, the Okanagan Power and Irrigation Company.<sup>32</sup> Sifton did not comply, but the whole episode tottered precariously on the edge of legality and propriety. When the fever of a boom was in the air, Presbyterians were no more immune to it than anybody else.

Bryce's view of society can only be gleaned from certain asides made in the course of talking about something else. Clearly he did not feel impelled to reflect on the structures of society in as comprehensive a way as had Chalmers. Characteristically, he accepted and acted upon the received wisdom of his age without much in the way of introspective evaluation. These demurs aside, however, it is possible to trace the main lines of his outlook.

Bryce's society was, if not classless, very fluid in its structure. Each class had a role to play in the overall health of society but anyone with the right combination of hard work, initiative, education and luck could rise to the highest place. Bryce's admiration for such self-made men as Lord Strathcona and Andrew Carnegie shows how captive he was to the notion of individual entrepreneurship. The strange persistence of this notion in the face of clear evidence of the tendency of Strathcona and other Canadian financial entrepreneurs to enter into syndicates and other kinds of

formal and informal combines has become the subject of recent scholarly investigation.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, according to Bryce, these men owed everything they had to their own brains and stamina.

Ever the individualist, Bryce considered that any subclass or sub-group of society that placed its own power and aspirations above the general welfare of society did so in defiance of Christian principle and established order. In this light, he interpreted any dissent from established order, regardless of the individual merits of the situation, as an attack upon the whole fabric of society. Plutocracy at one end of the social spectrum and mob rule at the other end were seen in essentially the same terms. However, he was inclined to be more fearful of the latter than the former. In an unique interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, he said, "On the other hand, it must be observed that anarchists, social extremists, Jacobins, moonlighters, and all pure self-seekers, in their principles are directly opposed to the Sermon on the Mount and the doctrine of altruism laid down by Christ, that they at once cut Christ adrift and defy the sanctions of morality, loyalty and law".<sup>34</sup>

It was this fear of collectivist activity that was one of the main points of divergence between the progressivism of Bryce and the Social Gospel that was to mean so much to many younger ministers during the decade following his

retirement and leading up to church union. The program of the Social Gospel movement, though to state it in this way suggests a clarity and focus which the movement did not, in fact, possess, was to mobilize the disadvantaged in order to gain a more equitable distribution of wealth, power, and prestige in society. Bryce would never have been comfortable with either the levelling tendency implied in this program or the tactics of militant confrontation which, to him, would have been the inevitable result.

Bryce was too deeply bound up with the secular middle-class values that he had spent a lifetime establishing to respond to the Social Gospel which now arose to challenge many of those values. Nor was the Presbyterian Church, as a whole, much moved by the new theology. The fragility of the bond between the Calvinist orthodoxy and its evangelical outreach, and the congeniality of its social philosophy to that of the secular sphere had left it very vulnerable to the forces of secularization. By the end of the century, significant changes had taken place in the Church.

The Methodist Church had, in spite of the Social Gospel faction, experienced the same kind of rapprochement with middle-class respectability. As a result, at the turn of the century, there was much less to distinguish between the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches than there had been fifty years before. It became easier to envisage a union of the main-line protestant denominations in Canada.

Bryce and his generation were willing to give up the distinctiveness of their traditions in order to embrace the practical advantages of a protestanism unified against the forces of materialism, unbelief, and the perceived threat of aggressive Catholicism. During the 1890s, while the movement languished, he continued to support the idea. It was during his moderatorship in 1902 that hope was rekindled. A routine fraternal visit to the Methodist General Conference, which was in session at the same time, by Bryce, Principal William Patrick and Rev. C.W. Gordon reopened the door.

Bryce gave his usual energetic speech, raising the subject of the faltered union plans and Patrick and Gordon followed in the same theme. The result was a surprising resolution, on the part of the Conference, to reopen negotiations with the Presbyterian Union Committee.

By the time the union of Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches in Canada had come about in 1925, Bryce had become senile and had been inactive in the world for about five years. Though it was a different era from the jaunty world of 1902, the new Church, in many ways, bore the stamp of Bryce and his generation.

## CHAPTER IV

## BRYCE AND THE HISTORICAL ENTERPRISE

The past had deep significance for George Bryce. He tended to place historical events in a sweeping continuum from the pre-history of the mound builders to the sunny progress of his own time. In writing about Lord Selkirk, he began with Selkirk's illustrious ancestors five generations before. His Short History of the Canadian People began with a description of the formation of the Canadian shield through several millennia of geological time.

That his literary powers were unequal to the task of presenting this sweeping vision to his readers is equally evident. Though he published nine full length books and over forty-five pamphlets, in none of his forays into print was he able to convey successfully the emotional and intellectual attraction fuelling his own interest in the past. History, he said, should be picturesque and thrilling. In spite of this assertion, however, it is impossible to get beyond the limitations of Bryce's prose style--flat, choked with facts, carelessly put together and curiously unimaginative.

Undoubtedly, he published too much. Several of his books, notably the Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's

Colonists (1909), the MacKenzie, Selkirk, Simpson volume of the Makers of Canada series and his Life of Lord Selkirk (1912) duplicated, with very few additions, material already covered in two of his earlier books, Manitoba: Its Infancy, Growth, and Present Condition (1882) and the Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company (1900). The Scot in Canada Vol. II was a dreary catalogue of anyone in possession of a Scottish surname who did anything of note in western Canada.

The only conclusion possible from this dogged publishing record is that seeing his name in print appealed to Bryce's considerable vanity. It is doubtful that he made much money from his books. A statement of his assets<sup>1</sup> in 1920 lists a royalty of \$50.00 from a second edition of his Short History of the Canadian People. Though the market for Canadian books was still very small at that time, 3,000 copies being a typical press run, none of Bryce's books ever lost money and three had gone into second editions. Since people were buying his books, the incentive to publish several books of mediocre quality rather than one book of merit must have been irresistible.

From the early 1880s to his death, history became Bryce's main avocational interest. An antiquarian sensibility, in both its positive and negative aspects, informs all his work. There is the pleasure taken in piecing a story together. There is a fascination with original sources.

There is also a mawkish sentimentality, a tendency toward hero creation and hero worship, and a disinclination to deal with violent conflict and contention.

In The Death of the Past<sup>2</sup>, J.H. Plumb makes a clear distinction between an interest in history and an interest in the past. History is an intellectual process of finding out what happened in the past. Rather than being explored on its own merits, however, the past has always been used for a variety of social purposes. The past is always a created vision, often appropriated by ruling classes to buttress their position in society. It would be overstating the case to say that Bryce consciously and with calculation used the past to affirm and extend his middle-class values. Lacking the professional historian's obligation to be disinterested, however, his deep commitment to the progressive ethic naturally spilled over into his study of the past. His purpose was to find meaning for the present in the past, to show the justification and roots of present actions in the past.

Douglas Owsam, in his book Promise of Eden, has presented Bryce in the role of western regionalist. According to Owsam, Bryce and the other former Ontarians who came to the West on a wave of Canadian expansionist fervour began to wonder, in the 1880's, whether the bargain made with Canada in 1870 had been worth the price. The west's position as hinterland to central Canada became irksome, a thing to be

resisted. As Owram has said, "A sense of alienation from the East would bring western historians to undertake a fundamental reorientation of their perspective on western development and western identity. These stresses led what had begun as an attempt to set down the history of the West to become an effort to develop a particular regional historiography."<sup>3</sup>

Their dissatisfaction with the present impelled historians like Bryce and Rev R.G. MacBeth to invest the history of the region prior to 1870 with idyllic qualities. The culmination of this retreat was the publication of Bryce's Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists in 1909. In this book, Bryce presented the Red River Settlement as a small utopia where racial and social strife, as well as the taint of eastern expansionism, were unheard of. The golden age of the West became the lost Red River past instead of the future full of promise. The regional historiography that Owram saw Bryce and MacBeth creating emphasized the separate roots and separate integrity of the West.

While there is some merit in this portrait of the last phase of Bryce's historical career, in the light of a full assessment of his preoccupations, this is a very partial view. Certainly Bryce tended to think of the West as Ontario improved, the inheritor of the mantle of newness and progressivism. In The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists there is, to be sure, a turgid undercurrent of

nostalgia. But this has more to do with the commemorative purpose of the book and its function in increasing enthusiasm for the Selkirk Centennial in 1912. There is little evidence, either in Bryce's other books, his other public statements, or his activities during this period, to support Owram's contention that Bryce's history was fuelled by a sense of grievance against central Canada.

At the same time, Owram ignores another theme that claimed Bryce's attention from the late 1890's till the end of his life. During the same period when Owram would have Bryce rejecting central Canadian control and founding a regional school of historiography, he was giving speeches on imperialist sentiment as a cohesive force in healing Canadian divisions.

Bryce professed to see a rising tide of national spirit in Canada. His frequent elaboration of this theme is hard to reconcile with a wounded regionalism. By his own assessment, he had never advocated a "narrow provincialism." No matter how frustrated he became with what he saw as Ottawa's unwillingness to give Manitoba equal status with the older provinces in confederation, he thought of himself as first, a citizen of the British empire, then a Canadian, and finally, a Manitoban. In order to support this argument fully it will be necessary to examine Bryce's historical career in greater detail, placing it within the context of events.

