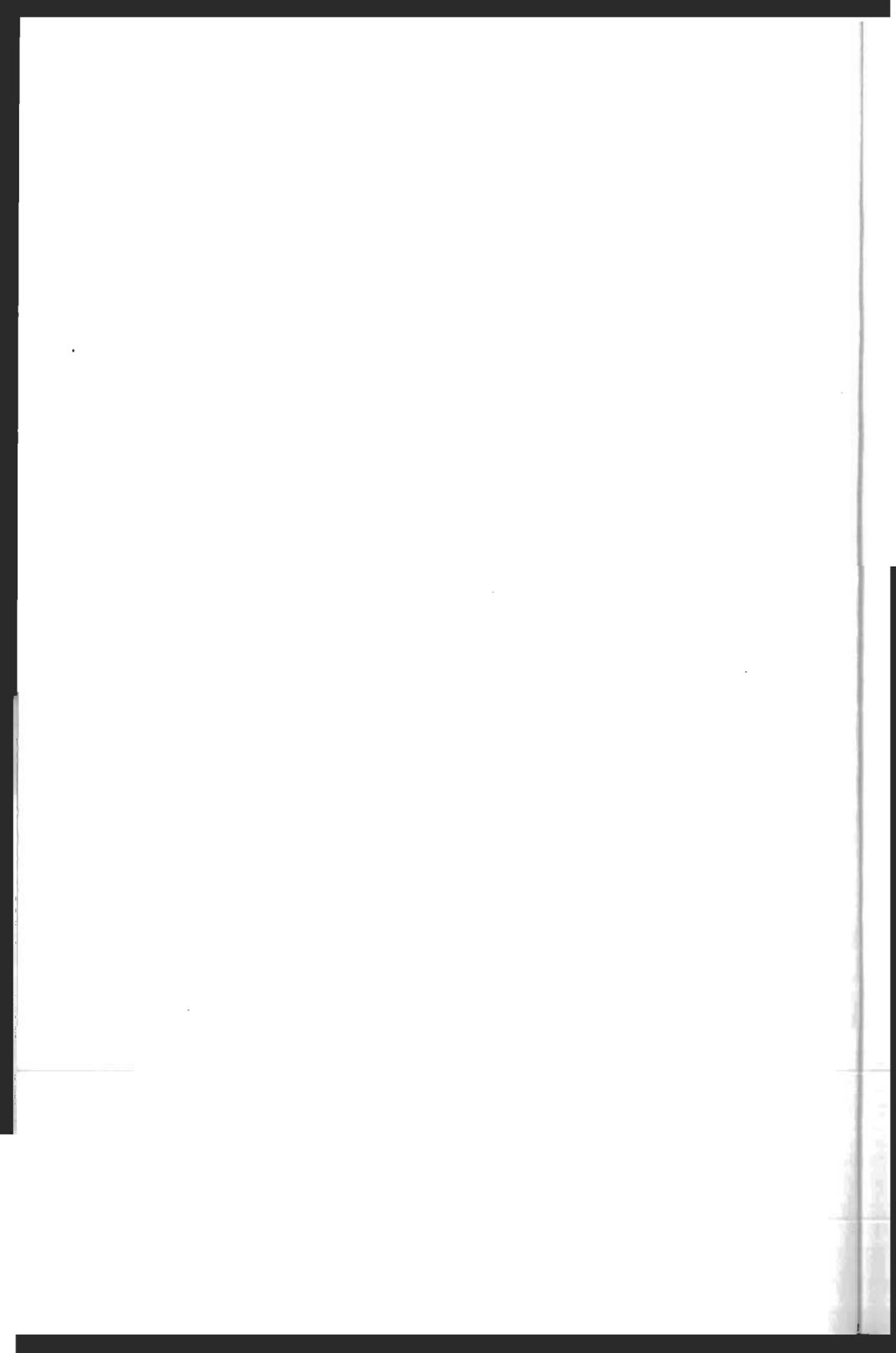


A
SNUG
LITTLE
FLOCK

*The Social Origins of
the Riel Resistance 1869-70*

FRITS PANNEKOEK



The spiritual staff provided for the snug little flock [to each clergyman 161 persons, based on the census of 1849] consists of one English Bishop and five Church of England missionaries, who are equally balanced by one Catholic Bishop and five French priests.

Alexander Ross, Red River

A SNUG LITTLE FLOCK

*The Social Origins of the
Riel Resistance of 1869-70*

Frits Pannekoek

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To W. L. Morton

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F. Pannekoek
October 1, 1990

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Preface

Questions about the identities of the mixed-blood Indian-European peoples of Canada and the United States have puzzled historians and anthropologists in both countries. Who are the mixed-bloods of North America? Why do they have a strong collective identity in Canada, and virtually none in the United States? Why is the collective identity in Canada largely French-Cree and Catholic? What happened to the English-speaking Protestant Halfbreeds? Why do the Protestant, English-speaking mixed-bloods no longer exist as a unique group either in Canada or in the United States, but identify themselves as White, Indian or Métis in Canada and Indian or White in the United States?

While it has become commonplace to view mixed-blood peoples as products of the culture and economy of the fur trade, it is much more difficult to trace the roots of the process that created an identifiable Métis 'nation'. It is even more difficult to determine why no strong mixed-blood identity emerged in the United States.

Nineteenth-century American fiction reflects the ambivalent American mind on the mixed-bloods of North America. In his *The Half Blood: A Cultural Symbol in 19th Century American Fiction* (Lexington, 1979), William J. Scheick wonders about the mixed-blood in the nineteenth-century American mind:

Does he represent a new, wonderful natural link between red and white races symbolizing an emergent American identity or does he represent a degenerate, abnormal amalgamation of the worst vices of both races menacing the promise of a New World civilization? Half-blood characters [in American fiction] seesaw on this question...¹

He suggests that white Americans saw mixed-blood people more as agents of the French/Indian menace than as allies of New England. But they did not see a new nation symbolizing the strength and future of the American frontier.

The lack of a clear place for the American mixed-blood was behind much of the American government policy that endeavoured to

treat the mixed-blood as either White or Indian, but certainly not as the unique manifestation of a separate identity expressing distinctive aspirations.² Even more peculiar than the American mixed-blood acceptance of either Indian or European identification, was the Canadian Métis response. Adamant about their 'nationhood' in Canada, they nevertheless accepted American designation as Indian or European when they crossed the 49th parallel! Here is a strong suggestion that the Métis identity was understood to apply only in British North America, particularly British Rupert's Land.

Most scholars accept the concept of the Red River valley of the North as the cradle of Métis culture and identity in North America.³ They agree that it emerged out of the traumatic events of the early nineteenth century, when a long struggle between the London-based Hudson's Bay Company and the various Montreal fur partnerships (which eventually merged as the North West Company) ended in a rationalization of the fur trade. The surplus workforce began to migrate to the agricultural settlement that Lord Selkirk had founded at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers.

The mixed-blood settlements at Pembina, now in North Dakota, and nearby St. Joseph, both extensions of the Red River mixed-blood communities, numbered some 2,000 by the mid-1860s.⁴ These southern members of the extended Red River mixed-blood family shared with their Red River relatives the buffalo herds on the plain and in the last decades of the nineteenth century pursued the diminishing remnants westward as far as Fort Benton and Wood Mountain.