Historians like L.G. Thomas,<sup>4</sup> W.L. Morton,<sup>5</sup> and T.D. Regehr,<sup>6</sup> have tended to see Bryce, as distinct from the native historians James Ross, Donald Gunn and J.J. Hargrave, as the first voice of Ontario democracy in the historiography of the west. With his university training in modern historical method, Bryce was supposed to have brought a sophistication to the writing of history not possessed by Ross and Gunn, who were simply relating events from their own experience.

Some qualification of this assessment of Bryce's historiographical significance is necessary. Though a spokesman for the values of law and order, responsible government, universal education, and rational religion, Bryce should not be seen as a modern academic historian, or even a figure in transition toward that goal. His training at the University of Toronto in the 1860s exposed him to historical study, but history then was still pursued as one of the branches of literature. It was not until the appointment of Prof. George Wrong in 1894 that a more modern academic history began to be taught there.

Bryce's interest remained avocational in nature. His work can be placed, early or late, within the amateur tradition of the popular historian writing for a large general audience. He proved, in his Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company, that he could handle a detailed historical account based on original sources. However, even in

this book, which he justly considered his best, the themes that interested him most were the qualities of mind and body necessary to confront the wilderness. It was the human story on a grand scale, not the annual trade statistics of the Company, that occupied his attention. Factual details--and there were many - were used in service of the story. They had no relevance of their own. Bryce's admiration for the pluck, cleverness, and fairness of the Hudson's Bay Company officers led him to sacrifice much in the way of logic and evidence, in order to present these men in a favourable light.

There is a heavy strain of the celebratory and commemorative in Bryce's history. The Selkirk biography and the Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists were both written with the express purpose of increasing interest in the Selkirk Centennial of 1912. The finding of heroes and, as J.M. Bumsted has said, "a viable founder"<sup>7</sup> was a necessary task to provide meaning and inspiration for his own time. In Bryce's work, logic, continuity, style, accuracy, precision, and evidence--all hallmarks of the modern approach to history--became subordinate to the celebratory mode.

The necessity for an affirmative tone imposed by this celebratory mode plus Bryce's natural optimism made it difficult for him to deal with conflict, hardship, or other negative aspects of the past. As he said in his Life of Lord Selkirk:

In the joy of accomplishment we may forget the bloodshed, and hardships, and poverty of the first settlers one hundred years ago. They built, and we have entered into their labours. The rebellions and struggles are left aside to the historians, while we hoist our banners and sing our Paeans of gladness.<sup>8</sup>

The role of popular literature in affirming what is felt to be good and true in a given society is well known. It was Bryce's intention to reach the widest possible audience with his historical work. This he was able to do when his fellow liberal J.W. Dafoe agreed to run Bryce's series of articles on the history of Winnipeg in the Free Press every Saturday, throughout 1905. The series was called "An Illustrated History of Winnipeg"<sup>9</sup> and featured Bryce at the peak of his celebratory form. In these jaunty history lessons, crammed with facts and lists of names, Bryce attempted to instil a popular appreciation for the heroes, living and dead, who were responsible for the growth of the city.

In this series of articles, more than in any other source, Bryce dealt with events from his own experience: with the beginnings of urbanization, a commercial economy, and a metropolis/hinterland relationship. Coming from a farm background, like many of his fellow Ontarions, Bryce had always seemed most at home dealing with the remoter past of the fur-trade era, when cities were an irrelevancy to the North West. In the "Illustrated History of Winnipeg" he was able to reflect on what he felt was best about his own time and to relate it to a coherent picture of the past. In his

foreword he explained his fascination with Winnipeg in this way:

But Winnipeg has been unexampled in Canada as the arena of great physical and material energy; it has been the theatre of great hopes and sanguine anticipations; it has gathered a large cosmopolitan population speaking twenty languages; it has the character of a busy metropolis, conscious of the fact that it commands the backing of a thousand miles of fertile prairie--the home of coming millions; it is a city that regards merit rather than the claims of family history, and present deeds rather than past achievements; it is a friendly city--remarkably free from fierce distinctions of class, rank or creed.<sup>10</sup>

This was the mirror Bryce held out to his fellow Winnipeggers. It was a picture of the city that, in its rigidly affirmative tone and airy unreality, had no room for the images of poverty, over-crowding, prostitution, and labour unrest that, in a short ten years from the time this was written, could no longer be ignored. Bryce's city was always new; too young to have those problems most associated with the corrupt cities of Europe.

This lack of both clarity and reality in Bryce's image of the city reflects a bias in his literary tastes. A list of his literary favourites is revealing: Francis Parkman, James Fenimore Cooper, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Walter Scott and R.M. Ballentyne. None of these writers, it is certain, would have helped a nineteenth-century Canadian with an interest in history to refine a literary image of the modern city. Crude echoes of all these writers can be heard in Bryce's histories; the frontier and wilderness themes of Cooper and Longfellow: the fur-trade adventures of Ballentyne, the dense Scottish romance of Scott, and the

struggle of England and France for possession of North America in Parkman. These themes and images nurtured Bryce's boyhood. He was receptive to seeing them acted out again in a new theatre when he came to the west.

In the histories of Francis Parkman, Bryce found what he most admired. The superbly drawn characters, sweeping action and noble sentiments were all couched in Parkman's elegant but readable style. It was the kind of writing that Bryce tried in vain to emulate. When he helped to found the Historical and Scientific Society, Parkman was among the first honorary members.

Unfortunately, it was not Parkman's attention to detail and careful footnoting that Bryce copied. It was a use of literary devices, skillfully handled by Parkman, but in Bryce, clumsy and mannered. In Manitoba: Its Infancy, Growth, and Present Condition, Bryce and a friend whom he called the historiographer were pictured visiting the village of St. Anne on the Ottawa River. Here they met a voyageur named Old Pierre who told, supposedly in his own words, his recollections of the old voyageur route to the West.<sup>11</sup> The pedantic interjections of the historiographer were meant to be contrasted with the lively, vivid account of the participant in the event.

Another related device, used presumably to add authenticity to the narrative, was to quote first-person accounts of certain events at length. The testimony of John

Pritchard on the Seven Oaks massacre was quoted in its entirety in Manitoba: Its Infancy, Growth, and Present Condition.<sup>12</sup> In the Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists, Frank Larned Hunt's paper to the Historical Society, Britain's One Utopia was quoted with slight abridgement,<sup>13</sup> as was Marion Bryce's paper on early Red River culture.<sup>14</sup> That this technique also allowed Bryce to add a few extra pages to his books without exertion to himself cannot be denied.

His literary intentions became more explicit in 1906 when he wrote a popular novel with a Red River setting under the pseudonym "Waverley Gilman". "The Great Camerons: A Tale of Fort Garry"<sup>15</sup> was sent to MacMillan and Co. in 1906 and subsequently was refused publication by them. It is not difficult to understand why. Featuring a plot line that rambled extensively through every popular narrative device from mistaken identity through outrageous coincidence to family curse, Bryce failed to produce even convincing cardboard characters. The hero and his family managed to become involved in every significant event in Red River history from the Free trade agitation of the 1840s to the Riel Rebellion of 1869-1870. It was as if Bryce felt that, since it was the only novel he would ever write, he had to include every incident from his knowledge of the period plus fictionalized experiences from his own life.

"The Great Camerons" is the story of Torquil Cameron, a

Nor'wester trader living in affluent retirement at White Horse Plains among the Métis. Cameron was the descendant of Cameron of Lochiel, the highland chieftain prominent in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Presumably because of this treacherous involvement in the lost Stuart cause, a curse has descended on the Cameron family. The story involves the working out of the curse through the violent death of Torquil's son Donald in the aftermath of the Sayer trial, and many mishaps befalling his mixed-blood grandson Malcolm.

This manuscript is written so poorly that Bryce's intentions as to the meaning of the story are not clear. For this reason, caution must be exercised in determining the significance of the novel to his historical views and outlook as a whole.

None-the-less, in the act of writing a popular novel, Bryce may have revealed more than he intended about himself. For example, even given the demands of the adventure genre, "The Great Camerons" contains a surprising amount of violence: six murders, one drowning, two serious accidents and one kidnapping. The male characters are weak and passive and the female characters are physically and psychologically awesome. Racial intermarriage and its consequences enter frequently into the plot.

Regrettably, the significance of these striking features of the novel, in an assessment of Bryce's personality, must be left to the psychohistorians. For this

paper, it is sufficient to say that "The Great Camerons" provides further evidence of the closeness of Bryce's historical sensibility to the literary sphere. The Red River of the novel is less an accurate picture of Red River, although Bryce has drawn on his historical research to give it local colour, than it is a creation of his own imagination, based on other literary models. Often the Lochaber House of the "Great Camerons" is more reminiscent of the highland estate of the rough-hewn Scottish chieftain pictured in the sentimental novels of the Jacobite period of which Bryce was so fond.