There are those who are prepared to argue that the real ancestors of the Métis of the northern-tier states, and to a lesser degree of Red River, are the fur trade families of the old North West, the area south and west of lakes Superior and Huron that was the heartland of the eighteenth-century fur trade.⁵ Unfortunately, a comparative examination of Métis surnames in American settlements with those in Red River has not been conclusive and much work needs to be done to confirm what is at this moment only an interesting hypothesis.⁶

Whatever the origins of the American mixed-bloods, today their descendants live in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota and Montana. In 1879 Dr V. Havard, Assistant Surgeon to the American government, attempted a very detailed calculation of the

mixed-blood population of North America.⁷ He found 1,008 mixed-bloods located in Montana, distributed as follows: 15 at the Crow Agency, 20 at Fort Benton, one or two at Wolf Point on the Missouri, 650 on the Milk River near Fort Browning, one to two families at Fort Belknap, one family at Carroll on the Missouri and 300 families in Missoula Country. He further located 25 individuals in Iowa, 130 in Nebraska, 15 in Wyoming, 23 in Idaho, 300 in Oregon, 250 in Washington Territory. If all minor settlements were included, Havard counted a total of 21,691 mixed-bloods in the Northwestern United States. In comparison, he found approximately 11,230 in the British territories: 6,500 in Manitoba, 500 in the Rainy Lake area, and 2,500 in the Saskatchewan country. He extrapolated from these figures an estimated of 40,000 mixed-bloods in North America. Virtually all these Métis he described in one way or another as 'Canadians' or as descendants of 'Canadians'. To Havard, the Métis were Canadians whose culture was rooted in the British Imperial experiences originating north of the 49th parallel.⁸

This perception may have emerged from American government policy. American governments had insisted from the beginning that mixed-bloods were either Indian or European and to be treated as such; more importantly they were the responsibility of the British Crown. A case in point showed up in the American government's position on Louis Riel's request for special status on behalf of the American Métis in 1879. Riel, who led the 1869 resistance to the Canadian annexation of Red River and the 1885 rebellion against Central Canadian injustices at Batoche in present-day Saskatchewan, is acknowledged as one of the founding leaders, if not the originator of the Canadian Métis Nation. Riel would appear to have accepted the American lack of recognition for the Métis, at least while he was in the United States. He spent less than a decade in the United States (intermittently from 1866 to 1868, from 1870 to 1875 and continuously from 1878 to 1884), but became an American citizen 16 March 1883.

In August 1880 he drafted a petition to Colonel Nelson Miles, asking for a reserve to be set aside for 'halfbreeds' of Montana.⁹ Riel's wording is peculiar, and very important:

We ask the government to set apart a portion of land as a special reservation in this territory for the halfbreeds, as, scattered amongst other settlers, it becomes a very difficult matter for us to make a living and owing to our present limited means and want of experience in economy, we cannot compete with the majority of our fellow countrymen.¹⁰

He further asked that all 'halfbreeds' settling in the reservation 'shall own that land according to the homestead, preemption or timber acts or such other way as the government may desire.' It is clear that Riel was prepared to argue to the American government for an essentially European Métis status despite the Indian blood, and that he ultimately advocated an essentially sedentary lifestyle. He saw the other settlers as his 'fellow countrymen'.¹¹

Thomas Flanagan, a controversial authority on the Métis land claims, has also noted the significant lack of any reference to Métis nationhood and any argument for aboriginal rights.¹² Elsewhere in his writings, Riel describes the Métis as 'Métis-Canadien-français dans les Etats-unis.' He also argues that the Métis are a people-in-between, but essentially European.

If the poor Half-breed is ignored, in fact; if he cannot be but disregarded on account of Indian blood, could he not be taken care of according to law for the sake of the Caucasian blood which circulates in his veins and runs up to his heart?¹³

The American government persisted, however, in insisting that the 'halfbreeds' as a group were British subjects and the responsibility of the British Crown. If they continued to live in the United States, they could take up homesteads like other settlers. A. R. Keller, the Indian Agent responsible, thought Riel's request 'extraordinary'. He indicated in summary that they were 'descended from the Cree tribe of Indians, located in the dominion of Canada.' They were 'British subjects', and should return to the 'Red River of the north, where they belong.'¹⁴ Whether or not the Métis who signed the petition were descended from Red River Métis is only peripherally relevant. Much more critical is the evidence that the American government owed the Métis nothing as a group.

The impact of American policy on the identity of those American mixed-bloods who in Canada would have been Métis was evident in Montana. In the 1960s approximately 4,000 Montana Métis called themselves 'Chippewa', or the 'landless Indians'. The native community was less charitable and called them 'Cree', 'bon jours' or 'bon hommes from Lac La Biche.'¹⁵ These designations, particularly Cree and French, again suggest a 'Canadian' origin. Attachment to the Métis nation, whose identity was focussed in Canada, was not evident.

While the American Métis never established a distinct identity, the Métis in Canada were subject to differing policies and followed another historical path. These policies and paths both caused and allowed the formation of the unique mixed-blood identity in Western Canada. What has not been determined to date are the precise experiences that formed the unique Métis identity or why individuals claimed the identity as theirs. Why, by the later decades of the nineteenth century, did the Métis Nation come to claim all mixed-blood people of both English and French heritage as theirs? Why did the English-speaking Protestant mixed-bloods of Red River disappear as an identifiable group in the 1860s, submerging themselves amongst the white settlers, and in some cases the native community? Why did the Métis emerge as the paramount mixed-blood group that subsumed in such a short time all remaining mixed-bloods? An account of the Red River mixed-blood experience in North America may offer some general observations that could be instructive in a more general sense. Why are some groups excluded from a new national identity, as were the English-speaking Protestant mixed-bloods? How are new 'national identities' formed? What are the implications of the particular way in which a Métis identity emerged for Métis claims to rectify past injustices and settle aboriginal cultural and land claims?

PAM

*John Inkster*

PAM

*Mrs Inkster, née Mary Sinclair*

PAC c.20243

*The heads of a prominent Halfbreed family: John Inkster and his wife. The Inkster house and farm buildings were photographed by the H.Y. Hind Expedition, 1857-58.*

Introduction

G. F. G. Stanley and W. L. Morton have offered two contradictory but well documented interpretations of the first Riel Resistance. Stanley placed the resistance within the frame-work of the frontier thesis as

a manifestation...of the problem of the frontier, namely the clash between primitive and civilized peoples. In other parts of the world like in South Africa, New Zealand and North America, the penetration of white settlement into territories inhabited by native peoples had led to friction and wars; Canadian expansion into the North-West led to a similar result. Here both the mixed-blood population and Indian tribes rose against the Canadian intrusion and the imposition of an alien civilization.¹

Obviously this is an overly sharp hinterland/metropolitan dichotomy. Carl Berger in *The Writing of Canadian History* (Toronto, 1976) provides a more detailed analysis of the intricacies of the frontier interpretation than required here.² It is important to note, however, that Stanley's interpretation includes by implication several critical elements of frontierism. He sees the native and Métis as at once free (from civilization) and unorganized (at least in the European sense) but affected by the raw democratic spirit of the frontier and unable to resist the superior forces of civilization (Ontario). This is not an interpretation held by Morton who considered 'what the Métis chiefly feared in 1869 was not the entrance of an agricultural frontier of Ontario into Red River — and they would have welcomed that of Quebec — but the sudden influx of immigrants of English speech and Protestant faith.'³

In both interpretations the English-speaking Halfbreeds and their clergy, all of the Church of England, are given similarly minor roles. Stanley places the English-speaking Halfbreed solidly on the side of the Métis in their resistance to the agricultural frontier. Morton is reluctant to give credence to any sense of unity between the two groups but comes to a similar conclusion that:

The great, central body of [Halfbreed] sentiment was inclined to risk nothing for Canada, and was at first not unsympathetic with the cause, if critical of the acts, of the Métis, with whom they possessed ties of blood and of long association on hunt and trip.⁴

In this sense, then, Morton considers the Halfbreed ties of blood with the Métis more important than their ties of language and religion with the Canadians.

Morton's views on the 1869 resistance have been supported by recent historians like Jennifer Brown in her *Strangers in Blood* (Vancouver, 1980). She points out in her pivotal argument that the fur trade produced two distinct traditions: one of the Hudson's Bay Company and another of the North West Company that did not meld together in Red River. The two traditions had their peculiarities.

Those company offspring who lacked either paternal resources or direction or both usually remained as halfbreed or métis in the Northwest. These mixed-bloods were to some extent divided along old company lines. Many lower-ranked Hudson's Bay Orkneymen and other servants had retired to Red River, and their descendants, known as 'Scotch' or 'English halfbreeds,' were said by some observers to be more settled and more oriented toward acquiring education and civilized ways than the métis with their taste for the more free and 'improvident' life of the Indians, although the two overlapped somewhat.

In contrast, since very few Scottish North Westers had made their homes in Red River, most mixed-bloods of that company who migrated to the settlement were of voyageur and French background or, if Scottish, they lacked paternal ties. As buffalo hunters, suppliers, or workers in other subservient capacities, they tended to constitute the lower classes of the fur trade while maintaining a separate group consciousness that went back to the earliest days of Red River.⁵

A rational extension of Brown's landmark research would have been to see if these distinctions could be traced through the actions of

each group in the Riel Resistance. That is, did the descendants of the North Westers act differently than the descendants of the Hudson's Bay Company experience? Brown does not explore this query in any detail, but nevertheless comes to a general conclusion which reinforces Morton's and Stanley's views that the Métis and English-speaking mixed-bloods were united in opposition to Canada. She argues from an economic perspective that 'lacking upward mobility, these mixed-blood descendants of the fur trade joined a common cause that emphasized their maternal descent'.⁶

Irene Spry is equally adamant. She maintains firmly that the two groups of Métis were united, were socially similar and that they were joined by their Indian heritage. She argues that the only divisions that existed within the settlement were 'between the well-educated and well-to-do gentry, the officers and retired officers of the Honourable Company and those of their progeny who had achieved respectability, the clergy, and the prosperous merchants, in contrast to the mass of unlettered, unpropertied natives of the country' and 'the second . . . between the professional farmer and the hunter and plains trader.' Divisions then were economic, not racial, religious, or cultural.⁷

Spry's economic interpretation springs from a secular bias which resists the use of Anglican Church source material, the evidence for many arguments in this book. Her bias which also affected the work of Morton, Stanley, and more recently, Gerald Friesen,⁸ who have all excluded Anglican Church sources material from their respective analysis, has resulted in three major problems which the following chapters attempt to correct:

1. it underestimates the separateness of the English-speaking mixed-bloods, the majority of whom were Anglican, in Red River and the western Canadian interior;
2. it underestimates the role of the English-speaking mixed-bloods in the history of Red River and the western interior; and
3. it underestimates the role of the Anglican clergy in the history of western Canada and the major events that shaped it.

The skeptical attitude toward these church sources by historians has been shaped by the secularism of the post-World War II era. The impact of mid-century secularism on the scholarly investigation of missionary/native relations has been well outlined in Philip Goldring's

1984 article on 'Religion, Missions, and Native Culture'.⁹ He observed that historians and anthropologists, particularly after World War II, tended to adopt a 'secular view' while searching for personal perspectives in a largely secular age. They usually found their conscience to be 'anti-colonialist and anti-bureaucratic'. Missionaries came to be seen as bent on the purposeful and malicious alienation of the native from his traditional and by intimation more precious social, economic, and religious order.

The obstacle that the secular bias can present to a full integration of church sources in the writing of fur trade social history is dramatically illustrated in Spry's article. Her paper attempts to refute my assertion, illustrated in various articles and again more fully in the following chapters, that the clergy were instrumental in precipitating the conflict between Roman Catholic, French-speaking Métis and Anglican English-speaking mixed-bloods. In finding the missionary to be at the root of the disintegration of Red River society, this manuscript too can be accused of an anti-colonialist, secular interpretation. It does not, however, see the missionary as disturbing an idyllic mixed-blood society completely at peace with itself. Rather, the following chapters illustrate that the Church of England, its missionaries and its adherents, were major players in the drama whose roles must be examined in order to determine why the English-speaking mixed-bloods so readily accepted, and ultimately became part of the new Canada.

Spry believes that the mixed-blood peoples of western Canada were, by the 1870s, a traditional and distinct society united by blood. She sees the missionary as unsuccessfully attempting to destroy her united mixed-bloods. In her refutation of my interpretation Spry argues that:

Very little evidence of conflict, let alone "hatred", has come to light except in the clerical sources on which Pannekoek's conclusion seems in large measure to be based. Such sources, it is submitted, must be used with great reserve. Independent evidence is needed to test the testimony of writers who were concerned to convert the adherents of rival dogmas and to protect their own flocks from counter-conversion.¹⁰

The arguments and those of the following chapters are not wholly or even largely based on clerical sources, sources which in any case Spry has not consulted to substantiate her counter arguments. The arguments in this manuscript are based equally on Hudson's Bay Company documents. There is no doubt that the evidence from the clerics must be tested; but why should the letters and diaries of the clergy relating to their 'religious wars' require any more care in analysis than the documents penned by the sometimes unscrupulous and always enterprising fur traders. What is most curious about Spry's approach is that she accepts commercial documents quite uncritically, and because they do not always mention religious divisions, she concludes that no religious divisions existed. More importantly, she also argues that the divisions within the community were largely economic ones between farmer and trader, and between gentlemen and engagé. Based as they are exclusively on business archives these economic conclusions come as no surprise. Surely religious sources must be used to test Hudson's Bay Company sources! That is what the following chapters attempt to do.

Recent research by others also indicates that Spry's observations which emphasize unity and inter-connections between mixed-blood groups must be carefully questioned. In D.N. Sprague, and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* (Winnipeg, 1983), Sprague has pointed out that there were serious economic and social differences between mixed-blood language groups and that these differences lasted until after the Riel Resistance. As important, in his marriage tables he does show quite conclusively that the majority of the mixed-bloods *did* marry within their groups and that religion reinforced the distinction between the two groups. This observation is critical in the testing of Spry's hypothesis which emphasizes inter-marriage between the two groups.

The following chapters will argue that the Riel Resistance of 1869-70 was in part caused and certainly exacerbated, not by the racial and religious antagonisms that were introduced by the Canadians in the 1850s, but rather by a sectarian and racial conflict that had roots deep in Red River's past. The Halfbreeds and the Métis had been increasingly at odds at least twenty years before the Resistance, and the origins of their divergence lay in the nature of Red River and fur trade

society. It can also be argued, and Jennifer Brown's *Strangers in Blood* (Vancouver, 1980) provides ample evidence, that the roots of these antagonisms were already in place in the differences between the social structures of the Hudson's Bay Company trading system and the social structures of the St. Lawrence River trading system. During the Red River Resistance the religious, social and economic differences flared into a near civil warfare between the mixed-blood brothers.¹¹

Such an interpretation would seriously question the conclusions of Marcel Giraud's mammoth monograph, *Le Métis Canadien* (Paris, 1945), probably the most detailed analysis of the pre-1870 Canadian West, and the inspiration for much of the work done on Red River and the Métis to date. Morton's chapters on the historical background of Red River in *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto, 1957), and his introductions to Alexander Begg's *Red River Journal* (Toronto, 1956), and Eden Colvile's *Letters* (Toronto, 1956), have been influenced by Giraud's synthesis. It is best summarized in his article 'The Canadian Metis', published in *The Beaver*, Outfit 281 (September, 1950).

In the Red River colony civilization and barbarism met and mingled. On the one hand was the sedentary agricultural economy of the colony, on the other the nomadic hunting economy of the Plains. This admixture of civilized life and barbarism, this conjunction of settled and roving ways, indeed occurred in the very persons of the halfbreed population of Red River and the west.