The inability of early writers, coming from an Ontario or British background to comprehend and describe the prosaic reality of the western environment has been noted by literary critics like E.A. McCourt.<sup>16</sup> His vision obscured by layers of romantic sentiment and dreams of a progressive future, Bryce abstracted from the past only what he required for a historical vision that was frankly concerned with special pleading. His history no less than his novel, was a literary construct.

Given the demands on his time and the necessity for travel to archives all over the world in order to consult appropriate sources, Bryce was an eager researcher. It was a part of the historian's task which he professed to enjoy. For Manitoba: Its Infancy, Growth, and Present Condition, he was careful to engage the sympathy of the current Earl of

Selkirk, who kindly arranged for copies of Lord Selkirk's pamphlets and transcriptions of the Selkirk correspondence to be sent to Bryce.

The Library of Parliament and the Public Archives of Canada, then in its infant stages under Douglas Brymner, became regular stops on Bryce's annual summer vacations. The Harvard University library, which then had one of the best collections of documents on the Canadian fur-trade was also on the itinerary. Much of the research for his Short History of the Canadian People was completed there. In 1896, Lord Strathcona gave him access to the Hudson's Bay Company archives, including the post 1821 section, when Bryce was researching his Hudson's Bay Company volume.<sup>17</sup>

His delight in maps and archeological evidence resulted, not only in his mound exploration pamphlets, but also in a series of papers for the Historical and Scientific Society and the Royal Society on old Hudson's Bay and North-West Company forts. It was a point of particular pride that, by comparing several old maps, he proved, to his own satisfaction at least, that the original Fort Rouge was situated in the south-west angle of the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers.<sup>18</sup>

If Bryce was an eager researcher, however, he was an impatient writer and corrector of galleys. His respect for sources did not extend to footnoting or to the inclusion of any but the most cursory of bibliographies. In fairness to

Bryce, the use of these scholarly devices was not common during the early part of his career, especially in popular histories.

The appearance of numerous typographical errors in Manitoba: Its Infancy, Growth, and Present Condition added weight to the charges of carelessness in factual matters and writing style that were often well deserved. As quoted in the Free Press interview preceding his 1905 "Illustrated History of Winnipeg" Bryce said, "Yes, writing books on the creative side is delightful, but as to correcting, rearranging and revising, alas! alas! woe is me."<sup>19</sup>

In spite of his use of original sources, Bryce's work owed a great debt to the histories of James Ross, Donald Gunn and J.J. Hargrave. It was Gunn's portrait of Lord Selkirk as a conniving opportunist that first stung Bryce into print. Although this estimate of Selkirk's career was totally unacceptable to Bryce, Gunn's wealth of detail on Red River life from its earliest beginnings was a valuable source of information. His narratives often followed these sources very closely--especially Ross and Hargrave. So closely did parts of his "Illustrated History of Winnipeg" resemble Hargrave's book that an angry friend of Hargrave's wrote to the Free Press:

Stories of events written by Mr. Hargrave have been used almost entirely, and the resemblances, both in sentences and paragraphs are so clear and numerous, that all ideas of doubt as to the matter seem to be practically eliminated.

I believe the public and the friends of the late J.J. Hargrave especially, are entitled to some explanation from Rev. Dr Bryce.<sup>20</sup>

In fairness to Bryce, who had none of the academic historians' consciousness of the necessity to cite sources, although he did use stories and incidents from Ross and Hargrave, at times stopping just short of literal transcription, this was quite a common practice among popular historians. Charles Tuttle, for example, when editing Gunn's History of Manitoba for publication in 1880, wrote an additional thirteen chapters in which he used whole passages from Ross's history with only minor changes and abridgement.<sup>21</sup>

It was not the first time Bryce had been accused of near plagiarism. In his paper to the Historical and Scientific Society on the surface geology of the Prairie Provinces in 1891,<sup>22</sup> he had used a report by a staff member of the Geological Survey of Canada without acknowledging his debt to the satisfaction of J.B. Tyrrell. It is doubtful that he deliberately tried to pass off the work of others as his own. He simply thought of his role as that of summarizer of all that had gone before.

Related to this was a tendency to intrude himself on the narrative whenever possible. In the first chapter of his "Illustrated History of Winnipeg", Bryce says of Fort St. Charles, built by La Verendrye, "The writer some years ago found the remains of this fort at Coutchiching three

miles up the river from Fort Frances."<sup>23</sup> This prompted a letter to the editor from Bryce's Historical Society colleague, C.N. Bell noting, among other things, that Bryce had named the fort wrongly, it being St. Pierre and not St. Charles. Bell went on to say, "... Dr. Bryce no more discovered or 'found' them than a new arrival in Winnipeg would now discover or 'find' Main Street."<sup>24</sup>

The critics were seldom kind to Bryce. The eastern intellectual periodical The Week took little notice of his work. His Short History of the Canadian People was reviewed by the prestigious English journal The Saturday Review, which kept an eye on colonial affairs. The anonymous reviewer said, "Although Professor Bryce insists, both in his preface and elsewhere on the importance of writing history so as to interest the reader, he has, nevertheless, failed to produce an interesting book; his pages are overcrowded with names and facts and his style is deficient in life and vigour."<sup>25</sup>

Even his friend, Rev. R.G. MacBeth, writing a review of his Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company, had to point out that anyone who published as much as Bryce could not hope to do anything but injury to his reputation as an exact historian.<sup>26</sup>

Bryce was often taxed over his judgement in giving too much weight to certain incidents in history and ignoring certain others. The Saturday Review pointed out that he

included the explorations of Columbus and Magellan in his Short History of the Canadian People when he could have happily used the same space for a fuller explanation of Canadian history. His Manitoba gives only 3 1/2 pages to the entire Riel Rebellion, while dwelling for six chapters on the period from 1812-1821. In the Short History the process of Confederation is dispatched in four pages, while the United Empire Loyalists are given fifty pages.

This curious weighting of his narrative can be attributed to two qualities of Bryce's historical approach: his desire to affirm the positive features of the past and his disinclination to become enmeshed in traditional political history to the exclusion of social, economic, and religious history.

Bryce arrived in Winnipeg shortly after the 1869-1870 Rebellion but, by his own rueful testimony, the ill-feeling and divisiveness of this experience was still very much a part of life in the newly annexed North West. Indeed, its currents, though submerged beneath the surface of daily life in Winnipeg, continued to be felt for at least thirty years. It was understandable, when he came to write his Manitoba only twelve years after the event, that Bryce would wish to take the tactful course in skimming lightly over it. Others had not been so reticent. One of the first papers given before the Historical and Scientific Society in 1882 was by Alexander McArthur on the Rebellion.<sup>27</sup>

Alexander Begg had published his Creation of Manitoba in 1871.<sup>28</sup>

Except for a paper to the Historical and Scientific Society entitled Two Provisional Governments in Manitoba,<sup>29</sup> it was not until 1900, in his Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company, that Bryce gave anything like a full account of the Rebellion, and even then it was limited to one sixteen-page chapter. His feelings about it were clearly strong. As a practical man of affairs, Bryce liked to present himself in the role of pacifier. In any given disagreement, he believed that taking a middle course, making concessions to each side, and thereby arriving at a consensus was the only viable way of solving the problem. The powerful emotions and entrenched positions associated with the Rebellion were clearly very disturbing to him, especially since he had found it necessary to choose sides.

With a conservative's fear of chaos wedded to the liberal conviction that gradual reform will bring satisfactory change, Bryce found the very idea of rebellion repugnant. As he said in his Short History, "It has been often the case that in great movements it falls to the lot of the extreme and the eccentric to hasten forward the crisis of events. It was true in the Puritan conflict in England, in the American revolt, and in the French Revolution."<sup>30</sup> This distaste for violent action added to his basic optimism, made Bryce engage these episodes of conflict with reluctance.

Perhaps following the lead of J.R. Green, who published his Short History of the English People in 1874,<sup>31</sup> Bryce's focus tended to be on the social, economic, religious and cultural aspects of history, eschewing the whig historian's preoccupation with the evolution of responsible government. The whig heritage is implicit in Bryce's work, but in the western Canadian context it was a theme that he was glad to leave to others to elaborate.