The result was a society quaint and unique, in which were reconciled the savagery of the Indian and the culture of Europe. The reconciliation was transient, however, dependent as it was on the continuation of the fur trade on the Plains. When the agricultural frontier advanced into the Red River Valley in the 1870s and the last buffalo herds were destroyed in the 1880s, the halfbreed community of the West, *la nation métisse* was doomed, and made its last ineffectual protest against extinction in the Saskatchewan Rebellion of 1885.¹²

Giraud maintains that the elements of 'civilization' that existed in Red River were due to the work of the clergy. They were the principal bulwarks of law and order, fighting as they did against drunkenness,

immorality and vice. Whatever restraint existed and whatever sedentary life there was, were due largely to their perseverance. Giraud also argues that by going on the hunt with the Métis, the Catholic clergy implicitly sanctioned and thereby reinforced the nomadic life that the vagaries of climate had already dictated. He also claims, and this is a point of considerable importance, that the clergy substantially decreased the distance between white and mixed-blood Red River; that is, they minimized racial tension.

But Giraud's observations are compromised by his tendency to underestimate the importance and influence of the Protestant clergy. Because they were members of the élite and because they were responsible for so much of the social dissension, the Protestants were far more crucial to the events in Red River than their Catholic counterparts. Giraud argues the opposite because of what he sees as the overwhelming importance of the Métis to Red River, and because of the remarkable influence that the Catholic secular clergy had over them. In fact, the Catholic Church was historically passive, and reacted to rather than initiated the events that shaped Red River. If any religious institution should be singled out for its influence it must be the Church of England. Its clergy assumed the principal roles in the most significant events of the settlement.

Giraud has further compounded the limitations to his study by failing to distinguish adequately between Halfbreed and Métis. While he does distinguish between 'le métis ecossais' and 'le métis canadien', he too often sees the first group, the Halfbreeds, as an appendage of the Métis, following, and generally sympathizing with them. Yet, even before a series of racial and religious crises, between 1820 and 1863, they were a group with an identity distinct from that of the Métis, and with a dynamism of their own.

Giraud's emphasis on the Métis is the result of several factors. First Giraud, like Spry, did not consult any Anglican missionary sources, which contain the bulk of material relating to the Halfbreeds. Second, he interviewed a large number of western Canadian Métis, and only a few Halfbreeds. If the argument here is correct, that the Halfbreeds had reoriented their identity to Canadian rather than mixed-blood or Métis in 1863-9, he would, of course, have found few Halfbreeds who claimed a distinct identity. Also the Riel Rebellions

have been featured in Canadian history and until John Foster's work all attention was focussed on Riel's followers - the Métis of folklore and myth. Giraud's discomfort with English may also have lead him to inadvertently concentrate on the Métis. He tended to translate all of his research notes into French which may also have caused some problems in later focus.¹³

Giraud's work, as well as that of Morton and Stanley, is marred by what Emma LaRocque in her *Defeathering the Indian* (Agincourt, 1975) has called the civilization-savagism dichotomy. The implicit assumption by the three is that there is a ranked order in culture and that European civilization is more complex, of a higher order and therefore implicitly more valuable. LaRocque observed that perhaps no clearer example

can be found than in the use of the term 'savage' and all its synonyms. The height of ethnocentricity is to call someone else barbarian... primitive or uncivilized. It is to set oneself up as a measuring stick of civilization. Furthermore, it is to assume that one is exempt from barbarity and savagery.¹⁴

There are even more severe limitations to Giraud's central theme that Red River's historical development resulted from the interaction of the environment, the Métis, the clergy, and the bourgeois, which produced a society delicately balanced between 'civilization and barbarism', with the Métis the personification of that balance. While the Métis community may have been a balance of European and Amerindian cultures, Red River, taken as a whole, was a society that was not the product of a delicate balance, but of brittleness, whose parts were mutually antagonistic and increasingly pitted one against the other. In general, the Catholics maintained their distance from the Protestants; the Halfbreeds, from the Métis; the clergymen, from the commissioned gentlemen; and the white wives, from their Halfbreed counterparts. These divisions tended to fall, in many instances, along the divisions between the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company traditions of fur trade society. It will be argued that these were reinforced by the actions of the clergy.

Indeed on the eve of political change in the 1860s, it became increasingly apparent that Red River was so fragmented and divided

within itself that the élite was incapable of offering leadership and that the general population was on the verge of sectarian and social war. In one sense, the clergy tried creating an economic balance between the nomadic and sedentary life, and a cultural balance between Indians and European ways; in another, they precipitated a steady deterioration of the relationships among the various parts comprising the settlement. As a result, between 1820 and 1870 Red River society increasingly lost confidence in itself and its leaders. It was a community rife with vicious gossip in which many were slandered, and few escaped the sharp tongues of neighbours. When Canadian annexation came, as it did with a new élite from Ontario, old Red River was already spent.

PAM



*James Bird Jr.,
from an 1855 sketch*

PAM



The home of Chief Factor James Bird, where he lived with his second Indian wife Elizabeth, his seven sons and one daughter. Hime photograph 1857-1858.

1

The Red River Setting

To a casual observer, Alexander Ramsey, Governor of Minnesota, Red River in 1849 appeared as a picturesque rural backwater dotted with church steeples and numerous windmills. It was an aspect it would have for the next fifteen years. Life in Red River arranged itself into a pattern regulated by the seasons, the Church, the Hudson's Bay Company and the family. The remnants and descendants of the 151 Scottish settlers recruited by Lord Selkirk between 1811 and 1817 lived around Frog Plain, immediately above the forks on the west side of the Red River; while the remnants and offspring of the twenty-six French-Canadian farmers, who had come with Rev. J. N. Provencher in 1818, settled at Saint-Boniface, on the opposite shore from the Company's fort. Nearby, along the Rivière la Seine, subsisted some forty-five mercenaries recruited by the Earl of Selkirk for service in Red River. They were joined in 1821 by 170 unhappy and naive settlers recruited in Switzerland.

The major source for Red River's population and troubles, however, were the castoffs of the fur trade, the retired servants. In 1822, one year after the union of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies, a first wave of 600 discarded British and mixed-blood servants arrived to settle along the Red from Image Plain to the Grand Rapids near present-day St Andrews. Since the early 1800s some 200 Métis had congregated at Pembina, but in 1822 the majority migrated to White Horse Plain on the Assiniboine. Even some of the trade's gentlemen, particularly the retired Chief Factors and Chief Traders of the Hudson's Bay Company, showed an inclination to take their country families to Red River rather than abandon them for the more refined, though unfamiliar life in Scotland and Canada.

After the exodus of the de Meurons (the Swiss) and some of the less stalwart settlers in 1826, Red River assumed the racial and

religious balance it would maintain until 1871, when the population climbed to 11,960 from the nearly 6,000 it had been since the 1840s and 1850s. The census of 1871 indicates that of the 11,960, 1,600 were European, 560 Indians, 5,720 Métis and 4,080 English-speaking mixed-bloods. While it was a settlement which since 1849 had become imperceptibly more mixed-blood and less European racially, the religious balance remained constant. In that year, for example, there were 2,180 Protestants and 2,511 Roman Catholics, as compared to 5,720 and 6,240 respectively in 1871.¹ While there would seem to be a substantial increase in Europeans, most of it (probably one-third) was of recent and Canadian origin. Of this population approximately forty-four per cent were located in the lower settlement on the west bank of the Red River, that is between the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and the Grand Rapids, approximately twenty-four miles downstream. The upper settlement immediately surrounding Saint-Boniface Cathedral on the opposite side of the river from Fort Garry, contained approximately twenty-eight percent of the population, as did the settlements which spotted the banks of the Assiniboine some thirty miles upriver to Saint-François-Xavier and later in the 1850s to Portage la Prairie.²

| RED RIVER POPULATION SUMMARY | | | | |
|---|-------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| DATE | 1849 | | 1871 | |
| Roman Catholic | 2588 | 48% | 5720 | 48% |
| Protestant* | 2803 | 52% | 6240 | 52% |
| European | 500 | 9% | 1600 | 13% |
| Indian | 537 | 10% | 560 | 5% |
| Métis | 2631 | 49% | 5720 | 48% |
| Half Breed | 1703 | 32% | 4080 | 34% |
| TOTAL | 5371 | | 11960 | |
| *This includes the 163 Pensioners and the 460 Indians at St. Peters. This table was extrapolated from the 1849 and 1871 census. | | | | |

Among the principal settlers were William Hemmings Cook and James Bird. Chief Factor Cook was 53 years of age when he arrived in the settlement in 1820. Short, husky, dark-haired and swarthy-looking, Cook had spent 33 years in the service of the Company before petitioning the London Committee in 1815 to let his family settle somewhere in Rupert's Land. Within a few years of 1820 Cook was settled with Mary Cocking, his third wife whom he married in the custom of the country, and his children: Samuel 21, Mary 20, Jeremiah 19, Charles 16 and Lydia, Jenny, Catherine and Joseph all of indeterminate age. Cook first established his household on a narrow piece of land between the Red and Seine rivers, but in 1824 moved with his family to Image Plain where he had two five-hundred-acre lots. This was a considerably more congenial area already settled by an increasing number of Cook's fur trade friends.³

Chief Factor James Bird also entered the settlement in 1820. He was 56 years old and was accompanied by his second Indian wife, Elizabeth and his children: a married son, five unmarried adult sons, an unmarried adult daughter, and a son under 15 years of age.⁴ Many of this large family probably lived for a time in the one house, among the largest and most pretentious of the settlement. Another less prominent canoeman, Peter Corrigan, a gaunt, tall and formidable Orkneyman who, at 42 years of age, had served in posts along the Saskatchewan and at Norway House, arrived at Red River in 1822 accompanied by Christy, his Indian wife, and James, 20, their unmarried son. He established his family on two 125-acre lots above Image Plain near the 1846 site of St. Andrew's Church.⁵ His home would have been more modest than Bird's, and may have approximated this period description:

The seams of the log walls were plastered with mud, the chimneys were of the same material; the roofs were thatched with reeds and covered with earth; the boards of the floors and doors and beds were planed with the saw, and the windows for admitting light were formed of pacchetin [sic] made of skins of fishes.⁶

The extended family settlements were typical of the bulk of Red River settlers like Henry Hallett, Humphrey Favel, William Garrioch

and William Flett. Hallett, born in England in 1772 and employed by both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company (1810-1821) had served at one point as a trader at York Factory. He retired in 1824 with his Halfbreed wife, Catherine Dease, and their five children — James 24, Henry Jr. 23, William 12, Anne 16 and Elizabeth 12 — on two adjacent lots.

William Garrioch, a trader and then 'second clerk' at Swan River, retired one year later in 1825 with his wife Nancy Cook, the eldest daughter of William H. Cook, and their six children. His eldest sons, William Jr. and Peter were respectively 22 and 20 years old. Garrioch settled next to his father-in-law, W.H. Cook, on 263 acres of land, and undoubtedly regarded himself as Cook's man. While Cook maintained close ties with retired commissioned officers who formed the settlement's squirearchy like James Bird and Thomas Thomas, Garrioch sought his friends amongst other Orkney-born servants, the younger Cooks, and Swiss-Demeurons like Anthony Anchette. Garrioch's home, 'Orkney Cottage', became the gathering place for their group and much of Red River's gossip was undoubtedly savoured there in the long winter evenings.

One rung below the Garriochs in social standing were the various Flett families. It is not known if they were interconnected. Two major families of that name were led by William and George Flett respectively. William Flett, an 'honest and interested' servant of the Company, arrived at Red River in 1822 with his second Indian wife, Saskatchewan, and his four children — Elizabeth, Ann, Peter and William — in tow. Unlike others of his community, his eldest children, all over twenty, lived on their own land. George probably arrived in the settlement with his wife, Peggy Whitford, and three children, all boys under 15, about the same time as William. Flett was not granted any land upon retirement although he was granted a pension of £30 per annum for seven years, a not inconsiderable sum. He eventually acquired about 34 acres by squatter's rights. The Fletts, like the Garriochs, endeavoured to ally themselves with settlers of substance, and the retired commissioned gentlemen. Flett's son, Joseph, born in 1825, married Lydia Cook, one of W. H. Cook's many daughters in 1843. The web of kinship that was being inadvertently spun in Red River was a complex one. John Foster states⁷ that the family network

that was being constructed was also conscious. The fact that Lydia, the daughter of a fur trade patriarch, was reduced to marrying the son of an impecunious labourer might also indicate the state of the marriage market for Halfbreed daughters.⁸ It was difficult to maintain one's predestined station in life at Red River.

Even lower on the social rung were men like James Gaddy who, with his four children, retired to Red River from York Factory in 1822 at age 50. As a former labourer, a steersman and an interpreter, he was not entitled to receive a large grant so he settled on a few acres of public land near the Cooks. Like Flett he managed a distant marriage alliance with the Cook family through his son William, who married a Cook granddaughter. The Gaddys never amounted to much in Red River. Their attachment in the end was more to the plains than to the farm. Cook must have realized too, although this is difficult to document, that by permitting the Gaddys to marry into his family and to settle close to his lands, he would be influencing the more nomadic of the Halfbreed settlers. William Gaddy frequently went on the hunt, and was close to many of the Métis of the settlement.

Households that arrived at Red River were often headed by European-born Company servants in their middle years. Typical of these was the William Tait family. Tait, 33, an Orkney labourer had married a daughter of a Swampy Cree Indian chief, in 'the custom of the country' and had three young children. 'Wallack', as he was called by the Indians, had few prospects for promotion within the Company and Red River offered him land and status. Such individuals often settled on the lots that remained between Image Plain and the Forks. They too endeavoured to tie themselves to one of the established patriarchal families.⁹

The struggle to survive in these early years was no doubt made easier by the support of cousins, brothers and uncles all under the same roof or on adjacent lots. The extended family was the greatest insulation against the vagaries of climate. A large number of adult men who married in the late 1820s and early 1830s and who had families stayed with their fathers. Samuel, one of William Hemmings Cook's sons, lived with his wife in his father's home. Similarly, James Bird's two sons who married in 1824 remained in the family home. This dependency of adult children upon their fathers and, one suspects, of aging

parents upon their children was the Red River way, reinforcing and reinforced by the hierarchical traditions of the fur trade, and by the family structure common to many of the Scottish-born fathers. The increasing dominance of the extended family is apparent from the substantial increase in the number of sons over 16 living at home. The extended family was most common among the most Scottish of the families, who had on the average .82 sons over 16 at home in 1843, compared to the mixed-bloods who had only .35.¹⁰ In both cases this was double the number of 1838.

It can be argued, although the evidence is by no means conclusive, that this increasing interdependency of adult children and their parents was in direct contrast to the independence the children had experienced before their move to Red River. In the interior some were raised by their Indian or part-Indian mothers, since their fathers travelled widely and often wintered at some distant post. Some families, especially of senior officers, did travel as units. Peter Garrioch, the son of William Garrioch, however, rarely saw his father as a child.¹¹ William Cockran, the missionary, in another view noted the very affectionate and, possibly from a European perspective, over-indulgent upbringing of the mixed-blood child.