The celebratory stance of Bryce's history, especially in his late period, gave him much in common with that cult of old settlers identified by Douglas Owrarn and best exemplified by the work of Rev. R.G. MacBeth. Owrarn identifies Bryce as part of this school of western Canadian historiography. Yet a closer look at Bryce's output during this period reveals, in spite of close personal association with MacBeth and the concerns of the Old Settlers Association, a certain distancing from the use of utopian rhetoric on which Owrarn bases much of his argument. The high point of this utopian rhetoric was a paper by Frank Larned Hunt delivered to the Historical and Scientific Society in 1902 entitled Britain's One Utopia. It is true that Bryce included an abridgement of Hunt's remarkably syrupy and overblown vision of the Red River past in his Romantic Settlement volume.<sup>32</sup> As has been shown, however, he had included many first-person accounts in his books without necessarily subscribing to the opinions expressed in these accounts. In the same

book, he quoted Pierre Falcon's song of celebration after the Seven Oaks massacre certainly without sharing Falcon's joy in the victory of the Bois Brulé. He never used utopian imagery himself except in an ironic way as, when introducing the inflexible Adam Thom, he said, "And now, in 1839, in this Arcadia of Red River there became evident the dreadful presence of the law in the person of Adam Thom..."<sup>33</sup>

He ascribed this idealistic picture of the past to the elder settlers but did not share it himself. Describing their viewpoint, he said, "Certainly, to the old people, there was a feeling of freedom from care, as of its being a lotus-eater's land--a Utopia; an Eden before sin entered, and before man's disobedience brought death into the world and all our woe."<sup>34</sup> Though he could not resist the temptation to quote Milton, Bryce gave ample proof, both in the rest of the Romantic Settlement and in other work of the same period, that the Red River Settlement was not free from conflict or tension, as Hunt and Macbeth's utopian rhetoric had suggested. He understood the trepidation with which the older settlers had viewed the influx of new people, new ideas, and a new vision of the West after the transfer. He had sympathy with their sense of loss. But he was never so caught up in nostalgia that he did not portray, perhaps reluctantly, the very real racial, social and economic tensions of that older society; tensions which he saw being played out in the Sayer free trade agitation, the Corbett

trial, the erosion of authority and finally, the 1869-1870 Rebellion. These tensions are not given prominence in his histories, but they are present and by their presence contradict the utopian rhetoric of Hunt.

This close textual analysis may seem like pedantic hair-splitting. However, Owram's argument that Bryce retreated to a mythical golden age rests, rather crucially, on whether Bryce did or did not use utopian imagery in this later period. There is certainly little evidence that he embraced this imagery with any sense of conviction.

Another vulnerable point in Owram's argument would seem to be the lack of evidence that, after 1890, Bryce became dissatisfied with the position of the west as hinterland to central Canada. Certainly he chafed at the various instances of Ottawa's checking of Manitoban initiatives in the railway disallowances, the boundary disputes, and the School Question. However, he never saw himself as a 'Manitoba firster', and had nothing but contempt for those advocating provincial autonomy before federal authority. He was as much a convinced expansionist in 1909 as he had been in 1882. Indeed, his later speeches had to do with moving the Canadian frontier to the unexploited north.

If Owram is correct in placing him in the category of regional historiographer, one would expect to find some hint of grievance against central Canada in Bryce's later books; the sense of grievance that Owram suggests gave rise to a

regional consciousness. But, in fact, a review of Bryce's historical career reveals that his attitude to central Canada remained substantially the same. There is no discernible grievance mongering in the post 1890 period. If anything, there is a perceptible hardening of attitude, as if his outline of history was being chiselled in stone. This hardening of attitude was due, not to a deep dissatisfaction with central Canadian dominance, but to a last desperate assault on the Ontario Protestant version of western Canadian history, represented by Bryce and his colleagues of the Historical and Scientific Society, by the French-speaking Catholic version represented by Dugas, Taché, Langevin, and Drummond. It was a struggle that had very crucial practical application to the Manitoba School Question, in which all of the principals were deeply concerned. This struggle will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Suffice to say here, that Bryce's historical impulses in the 1890's were fed, less by regional discontent, than by an urgent need to support his view of Manitoban polity with a credible explanation of its roots in the past.

The imperialist sentiment of Bryce's later years also counters the notion of Bryce as regional malcontent. That Canada would rise to the status of sister country to Britain and that feelings of pride and loyalty to the Empire were inextricably bound up with Canada's own sense of identity

were ideas that Bryce propounded with increasing frequency during the Laurier era. His sermonizing on these themes had an undercurrent of urgency about it--as if his wishing hard enough would make it so. It was this strain of imperial sentiment that Bryce wanted to place over against the divisiveness of the School Question, western grievance, the influx of eastern European immigrants and labour unrest.

His address, The New Canadianism, was aimed very frankly at those forces which he saw threatening national unity and the path to imperial greatness: provincialism and pessimism. "This disposition to lose sight of Dominion or national interests and to prefer local or provincial advantage has been seen from British Columbia to Prince Edward Island, not excepting the spirit which has found its embodiment in what we call 'Manitoba first' and the two Northwest Rebellions."<sup>35</sup>

The two groups in Canadian society singled out for criticism in this context were stiff-necked western farmers and French Canadians. That western farmers had many justifiable complaints, Bryce happily conceded. Agriculture was the basis of all Canadian industries. What he condemned, however, was a certain social separatism developing in the agricultural sphere--the perception that farmers' interests were separate from those of the rest of society. It was this separation that prompted farmers to think that only farmers could represent their interests and that people in

cities and towns were opposed to the welfare of agriculture. Similarly, French Canadians refused to understand that Canada must have unity, not pluralism, and that this unity would be based on British values and British institutions.

The Canadian national spirit declares the unity of the people to be essential. Mennonites, Icelanders, Hungarians, Jews and others will not be Canadians unless they are educated in the spirit of our land. Out of this grew our great public school movement of 1890.<sup>36</sup>

Though he later softened this position somewhat by adopting the phrase "unity in diversity", on the level of public participation and institution-building, there was no doubt in Bryce's mind that Canada was a British country.

A strong federalist, Bryce said in his Short History, "...in the Canadian scheme, the Dominion Government is the repository of power, except where this is transferred to the several provinces. The Canadian theory is that of relatively more powerful central government than the United States."<sup>37</sup> Pointing to the regrettable friction between federal and provincial authority then raging through the 1880s over the Ontario boundary debate, the Manitoba railway disallowances, and the C.P.R. monopoly, he rather naively expected this tension to recede in time as the limits of Dominion and provincial power became more precisely defined by precedent. When these disputes were succeeded by the School Question, first in Manitoba, then in Saskatchewan and

Alberta, Bryce's faith in a strong federalism was shaken but still firm. That his stand cost him some friends and considerable censure from his more adamant provincial liberal colleagues is evident from his correspondence with Clifford Sifton and Laurier. He stubbornly weathered the storm and, in 1908, was still able to say to Laurier:

The west is now becoming of immense importance to Canada, a great change from what I can remember on coming to Manitoba in 1871--nearly 37 years ago.

I feel pleased to be able to look back over that time to think of both by pen and voice having been able to stand for a united Canada--rather than to be the advocate of a mere provincial life.<sup>38</sup>

It was on this level of sentiment that the united Canada would be realized. National spirit could not be legislated into being. It must arise from an effort of will, on the part of all Canadians, to subordinate sectional goals and feelings for the greater good of the whole.

It was national sentiment that he hoped to foster in his historical works, no less than in the public school system. This is, perhaps, another reason why, in spite of much abuse from critics, he continued to seek every possible avenue for publication. In addition to his regular output of papers to the Historical and Scientific Society, he wrote the "Manitoba" article in the 1911 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica.<sup>39</sup> A frequent editorialist and book reviewer for the Free Press, he also published occa-

sionally in church periodicals and serials like the Canadian Magazine, especially when the School Question was at its height. His inaugural lecture to the Manitoba College Literary Society, of which he was president for over twenty years, was usually printed in the Free Press and later issued by Bryce in pamphlet form to be distributed as gifts by the author.

If marxist literary critics like Terry Eagleton<sup>40</sup> have forced literary historians and intellectual historians to pay more attention to the "literary modes of production" of the authors whose work they seek to analyze and evaluate, it cannot be denied that it would have been difficult for the reading public of Manitoba, regardless of educational background, to avoid at least some of George Bryce's literary output. This remarkable output cannot be ascribed only to Bryce's vanity and his desire to earn money by writing, although these motives were certainly present. He had a sincere desire to communicate to as wide an audience as possible his feelings about the past and the future.

The literary tools he possessed were too crude to be effective on this level and often acted to obscure his meaning, rather than enhance it. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to think, as Douglas Owsram does, that the nostalgia marking Bryce's later work implied dissatisfaction with the present or a deliberate desire to oppose the official central Canadian version of western history. In his 1910

presidential address to the Royal Society of Canada,<sup>41</sup> it was western Canada's close ties to Ontario, Quebec and Britain that Bryce chose to emphasize, not its independent roots. Significantly, the address was entitled, "The Canadianization of Western Canada". The expansionist heritage was still intact.

## CHAPTER V

## BRYCE AND THE HISTORICAL ENTERPRISE II

If George Bryce's primary interest in writing history, was to provide a meaningful foundation for his own time, the actual events of the western past posed certain problems for him. His belief in the necessity of progress required him to write a history that was full of hope for the future, a history that presaged, in however subtle a fashion, the clear eyed progress of his own day. But it was difficult to portray the fur-trade era as a slow march forward when, at 1870, there was a fundamental discontinuity. How could that older society, now vanished with few traces be seen to point toward the present?

His ambivalent feelings about the past were no help to him in solving this problem. It was the very remoteness of the fur-trade from his own experience that attracted him to it. The "romance" of the past, which he often spoke about but never defined, had its source in the fact that the actuality of the past could never be recovered. It could only be recreated in the imagination. To make the past prefigure the present was to take something away from its imaginative power.