The Indian and half-breed mothers are passionately fond of their Children; this shuts their eyes against all of their feelings and makes them foster all the vices of their children the very same as they nourish their bodies. Their children are all of a rude nature, they grow up from infancy to manhood following the bent of their own inclinations without ever being thwarted in their desire or corrected for their faults.¹²

The transfer of agrarian skills and knowledge from a father to a son at Red River, on the other hand, was such that the son assumed both the father's identity and vocation. In fur trade families, the transfer of skills was not as easy. Before settling in Red River most Halfbreeds had to serve as labourers, while those more fortunate had been clerks. Even Joseph Cook, son of the Chief Factor, initially had to make do with that rank although later he became a 'trader'. The move to Red River complicated matters. Most Halfbreed sons could not normally assume the position of trader or merchant; they had



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH.

In 1856, near St. Andrew's Church, English-speaking Halfbreeds had an average of 1.4 acres under cultivation. From a sketch dated 1860 by Manton Marble.

neither the complexion nor the education. This, combined with the economic difficulties plaguing Red River, forced the Halfbreeds to be increasingly dependent upon their families. This is not to deny the existence of equally strong extended families in the interior fur posts, or that the Indian heritage may have reinforced the tendency; only that at Red River there was an obvious and marked increase in that tendency in the first decades of the settlement's existence.¹³

Yet the 1840s must still have been years of confidence, if not always prosperity, for Red River's families, for by then after two decades of bitter winters and mosquito-infested summers they had managed to come to terms with the land. In narrow river lots, divided into separate 'parks' or fields, they sowed their wheat and barley, the chief grain crops, and planted their patch of potatoes in the early spring, hoping that the climate would allow harvest which in some cases could be as late as September. Red River seemed timeless, fluctuating with the seasons between the buffalo hunt and the river lot. The European settlers, especially the Selkirks, were the most successful farmers. Even some of the English-speaking Halfbreeds, however, managed a marginal agricultural prosperity. In 1856, for example, the European families had an average of 2.3 acres under cultivation, while the English-speaking Halfbreeds squatting near St. Andrew's Church averaged 1.4 acres. The Métis attempted at the most a potato or barley patch of an acre or two. Much attention was paid to livestock. While in 1833 there were 3,500 head of cattle, in 1849 there were 6,014, complemented by 6,392.5 cultivated acres, 2,185 horses, 3,096 sheep, 18 windmills and two watermills. But in spite of the prodigious efforts of the Protestant parishes and some of the French-Canadian farmers at Saint-Boniface, agriculture could never provide sufficiently for the entire settlement in a climate treacherous with drought, grasshoppers, floods and frost.¹⁴

It was, in fact, necessary for the colony's survival that agriculture be balanced by the fishery and the hunt, the forte of the legendary Métis. Throughout the 1840s to 1860s as many as twelve hundred Métis would set out from June to August for the summer hunt, and later again for the October fall hunt. Because the Company required and purchased much of the pemmican from the summer hunt as provision for its northern brigades, the hunt became a main source of income as

well as food for the settlement. But these expeditions to the plains were not always successful. Indeed, in 1836, 1840, 1844, 1855, 1867 both the river lot and hunt failed, causing major famine. Yet the illusion of prosperity of the years 1833, 1834, 1841, 1849 and 1853, when both the hunt and field were surprisingly productive, was enough to make Red River people believe that theirs was a world of 'comfort and happiness'.¹⁵

This prosperity was partially reflected in the significant increase in the birth rate from 1832 to 1843. The increase in Kildonan was particularly phenomenal and could indicate both the confidence the Scots had in their agricultural endeavours as well as decline in infant mortality. By 1843 the average number of children in their households had increased to 5.7 from the 3.4 of 1832. For the mixed-bloods, the increase was less, but nevertheless pronounced from 3.7 to 4.1.

This is further indicated in the baptismal records of these years. James Hallett, who married Sally Fidler in 1828, fathered three children between 1828 and 1832. Henry Hallet Jr. who married Catherine Parenteau in 1824 fathered two sons soon afterwards, while John Inkster who married Mary Sinclair on 20 January 1826 fathered four children from 1829 to 1834. Thomas Favel and his wife added one more to an already large family of nine, and William Flett, a son of James Flett, married in 1830 and had a son two years later. While these particular family sizes were not unusual in the fur trade generally, the fact that children survived did mean that the average family increased in size, however imperceptibly.

The baptism records indicate that the European and mixed-bloods had virtually similar birth rates. If mixed-blood families were smaller then it was likely because of a higher rate of infant mortality. Joseph Bird, the eldest son of James Bird, and Betsey his wife, lost three children between 1831 and 1836. James Hallett, the son of Henry Hallett Sr., lost two children between 1834 and 1838, while Henry Hallett Jr. lost a child in 1834. The story of woe was never-ending and examples existed in many families. The tragic loss of children, very often in the spring with the onslaught of fevers, must have made life endlessly sad. Sylvia Van Kirk points out that Alexander Ross's young family itself seemed immune from the tragedies that seemed to befall so many others. Of his twelve children, ten reached adulthood.¹⁶

Had the children of mixed-blood parents died in one year or along with the children of Kildonan-Scot parents, then one could have assumed that the cause had been either famine or epidemic. But this was not the case; deaths did not occur as frequently among the Kildonans, the most European of the settlers. For example, Alexander Bannerman and his wife had five children between 1833 and 1844, all of whom lived. The high mortality rate amongst the mixed-blood couples suggests that they may not have been able to provide as suitable an environment for survival. The food supply for many of the mixed-bloods was uncertain. This cycle of feast to famine must have been a cause of malnutrition. Potable water was also a problem if Alexander Ross, Red River's first historian, is to be believed. The mixed-bloods were least likely to have wells and probably drew water from the Red River, into which leached the manure from their barns.

By 1843, it was apparent that a demographic and economic malaise was probably afflicting the Red River settlement and that it would affect the extended family. This is indicated by the decline in the average age of the head of the mixed-blood households from 39 to 36 years between 1843 and 1849. While the lower figure may have been due to disease or death from premature aging, it could also have been due to adult children of both the first and second generation finally leaving to establish their own homes. It is interesting to note, however, that the tendency amongst the Kildonan settlers was the exact opposite. The mean age of the head of their households continued to increase from 45 in 1843 to 52 in 1849. The Kildonan settlers, in the uncertain period of the late 1830s and early 1840s, seem to have turned inward to the protection afforded by the security of their extended families.

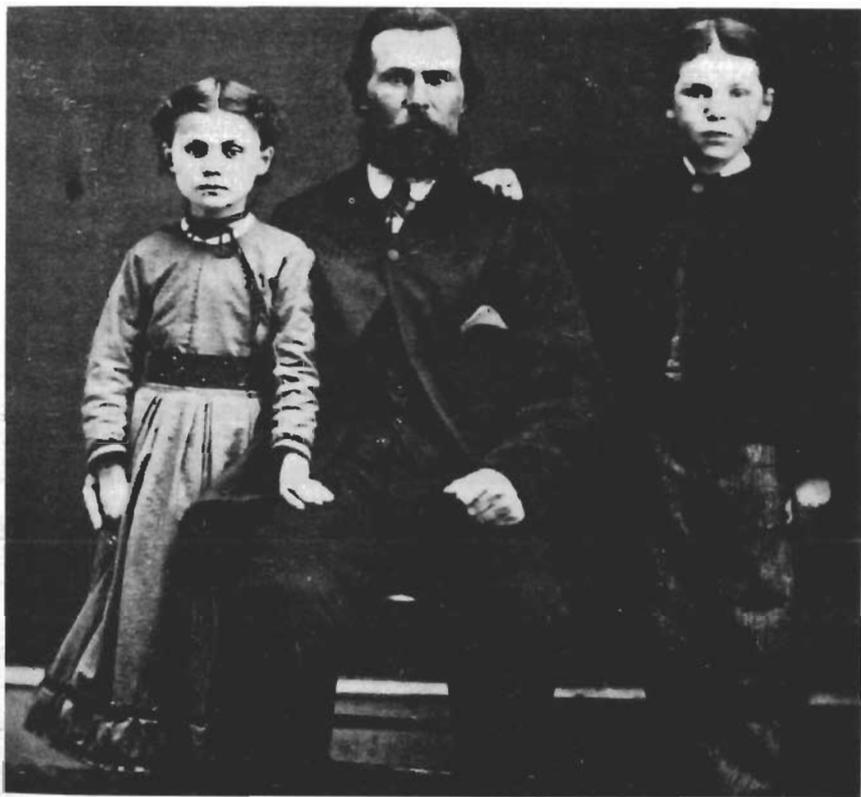
With the possible disintegration of the extended families the number of children per household declined, although the total number of children in the settlement merely levelled off. The number of children in Scottish families declined from 5.7 in 1843 to 4.9 in 1847, while those in Rupert's Land-born families declined from 4.1 to about 3.8 children. This decline was in all likelihood due to a probable decrease in the marriage and birth rates. For example, four of James Bird's nine sons, as well as Peter Favel and George Flett, remained bachelors for life. More important, of the men who did marry, fewer

PAM



Alexander Bannerman (left) and his wife had five children, between 1833 and 1844, all of whom survived. Below is George Bannerman, with Maggie and Archie.

PAM



had children. Although individually the events below could occur anywhere and perhaps Thomas and Samuel Favel may have been sterile, they do add flesh to bare statistics and cumulatively do create a picture. Thomas Favel and his wife remained childless. Samuel Favel's first wife died in 1845 without children, and the woman he married in 1846 then died in 1849 also without offspring. One John Garrioch, who married in 1843, did not father any children until the 1850s, and Jeremiah Cook, who married in 1833, did not have any children until after 1838. Among the members of the known statistical sample only Richard Favel and his wife seem the exception, with eight children all born during the 1840s.

The reasons for the probable break-up, tentatively argued in the previous paragraphs, of the mixed-blood extended families are not obscure. By 1835 the first generation of the Halfbreeds had filled up the remaining lots of open land in Red River. For the next generation the prospect of finding land in the settlement was dismal. The second range of lands behind the river lots were within the hay privilege, and the soils were so dense that they could not be cultivated until the invention of the chilled steel plough. Chief Peguis had been acutely aware of the problem.

There will be nowhere for them [the children of the retired servants] to settle upon this part of the river [for it] is thickly inhabited, there is only a little vacant land in the neighbourhood of the Fort; when that is occupied, a new settlement must either be formed behind or upon land called Indian reserve.¹⁷

Most land was subdivided and over-settled. William Hemmings Cook's land supported five families: those of Samuel Cook, the Widow Garrioch, Joseph Cook, Mary Cook, and Sarah Cook. Henry Hallett's eight-chain frontage supported about fifteen people. Some moved from the family farm to other lots. William Hallett, a son of Henry Hallett Senior, moved to Pembina Plain, a great distance from the family lots. John Garrioch, a son of William Garrioch, purchased a lot near Image Plain, and Jeremiah Cook, William Cook's son, and a friend, settled nearby. Many like the Favel boys found land along the Assiniboine River in what became the parish of St. James.¹⁸ Only as long as the buffalo held out could the pressure on the river lot farm be

tolerated; but even as early as 1834 and 1835, the herd began to diminish. Peguis grumbled that his buffaloes had gone to the land of his enemies.

But not all found agriculture on the plains profitable or palatable and some chose an alternative 'respectable' trade. Prominent Halfbreeds in other occupations were Dr John Bunn, Red River's only doctor, and later Thomas Sinclair, a wealthy merchant. One of W. H. Cook's sons remained home to train as a carpenter. The more menial trades were however never sufficient to provide a stable annual income and tradesmen resorted to free trade, farming and the hunt.

The Company's service was not always a viable alternative. George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company questioned the capability of the mixed-bloods, and thought many of them unsuitable for useful service. He was reluctant to have them hired. Chief Factor James Sutherland knew the problem well.

I could get him [Sutherland's second son] in the Cos service, but half-breeds as they are called has [sic] no chance there nor are they respected whatever their abilities may be, by a parcel of upstart Scotchmen, who now hold the power and control in the concern.¹⁹

Ironically, the Company's approach was further reinforced by a reaction from the Church, which did not want the mixed-bloods involved in the lower levels of Company work. Cockran in an undated letter indicated that he was unwilling for them to enter the Company's service.

They will continue there till they are unable to work, then when old age, and decrepitude unfits them for voyaging, they will come to establish themselves and burden us with their families.²⁰

Some of the sons of the first generation were caught in a serious dilemma. Most had neither the desire to become farmers nor the opportunity to work for the Company. Many turned to free trade as the only viable alternative, an alternative sanctioned by neither the Church of England nor Company. Only in this way could they see their way to the good life of their fathers, a life that was based on an income from

furs. Many took to the plains to trade or to the cart brigades destined for St. Paul. Peter Garrioch left the settlement in 1843 and traded with the Missouri Fur Company. William Hallett and his brother, James, joined Métis traders about 1845, when two of James Bird's sons also abandoned their farms for the plains.²¹

Those who pursued this illicit trade in furs were usually not supported by their fathers. In some instances the apparent family harmony of the 1830s was replaced by animosity and tension. When Peter Garrioch became a free trader, his father, William, refused to see him, and in the end Garrioch stayed away from his father's funeral. James Bird was to experience similar difficulties with his sons. When Alexander Christie asked Bird to keep his children under control, he droned out his sorrows. Of course, Bird was having his special problems. His new white wife with her presumed station would not have been enamoured of his mixed-blood children.

I have just received your note and beg to say that have lately heard with sorrow that the members of my family you name are somehow or other employed in an improper and illegal pursuit of furs... My son Phillip behaved so ill to me formerly that I was obliged to run him out of doors and resolve to have nothing more to do with him — My son Henry has occasionally behaved nearly as ill, and never allowed me to control him longer than I supported him and Frederick is wholly dependent of me though I lent him Smith's tools with a view of inducing him to settle down and work his trade.²²

Gerhard Ens argues that the push factors in Red River need to be tempered with pull factors of the plains. He points out that eighty percent of the mixed-bloods who lived in St. Andrews in 1835 were still there in 1849, while only sixty-six percent of the mixed-bloods who lived in Saint-François-Xavier in 1835 were there fourteen years later. After 1849 he argues that there was a substantial outmigration although he does not provide hard statistical evidence — rather supposition based on the '1885-7 Half Breed Script' commissions. He argues that there was not only an apparent outmigration, but also an abandonment of agriculture particularly in the Métis parish, Saint-François-Xavier.

The principal pull factor was the opening of the American fur markets to free trade. If in 1844 there were six carts going to St. Paul, in 1869 there were 250. Métis traders, and major traders like Ross, his son-in-law Greenhill, Bannatyne, and McDermot were all involved. Ens argues that a significant portion of the trade was in buffalo robes, and that mixed-bloods migrated to the interior to procure these. As the buffalo failed in the Red River area, in the late 1850s and early 1860s the mixed-bloods moved permanently to the interior in pursuit of the last herds. This tentative argument appears sound, and along with the push arguments makes sense.²³

It might be argued that the combination of pull and push factors during the 1840s made these years of increasingly subtle tension and fluidity for Red River. Those who knew the relatively more generous and prolific years of the 1830s probably despaired at the increasing uncertainty of their world. For Red River, the scapegoats were the Company and the Church. Both failed to realize, however, that they were in the clutches of a dilemma which had no solution.