This tension resulted in Bryce's adopting a history in

which progress was always present, but sometimes only as a latent force. He pictured it lurking in the background, gathering strength and momentum until, as in 1869, it could no longer be resisted. The entry of Manitoba into Confederation was seen as a quantum leap forward, a break with the past whose roots were, nonetheless, traceable to tensions slowly building in the older order. Throughout this process, the presence of British initiative and pluck was the constant. In order to identify the logical and factual contortions necessary for Bryce to fit the past into this particular mold, it will be necessary to set out the content of his version of the past in more detail and to compare it with the alternate versions of his contemporaries.

The Hudson's Bay Company played a pivotal role in Bryce's reconstruction of the past. In spite of much evidence to the contrary, Bryce could never convince himself that the Company, at least in its early years, was merely engaged in trade. Initially attracted by a sense of adventure and the scent of profit, the Hudson's Bay Company became nothing less than an informal arm of the British empire. Whether through the necessity of maintaining its charter or simply as a result of the moral superiority of its personnel, the Company became the agency of philanthropy as well as trade. The exploration of the northern part of the continent, the acquainting of the native peoples with civilized ways, and the reservation of Rupertsland for

British possession against the American encroachment constituted the enduring benefits of the two hundred years of Company monopoly.

After the union of the Companies in 1821, Bryce was forced to qualify his admiration for the Hudson's Bay Company. Instead of being the guardian of progress, the Company became the oppressor of the civil liberties of the growing number of inhabitants of the Red River Settlement. In an effort to maintain the unjust and outworn monopoly, the Company attempted to suppress the free trade movement. In the face of a small but vocal party advocating annexation to Canada and a similar group of American free traders advocating annexation to the Republic, the Company found its political and legal mechanisms unequal to the task of maintaining order. Bryce blamed the Company for the break-down of law and order marking the last twenty years of its rule. Under those conditions, the natural tendency of the Métis towards lawlessness ran unchecked. A portion of the blame for the Rebellion of 1869-70 had to be laid at the door of the Company.

In spite of this, Bryce felt that, on balance, the Company had made an unmatched contribution to Canadian nation building. So convinced was he of this, that he sometimes gave an assessment of events that was, even considering the time in which he was writing, amazingly naive. In explaining how the Company had come to retain ownership of one twentieth of the land on transfer to Canada, he said:

One of the greatest testimonies in its favour was that, when two centuries after its organization it gave up, except as a purely trading company, its power to Canada, yet its authority over the wide-spread Indian population of Rupert's Land was so great, that it was asked by the Canadian Government to retain one-twentieth of the land of that wide domain as guarantee of its assistance in transferring power from the old to the new regime.<sup>1</sup>

He was led into these idealistic statements because of his firm belief that the quality of men in the Company's service was responsible for its success. He presented them as perfect amalgams of character for subduing the wilderness. They had pluck, business sense, initiative and a taste for adventure. At the same time, as he emphasized again and again, they were educated and possessed a moral capacity which prevented them from being subverted by their environment.

As a free trader in every other context, Bryce found it difficult to justify the monopoly of the Company. During the early years when the Company's mission was as much exploration and philanthropy as it was trade, the monopoly was a compensation for risks undertaken on behalf of the British flag. But for Bryce, the absence of competition was a dangerous disincentive to Company growth. The advent of the North-West Company, the XY Company and the Astor Fur Trade Company into the trade produced a salutary effect for all concerned. Nor was this effect confined to the economic sphere. Competition and the mysterious workings of the free marketplace seemed, for Bryce, to have almost mystic sig-

nificance. In competing for markets and wealth, men were challenged and their finest moral qualities brought to the fore. In spite of the viciousness of their quarrel, Bryce was to say, "The shock of meeting of two such great bodies as the Hudson's Bay Company and the North-West Company enabled men to show courage, loyalty, honest indignation, decision of character, shrewdness, diplomatic skill, and great endurance. These are the elements of human character."<sup>2</sup>

The entrance of the North-West Company into the fur-trade presented Bryce with another difficulty. He championed the Hudson's Bay Company because it symbolized the virtues of the British race: education, civilization, order and morality, fairness, and sound business practice. On the other hand, the more aggressive entrepreneurial style of the North West Company was more appealing to his imagination. As he said, "The dash, energy, and skill that characterized these mixed companies of Scottish traders, French voyageurs, half-breed and Indian engagées have been well spoken of by all observers, and appeal strongly to the lovers of the picturesque and heroic."<sup>3</sup>

His fascination with the colourful way of life of the Nor'wester trader was tempered by its other distinguishing feature. Particularly in his Manitoba, Bryce identified the North West Company with lawlessness and a reckless violence which he contrasted unfavourably with the fairness and

moderation of the Hudson's Bay Company. Its opposition to the Selkirk Settlement was the darkest blot on the North West Company record. In that conflict, the Hudson's Bay Company became the far-sighted sponsor of colonization; the Nor'westers the vicious perpetrators of the Seven Oaks massacre, aided by their half-breed dupes. Bryce seemed to suggest that one could not pursue such a picturesque way of life without risking its darker side--the lack of restraint which leads to chaos and violence.

The union of the companies in 1821 was treated by Bryce as a satisfactory conclusion to the conflict and a tribute to the Hudson's Bay Company's ability to change with the times. Ironically, this forward-looking attitude was exactly what he found lacking in the post-union Company.

The Red River Settlement had grown into a rather complex community by the late 1840's consisting of retired Company officers and their mixed-blood families, english and french Métis, the Kildonan settlers, and a small number of American free traders. To prevent private dealing in furs, the Company issued new directives whereby land holders trading in furs or failing to contribute to school and clergy support would forfeit their land. Finding these measures draconian, Bryce could only account for them by treating them as an aberration from previous policy. As he said, "This was certainly un-British and severe, and we may look upon it as the plan of the Judge who failed to under-

stand the spirit of his age, and would have readily fallen in with a system of feudal tenure."<sup>4</sup>

According to Bryce, the problem with the Company's attempts to stamp out free trade was not only that this stifled personal initiative, but also that the Company lacked the legal mechanisms to enforce these measures. The trial of Guillaume Sayer on charges of illegal dealing in furs was farcical in its legal procedure. The jail breaks of Sayer and later Corbett and Schulz were further evidence of the Company's inability to keep the peace.

The parliamentary Select Committee inquiry into the renewal of the Company's license to trade in 1859 was presented, by Bryce, as the first evidence of Canadian interest in the North West. In spite of his sentiments being on the side of Canadian expansion, he could still be impressed by the way in which the Company handled the hearings. He was inclined to take an uncritical view of Sir George Simpson, whose aggressiveness and canny head for business cancelled out the allegations of impropriety levelled at Simpson by others. Bryce felt that Simpson had acquitted himself well against the questions of Hon. J.A. Roebuck. Lord Selkirk had a different opinion. When reviewing the galleys for Bryce's Manitoba, he had written, "I may note, however, that you give five or six pages to the wretched exhibition that Sir George Simpson made of himself before the Committee of the House of Commons under Wm. (sic) Roebuck's spiteful cross examination..."<sup>5</sup>

Pressure was being exerted on this Select Committee from Canada and from representatives of the Métis population of Red River for the Company's license to trade to be revoked, allowing free trade, freedom for annexation schemes, and redress of Métis complaints against the Company. Efforts were made to show that the Company was maintaining the North West in a state of suspended animation. The Company was actively discouraging large scale settlement plans and efforts to break the isolation of the territory. To reinforce these charges, the Company's failure to educate and civilize the Indian population and its exploitation of the natives in the trade were advanced as reasons why its power should be broken.

Nowhere were Bryce's ambivalent feelings about this later phase of the Hudson's Bay Company rule more in evidence than in his assessment of the validity of complaints against the Company at these hearings. He felt the Company was too inflexible in its dealings with the Metis population, and was trying ineffectually to maintain its hegemony in the face of clear evidence of a changing order. However, he would not agree that the Company had exploited or mistreated the Indians.

He was forced to admit that the Company's welfare depended on the natives continuing the hunt. But he would not believe, while admitting that it was difficult to prove, that the Company kept Indians involved in the trade by

giving advances on their next year's furs, thus effectively keeping them in debt. He was equally disbelieving of charges that the Company encouraged the liquor traffic. Recent studies, notably that of Arthur Ray<sup>6</sup>, have shown that alcohol was a staple of both regular trade and gift-giving ceremonies on the part of both companies. It is likely that the Hudson's Bay Company traded less liquor to its Indian traders than the North-West Company and after 1821, made a definite effort to stop the trade in liquor either for trade or in gift form. However, it was naive of Bryce to assert, as he did in The Remarkable History that, "Self-preservation inclined every trader to prevent the use of spirits among the Indians. The writer is of the opinion that while there may have been many violations of sobriety, yet the record of the Hudson's Bay Company has been on the whole creditable in the matter."<sup>7</sup> Either Bryce did not have as full access to Company journals as he gave his readers to believe, or he was simply putting the best possible construction on what he read there.

Throughout his historical career, he was insistent that, barring the occasional skirmish, the Company's record with regard to the Indians was admirable. No Indian wars, like those on the American side of the border, took place during the Company's tenure. For his part, the Indian respected and revered the trader as the, "... representative of superior ability and financial strength, but more than

that, he was the embodiment of civilization and fair and just dealing."<sup>8</sup>

The Company's worst sin was its failure to accept the changing order of things in the North West after 1849. Progress was desirable and inevitable. Regrettably, progress often meant that some people would suffer hurt and loss; but taken in the long run, the benefits to the majority would prove the wisdom of the change. As Bryce said, "These events represented the decadence of the Company's rule, they indicated the rise of new forces that were to compel a change, and however harmful to those immediately involved, they declared unmistakably that the old order changeth giving way to the new."<sup>9</sup> The Hudson's Bay Company was no longer the standard bearer of Anglo-Saxon virtues. That banner had now been passed to the incoming Anglo-Canadian settler.

In Bryce's worldview, the pivotal role of myths of British virtue has already been pointed out. In their search for identity, Canadians in the last part of the nineteenth century turned almost obsessively to ethnic identification to fulfill this need. In a nation of immigrants, ties that bound them to the old country offered a ready made inheritance of traditions, loyalty and pride. To say that one was of Scottish, Irish, Welsh, or English blood was to subscribe to readily understood stereotypes of ethnic identification. Patterns of behaviour were customarily

ascribed to "racial" origins. Carl Berger<sup>10</sup> has already shown how these stereotypes worked hand in glove with British imperialist sentiment to form a useable myth of the Canadian character--northern, hardy and British. The public hunger to indulge in romantic fantasies on these themes was fed by a number of books, pamphlets and articles devoted to the contribution of the various British peoples to nation building in Canada. Bryce's most extended contribution to this genre was the second volume of The Scotsman in Canada.

It is not surprising that this celebration of Celtic and Anglo-Saxon virtues welded to imperialist sentiment had little appeal for French-Canadians. As Carl Berger has said, "With its announced objectives of consolidating the Anglo-Saxon race and its appeal to the English-Canadian heritage it is hardly surprising that imperialism appeared alien and threatening to French Canadians."<sup>11</sup>

In the Manitoban context, the influx of Ontario protestant population and the failure of significant immigration from Quebec had reduced the french speaking population to a minority by the late 1870's. The original structure of the Legislative Assembly in 1871 called for an upper house, called the Legislative Council, in which representation was divided equally between English and French. In this way, the French speaking community retained political power independent of its proportion of the population.

Pressures mounted, beginning in 1876, on the part of

the protestant Ontario majority, to take away the perceived political and educational privileges of the French minority. During that year, the Legislative Council was abolished and an abortive attempt was made, by the Protestant section of the Schools Advisory Board, to abolish the dual system of education. After the fall of the Norquay government in 1886, the advent of party politics into the Manitoba Legislature became complete, further reducing the influence of the French speaking minority. During the early years of the Greenway government, the dual system of education came under increasing fire from protestant critics armed with new theories of secular education imported from the United States. This pressure culminated in the apparently unpremeditated speech of the Hon. Joseph Martin in Portage la Prairie in August of 1889 in which he promised, on behalf of the Government, to abolish separate schools and to end the use of the French language in the Legislature and the Judiciary.

Bryce's history had naturally reflected his convictions about the paramountcy of British values and institutions. Not surprisingly, this version of the western past and of the western future held little appeal for the French minority in Manitoba. With their political and social institutions threatened, and with them, the future of their language and way of life, their own appeal to history became urgent.

Although no institution exactly analogous to the Historical and Scientific Society arose in the French-speaking community until the founding of the Saint Boniface Historical Society in 1906, influential members of that community, notably the Catholic clergy, tried to inform Franco-Manitobans about their past and to impress them with the grandeur and enduring value of French-Canadian contributions to the history of the West. From 1886 on, French newspapers published historical articles and devoted amateur historians like L.A. Prud'homme and T.A. Bernier published articles and pamphlets on historical subjects.

The effect of this flurry of historical activity on the English speaking population was negligible for it would seem that little of it was translated into English. The Historical and Scientific Society, which in its early years had claimed many of the prominent men of the French community as members, had lost or alienated these members by 1886. Such was the overwhelmingly English protestant ambiance of the Society that very few French speaking members had ever given papers there or taken an active hand in the running of the Society.

The most significant book to appear, giving the French Catholic version of the history of the West, was The Canadian West: Its Discovery by the Sieur De La Vérendrye<sup>12</sup> by Abbé Georges Dugas, which was first published in 1894 at the height of the School Question, and appeared in English

in 1905. A popular history, it was written deliberately as a corrective to Bryce and to the Historical and Scientific Society version of the past.

Whereas Bryce had placed Lord Selkirk on the pedestal as founder of western Canada, Dugas, like Prud'homme and Bernier, assigned that role to La Vérendrye as one of a long line of daring French explorers. To Dugas, the real heroes of the fur-trade era were not the stolid Hudson's Bay Company men but, rather, the voyageurs and agents of the North West Company. While he condemned the Nor'westers for their harassment of the Selkirk Settlement, he found the rank and file of the Company to be admirable men.

This was in distinct opposition to the assessment of the French-Canadian fur-trader and his Metis offspring found in Bryce's books. Borrowing heavily from the stereotype employed by Parkman, Bryce found the typical French-Canadian to be charming, vigorous, colourful, but indolent, ignorant, and unreliable. The Métis shared these characteristics with an admixture of "turbulence" from their Indian mothers. As he said in his book on John Black:

Though he is a poor colonist, the French Canadian is unequalled as a voyageur and pioneer runner. When he settles on a remote lake or untenanted river, he is at home. Here he rears in contentment his 'dusky race.' The French half-breed, called also Métis and formerly Bois Brulé, is an athletic, rather good looking, lively, excitable easy-going being. Fond of a fast poney, fond of merry-making, free hearted, open handed, yet indolent and improvident, he is a marked feature of border life.<sup>13</sup>

Dugas offered another stereotype in place of this one. This was the image of the adventurous habitant who was daring, generous, and flexible. Although he lived in the wilderness, he did not let the values of home, family, and Church, learned in his Quebec village, fall victim to the harshness and cupidity of the fur trade life. More than that, he was a faithful friend to the Indian. Unlike the stand-offish English, he lived among the natives, sharing food and shelter with them. According to Dugas, "The Indians admitted that their friendship for the French was due to the fact that they recognized their great sincerity, and saw in them faithful and generous friends."<sup>14</sup> The Indians simply did not like the English, nor did they trust them.

The rhetoric of ethnic stereotype was also the keynote in a paper given to the Historical and Scientific Society on 25 November 1886 by Father Lewis Drummond. As President of the Society, Bryce had requested Drummond to give the paper, which was entitled, The French Element in the Canadian Northwest. It was a measure of the coming storm over racial and religious lines, that Drummond's paper was nothing less than an impassioned plea for the basic rights of the French speaking Catholic citizens of Manitoba. Drummond considered himself well suited to his task, having an Irish father and a French-Canadian mother. This ethnic mixture provided him with a drôle introduction to his talk. "As a descendent of

the early French settlers in Canada, I am proud to seize on all the good points of the French race, while an admixture of Irish, Scotch, and German blood effectively shields me from that inane prejudice against other nationalities which is the darling heritage of narrow minds."<sup>15</sup>

Drummond then engaged in a thumbnail revision of the Brycean version of the past, beginning with a list of French explorers who claimed, in their turn, large tracts of North America for the French crown in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This series of discoveries was capped off by the exploration of La Vérandrye, his sons and nephew. As Drummond said, "This discovery completed the occupation by France of all the north, the center and the west of this continent. It was a fit compliment to the discoveries of Marquette and Lasalle and Jolliet, of Chaumont and Dimuelles and Dablon--for it was, as they all had been, made for no sordid motive of gain, but for glory, either temporal or eternal, and, like its predecessors, this discovery was made with next to no material resources."<sup>16</sup>

The laudatory review of the paper in the Free Press the following day<sup>17</sup> is surprising in view of Drummond's systematic debunking of the role of the British race in the upbuilding of the West. He described the British approach to any given task as, "... the Nasmyth steam hammer cracking the nut - a vast display of force which must prevail ..."<sup>18</sup>

Over against Bryce's claims for the sterling qualities of the Anglo-Celt, Drummond described French-Canadians as, "Sprung from a race which was the acknowledged leader of European civilization, and which still is the element and most versatile in the world, they carried with them an hereditary polish which had filtered down to the lowest strata of the Canadian people."<sup>19</sup>

At the conclusion of his paper, Father Drummond made the point to which all his revision of history was directed. A short time before that evening, he had heard French-Canadians referred to as foreigners in the Legislature. As he said, "No, we are not aliens or foreigners - Thirty years ago, we, who speak French, were called by everyone purely and simply 'Canadians'; others were known as English, Scotch or Irish."<sup>20</sup> Drummond's revision of history stressed that French Canadians had at least an equal role with English Canadians in the conquest and progress of the Canadian West.

No account of the discussion following the presentation of the paper was published so that it is impossible to know how the members of the Society, and Bryce in particular, received it. Though Drummond's tone was amiable and conciliatory, it would have been hard to overlook the underlying bitterness--a bitterness directed very frankly at Bryce and his ilk who had minimized the French contribution to the West and willfully misunderstood the French-Canadian character.

After 1890, this battle of historical interpretation took on a more urgent and explicit character as the School Question unfolded and it became necessary for historical verification to be found for each position in the controversy. In historical terms, the dispute became centered on the nature of education in Red River prior to the rebellion of 1869-70 and differing interpretations of the Manitoba Act and the negotiations preceding it.

It was the School Question which finally forced Bryce to write and speak about the Rebellion and its immediate aftermath. His tone, usually mild and benign, became noticeably emotional, almost strident, as he delivered a paper to the Historical Society called Two Provisional Governments in Manitoba. In this paper Bryce first set the stage by describing the unsuccessful attempt by Thomas Spence to set up a republic of Manitoba in 1868. His subsequent sketch of the 1869-70 Rebellion was meant to be compared to the ludicrous Spence affair and found equally ludicrous in spite of the tragedy involved.

The heart of the paper was a discussion of the legality of the so-called fourth bill of rights which had been carried by the three delegates from the convention elected by the people of Red River. The three delegates--Judge Black, Father J.N. Ritchot, and A.H. Scott--were authorized to negotiate with the Dominion government over the terms of the transfer to Canada. The bill of rights, which Father

Ritchot carried and personally delivered to the officials of the Canadian cabinet, was supposed by most people to have been the third version drawn up by Riel and his Council based on the bill drawn up by the convention but with several important additions. Rumors that this third bill had been altered before it reached Ottawa were substantiated when Archbishop Taché, in support of his arguments on the unconstitutionality of the abolishing of separate schools, published the fourth version of the bill in the Free Press on 22 December 1889.<sup>21</sup> Apparently Riel and Taché had drafted this last version to reflect the discussions which Taché had had with the government in Ottawa on his way back from Rome.

In centering his paper on the bill of rights in its disputed third and fourth versions, Bryce was going to the very heart of the French-speaking Catholic position on the illegality of the new School legislation. It had been consistently argued by Archbishop Taché that the fourth bill of rights, which he had published, was a valid expression of the will of both English and French speaking citizens of Red River. Article 22 of the Manitoba Act, seemingly based on a similar clause in the fourth bill, guaranteed the rights of all classes of persons in Manitoba to such schools as they had been accustomed to by law or practice.

Bryce insisted that the document in the possession of Taché was not the bill of rights that had been approved by

the Provisional Government Council. He further revealed that the original document, in the handwriting of Thomas Bunn, was in the possession of the Secretary of the Historical and Scientific Society. Without equivocation, Bryce called Taché's version of the document, "... one of the most astounding violations of truth and honor this country has witnessed."<sup>25</sup>

Archbishop Taché maintained in his book Une Page de l'Histoire des Écoles de Manitoba<sup>22</sup>, that the bill of rights had gone through many drafts in the course of the discussion within the Provisional Government Council. Bryce's draft was not the final copy. The copy located in the records of one of the Federal Government departments after a search authorized by Senator Thomas Bernier and subsequently published by Taché was the legitimate copy--the only copy used in the negotiations with the Dominion.

Because the Taché version was not revealed until one month prior to the delivery of his paper to the Historical and Scientific Society, Bryce argued that it was a secret document without sanction of the people or force in law. As he said, "Will anyone in his senses maintain that what only a dozen people out of twelve thousand knew until nineteen years afterward binds the people with a treaty obligation?"<sup>23</sup>

In purely logical terms, there was a certain flaw in his argument. According to Bryce the Provisional Govern-

ment, not recognized by either the Dominion or Imperial Governments and tolerated by the majority of Red River people only under duress, had no legal right to negotiate with Canada. If this was so no document or action issuing from the Provisional Government could have legal validity. Therefore both the third and fourth versions of the bill of rights were equally invalid. If this was true, he was expending more energy than he needed to in proving the illegality of Taché's "fourth fictitious list of rights."<sup>24</sup> Perhaps he realized, however, that to press the argument to its inexorable conclusion would mean the necessity of discounting the legality of the whole of the Manitoba Act along with the negotiations leading to its framing. This would not only leave Manitoba in a sea of chaotic illegality but would swim against the accepted tide of public opinion, which was that the Act should be amended not nullified. Bryce was content to let this argument be his secondary line of defense, knowing that public support for his basic position would be strong enough to divert attention from the logical flaw of his argument. It can not be denied, however, that by casting doubt on Taché's version of the bill, Bryce was able to undermine the validity of Article 22 of the Manitoba Act and thereby, to his own satisfaction at least, break the back of the main legal argument of the French minority for the maintenance of separate schools.

Regardless of its logical inadequacies, this Paper

revealed more clearly what had, until that point, been implicit in Bryce's picture of Manitoba history. This was his analysis of the 1869-70 Rebellion as, essentially, the culmination of a failure of law and order in the North West. Added to the erosion of the Hudson's Bay Company authority was the inept bungling of the transfer on the part of the Dominion Government. He gave little credence to Métis claims of dissatisfaction. Echoing Ross and a host of other Anglo-Protestant opinion makers, he pictured the Métis as pawns manipulated by sinister interests. Riel, with his undoubted charisma and education, took advantage of his people and used them to forward his own insane desire for power.

With the publication, in 1900, of his Remarkable History, Bryce introduced the spectre of "Jesuitical cunning" and American complicity into his picture of the Rebellion. "The real deep significance of this rebellion has never been fully made known," he said. Professing to have unimpeachable sources and evidence of the clearest kind, Bryce said that there was "a dangerous religious element of ecclesiastics from old France"<sup>26</sup> at work in the Settlement during the Rebellion. One of these priests, an intimate friend of Riel, "... with Jesuitical cunning, gave close attendance on the sick Governor, and through his family exercised a constant detrimental power upon the only source of authority then in the land."<sup>27</sup> At the same time,

he revealed that on the evidence of a man high in the service of Canada, there was a large sum of money, perhaps as high as a million dollars, set aside by the United States Government in St. Paul for the purpose of securing a hold on Rupertsland for America.

In his "Illustrated History of Winnipeg," he advanced these charges again, this time identifying the Jesuit in question as Father Jean-Marie Lestanc who was in charge of the archdiocese in the absence of Taché during the early part of the Rebellion. Again he declined to name his sources as other than "competent eyewitnesses."<sup>28</sup> Lestanc's supposed close association with William O'Donahue led Bryce to state that Riel was being influenced, not only by Jesuits, but by Fenians with American support. This Jesuit-Fenian-American alliance was the secret history of the Rebellion to which he referred. Against the outcry of his opponents, he was never willing or able to reveal his sources for these allegations or to raise them to any level higher than innuendo or guilt by association.

More recent historians, notably William Morton<sup>33</sup> and G.F.G. Stanley<sup>34</sup>, have been inclined to agree that there was definite evidence of American meddling during the Rebellion, especially on the part of the Vice-Consul Oscar Malmros. But neither of these historians were able to prove a formal link between O'Donahue and the Fenian Brotherhood or between the American Government and O'Donahue. That the Catholic

clergy took the side of the Métis has been denied by no one. However, Morton and Stanley produced considerable evidence of the moderating effect of the interventions of Taché, Ritchot, and Lestanc, and no evidence of their deliberate manipulation of events prior to the Rebellion.

It is significant that Bryce's introduction of this secret history of the Rebellion only appeared in his work after the School Question had brought the submerged feelings about the Rebellion out into the open again and forced a reappraisal of the significance of the Rebellion to that controversy. It is doubtful that Bryce actually falsified information. But he had already shown a willingness to believe what he wished to believe on the basis of scanty evidence. It is therefore likely that he had some hearsay evidence of these plots which he considered credible. His own suspicions allowed him to fill in the blanks in the evidence. It cannot be denied, as well, that to reveal his sources would have exposed them to considerable contention and harassment.

In any case, once Bryce had made up his mind on any given matter, he was as immovable as stone. To angry testimonials from Father Lestanc and his friends that he was not a close associate of O'Donahue and had not, in fact, spent the winter of 1871 with O'Donahue in Pembina "plotting mischief,"<sup>31</sup> Bryce simply replied that these proofs did not touch the basis of his argument.

In spite of these unfortunate hints at behind the scenes plotting, Bryce's basic position on the Rebellion remained unchanged. The collusion of Riel and Taché in the negotiations with the Canadian Government had resulted in the unfortunate separate schools clause in the Manitoba Act. The French minority had been awarded an unjustified privilege. Following the Rebellion, the lines of nationality and religion had been allowed to continue as before, promoting factionalism instead of unity. The troubles of 1890 were directly traceable to the Manitoba Act and its perceived inadequacies.

In spite of the contemporary crises which made it necessary to appeal to history, however, it is hard to document the status of a sense of the past in the structure of values of Bryce's society. The powerful commercial middle-class knew that, in order to be considered the equal of old Canada, Manitoba must display her cultural attainments as conspicuously as her material progress. Like all cultural pursuits, a knowledge of history was considered necessary as a mark of civilized society and as a force in promoting civilization.

But when it came to analyzing how culture was to accomplish what was boasted of it--the exact way in which culture functioned as a civilizing agent--Bryce was mute. This received wisdom was accepted and transmitted by him apparently without questioning and without deep understanding.

Perhaps that explains why the love of the past, or at least the material vestiges of it, was easily overruled by other values during Bryce's era. In any given conflict between material progress and regard for the vestiges of the past, the dominant decision makers of his own class usually opted for material progress. The destruction of Upper Fort Garry in 1882 to make way for the straightening of Main Street was an act of wounding symbolic significance for Bryce. Mention of it, even twenty years later, could provoke an angry outburst from him. Those with power and influence, he said, did not value the past as much as they valued material gain. This act of vandalism would be bitterly regretted by generations to come.

At the same time, his own commitment to material and moral progress often seemed to cut away at the roots of his sense of the past. To progress, it seemed, one must first let the past go. In his more thoughtful moments, he acknowledged the truth of this harsh imperative. He had seen it in the fading of the fur-trade way of life, in the working out of the "Indian Problem", and even in the changes in his own theology in the wake of the new science.

There is no evidence that he realized the paradoxical nature of his commitment both to progress and to the past. Any doubts were channelled into a redoubled effort to show that the past was merely the prologue to greatness, but not less important for that. He insisted that knowledge of the

past was useful to the present and proved, in his articles on the School Question, how that could be true. But he was never able to explain how, without the spur of a contemporary crisis, the past could be useful in that pragmatic sense so valued by his peers.

The Historical and Scientific Society, which had undertaken a broad range of practical and historical involvements in its first phase, after 1890 became simply one leisure-time interest group among many others. It cultivated a history born of nostalgia, reflecting the divided nature of Bryce's attachment to the past. This history was disdained by the new generation of graduate-school trained historians like Chester Martin, who had less emotionally invested in the past) and a professional ethic that required objectivity. Martin and others of his generation spent their professional lives filling in the enormous gaps of fact, logic, and evidence left in the wake of Bryce's energetic plunge through the western past.

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## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

In looking over a career that spanned forty years, one is struck by how little, on balance, George Bryce's outlook changed. Why this should be so, considering the remarkable changes that took place in the West during these years is puzzling. However, both the nature of Bryce's personality and the nature of the social milieu in which he was nurtured can, at least partially, account for it.

Bryce's most striking personal characteristic was his "outer-directedness". He was not given to introspection; indeed, he regarded people who were introspective as highly suspect. Self-evaluation he equated with brooding and brooding, in turn, with doubt. He did not see how the great tasks that were required of his generation could be accomplished if doubt were allowed to seep into the mind like a slow working corrosive.

So little is known about the private Bryce that it is difficult to know whether his rejection of the reflective mood indicated an extremely strong sense of self-worth or whether, in fact, there was a vacuum at the centre. Armed with psychological theory, it is tempting to see his continual efforts at self-promotion, his sensitive vanity, his

clear need to be perceived as important, as reflecting an ego in constant need of shoring up. The obsessively jaunty public stance and the refusal to look inward can then be read as a betrayal of inner fears and insecurities. If so, this was not the kind of psychological stance that would welcome either on-going evaluation of ideas or flexibility in the face of new information.

This picture of Bryce must be balanced by the fact that the society in which he was raised did not encourage reflective qualities. On the contrary, steadfastness of purpose and loyalty to received values rather than flexibility, openness to change and critical evaluation, were the primary Victorian virtues. The fact that Bryce was very receptive to innovation in the sphere of technology only serves to underline the unreflective stolidity of his social attitudes.

His was a mind in which pragmatic concerns forced a certain ordering of values, an ordering in which the ideal of progress superseded all others. The desire to improve and advance, to build and grow dominated his life. Nor was this progress to be attained by any pacific accommodation to the western environment. Bryce often used aggressive imagery to describe the mission of Canadian expansion. The West had to be subdued and bent to the will of its new master. The chaotic wilderness had to be replaced by the order and serenity of the garden. That this garden would be

purchased at the expense of those belonging to the older order -- Indians, Métis, older Red River settlers -- he regretted.

This nostalgic regret provided the spur for his historical studies. If fur-trade society could not be saved in fact, it must be memorialized in print. But there was a definite ambivalence pervading Bryce's motives in writing history. He was commemorating a society which he was, at the same time, putting considerable energy into transforming totally. He was placing the past safely in the realm of imagination where it could not pose ugly reminders to the present.

The realities of fur-trade life both attracted and repelled him. It was dangerous to live so far away from organized society with its institutional bulwarks to morality; but it was also exciting. The individual in the fur-trade life had only his own resources, physical and emotional, to withstand temptation and loneliness. The wilderness could allow a man to show his best qualities or conquer him totally, leading to cupidity and degeneration. It is not surprising that Bryce most often cast the Scottish-born Hudson's Bay Company officer as the winner in this conflict with nature and the Quebec-born North-West Company coureur de bois as the loser.

The Hudson's Bay Company became the standard-bearer of British virtue in the fur-trade era until 1870 when that

standard was passed to the incoming Ontario settlers. By using the stalwart officers of the Company as the moral and spiritual ancestors of Canadian expansionists in the West, Bryce was able to draw an unbroken line of descent for the readers of his books. He gave the anglo-protestant dominant group a sense of the roots and rationale for their dominance. It was this point of view that so distinguished Bryce's history from the history of Ross, Gunn and Hargrave.

In literary terms, Bryce's work was clearly inferior to that of Alexander Ross. He wrote too much and too quickly. His books were poorly edited and full of typographical errors. His desire to make money from his writing often clouded his judgement. Material that would have filled three good volumes, he managed to stretch out into nine ponderous books. The flatness and mediocrity of his writing style prevented Bryce from succeeding as the influential popular historian he had clearly aspired to become.

Though his historical sensibility was compounded of large quantities of nostalgia and romantic fantasy of the boy's own adventure variety, it is a mistake to think of Bryce's fascination with the fur-trade era and Red River society as an expression of dissatisfaction with his contemporary situation. He was never so blinded by nostalgia that he was unable to see the tensions and flaws in Red River society. His faith in Canadian expansion into the West was unbroken in spite of particular annoyances with Federal

policy towards the West.

To say that Bryce's overall outlook changed little during his career is not to say that there were not new shades of meaning and different ways of expressing this outlook as the years wore on. His early interest in science and technology centered around an effort to create a viable modern science faculty within the University of Manitoba and his personal interests in ethnology and archaeology. After the fulfillment of his faculty plan in 1904, his scientific interests broadened to the national sphere. His later interests in forestry conservation, public ownership of utilities, scientific and technical education anticipated the debate about Canadian industrial and resource management that would surface again after the First World War.

Imperialist sentiment, too, was a later theme in Bryce's life. He had always been a champion of British law, British government, and most of all, British character. After 1890, when there were increasing challenges from many quarters to the British vision of Canadian society, he began to lecture about the almost mystical relationship of Canada to the mother country, to her imperial sisters, and to the imperial future. It was as if the balm of imperial sentiment was being applied to the multiplying pluralistic fissures in the Canadian body politic.

The theme of unity in opposition to pluralism carried through into his later view of the Church as well. With the

Presbyterian inheritance of anti-Catholicism and anti-prelacy exacerbated by the rancour of the School Question, Bryce came to believe in the value of a united Protestantism to combat what he perceived to be Catholic aggression. Materialism, unbelief, and the false hope of the sects, too, were seen as mounting threats to the Christian mission. After his moderatorship of the General Assembly in 1902, his mobile life-style prevented his taking a material hand in the church union debate. But his devotion to the cause never wavered. In his will, a considerable amount of his estate was ear-marked for Manitoba College, but only on the condition that the College be awarded to the United Church of Canada in the property debates between the new Church and the Presbyterian Church.

This thesis has attempted to reconstruct the worldview of George Bryce and to describe the way in which this worldview was translated into action. His values and beliefs have been placed within the context of a childhood in rural Ontario, university training at the University of Toronto, and a long career in the North West during its formative period.

That Bryce's worldview was a view shared with a whole class of people has been an underlying assumption of this paper and the main rationale for undertaking this study. Understanding the world as Bryce saw it constitutes a contribution to the understanding of the worldview of the

dominant decision-makers at the centre of late nineteenth-century western Canadian society. The world they constructed and laboured to maintain against the challenges of alternate visions is still present in vestigial form in the contemporary West.

At the same time, it is only fair to point out that the concept of a shared worldview, while a basic assumption of this paper, has not, itself, been further explored, amplified or examined here. Even had it been, the concept must remain at the level of hypothesis until much direct examination of it and of the nature of class formation and interaction in the nineteenth-century West has been undertaken.

Therefore this thesis has been about one man and one man only -- neither the most important nor the least important man. Bryce occupied the great middle ground as but one of the labourers in the vineyard. His vanity aside, this is a summation that would not have displeased him.

## ABBREVIATIONS

PAC	Public Archives of Canada
PAM	Provincial Archives of Manitoba
UCA, Winnipeg	Archives of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, United Church of Canada
UMA	University of Manitoba Archives
UWA	University of Winnipeg Archives

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