The Company, because of its economic, political and social dominance, was an obvious target for dissatisfaction. Originally, Red River was governed by a Governor and Council of three, appointed by Selkirk, and after 1825 by the Company itself, even though Red River remained the property of the Selkirk estate until 1836. After the Company's takeover the Council's membership was widened to include a Company-selected representative for the Métis, Cuthbert Grant, the 'Warden of the Plains', and a merchant representative in the person of Andrew McDermot. The clergy were supposed to represent everyone else. In the following years membership was widened even further to include a few of the educated Métis. The Council, in spite of the fact that it was appointed, did represent the interests of the settlement to the extent of sometimes acting without the sanction of the Northern Council of the Hudson's Bay Company. The Council of Assiniboia, comprising from eight to twelve of the most influential citizens of Red River, concerned itself with agricultural improvement, petty crime, and 'stallions roaming at large', as well as the funding of schools, agricultural societies and public granaries.²⁴

It was, however, subordinate to the Northern Council which was comprised of a varying number of Chief Factors and Chief Traders. In

the 1820s throughout the service there were about five factors for every four traders. By the 1860s this gradually changed to one factor to every four traders. Philip Goldring has pointed out that in reality the only difference between the two categories was pay.²⁵ Both were termed 'commissioned gentlemen', and under the Deed Poll, which united the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company in 1821, were entitled to a share of the current profits of the trade. The duties of the Council, which met once a year, generally either at York Factory or Norway House, consisted of the management of the fur trade, and the regulation of personnel. For the most part the Council obeyed the dictates of the Governor of the Northern Department, who was appointed by, and responsible to, the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company resident in London.

Law was administered by the Governor and Council of Assiniboia until 1835. After that date all non-capital cases of less than £10 were the responsibility of four magistrates appointed by the Company to an equal number of judicial districts, while all cases over £10 but less than £200 were heard by the General Quarterly Court, presided over by the Company's Recorder or legal officer after 1839. Capital cases and those involving more than £200 were the responsibility of the Canadian law courts.

As the colony became more densely populated and as its mixed-blood progeny were denied the good life they believed the fur trade offered, they blamed and vilified the Company. Settlement youth, seeking to achieve economic status outside the Company's service, traded freely with whomever they pleased. The most prosperous of the traders, Andrew McDermot, an Irishman, and James Sinclair, became the focal point of unrest when the Company tried, without success, to enforce its monopoly. For all intents and purposes the trade was free after 1849. The Company could no longer exercise any real control in Red River except through the force of the personalities in its employ, and its still substantial purchasing power.

The 1850s saw a continued challenge to the Company which was precipitated by a northward push of trade and settlement from Minnesota, a southward push of trade from Red River and, most important, the renewal of interest both in Red River and Ontario for annexation to Canada. Inside this Red River pressure cooker the steam started to

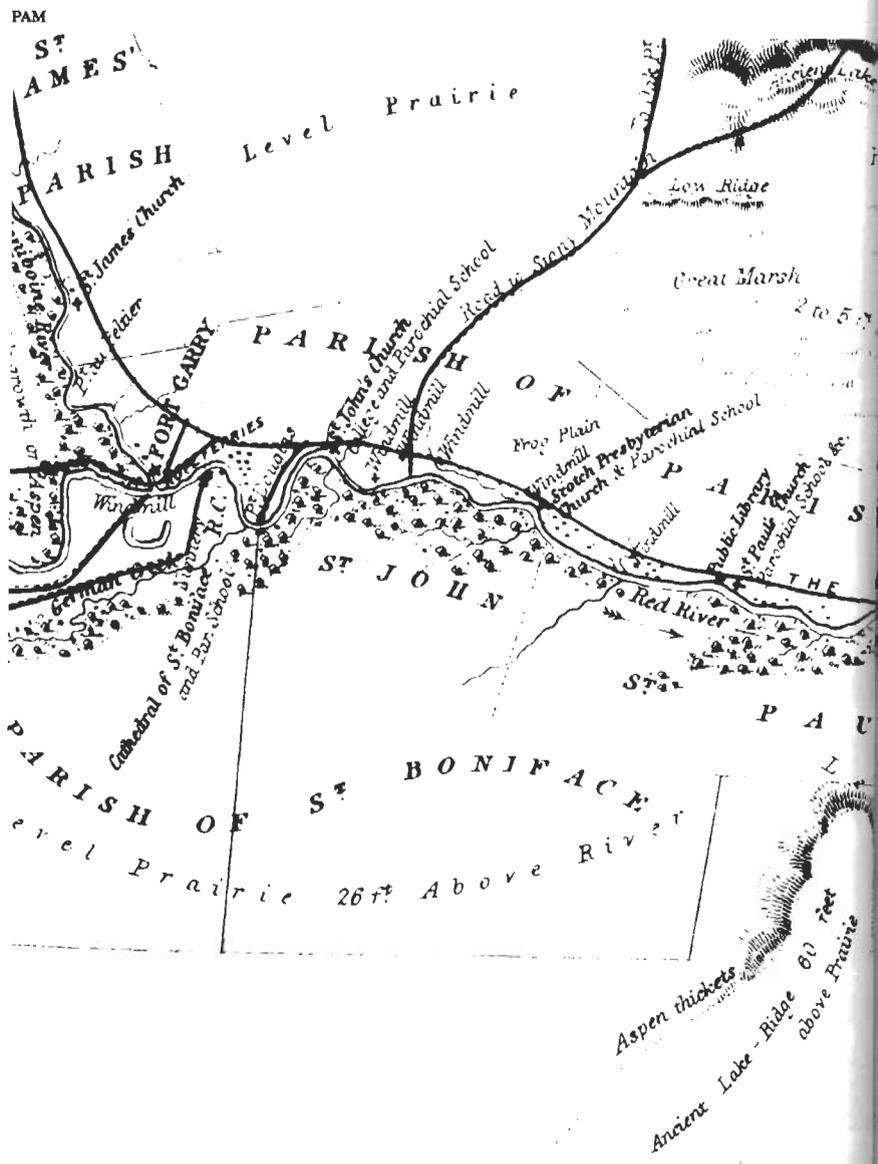
build in 1857. In that year not only did the British Parliament thoroughly investigate the Company's request for a renewal of its grant of Vancouver Island and its licence for exclusive trade in the Northwest, but the Canadian government dispatched an expedition led by Henry Youle Hind and S.J. Dawson to assess the possibilities for settlement in Rupert's land. As interest in annexation mounted in Protestant Red River, and as the government of the Company came ever more into question, life in the settlement became turbulent, sometimes verging on the lawless. The bigoted Protestantism and spirited land acquisition of the Canadians pressing into the North-West in the later 1860s forced the Roman Catholics led by Louis Riel to resist the inevitable union with Canada in 1869.

A principal institution governing and influencing Red River life in this period of turmoil was the churches. No aspect of life, whether economic, political or social, escaped their attention. Alexander Ross, Red River's historian and an influential member of its churches, indicated their pervasiveness.

Now, according to the census of 1849, the population of the colony amounted only to 5,391; of which number there are, non-residents, 1,511, leaving permanently in the colony a population of only 3,880 souls of all grades. One-half of the number, say 1,940 may be supposed [conjectured] to attend church regularly every Sunday, which would give to each of the places of public worship, Catholic or Protestant, a congregation of 215, or to each clergyman 161 persons. The spiritual staff provided for the snug little flock consists of one English Bishop and five Church of England missionaries, who are equally balanced by one Catholic Bishop and five French priests.²⁶

Red River was exceptional not in the fact that possibly one-half the population supposedly attended church, but that those who did were so well ministered by their clergy.

Until the population explosion of the 1860s, Red River worshipped at seven churches, four Protestant and three Roman Catholic. Rev. John West founded the first church, St. John's, two miles below the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, which in 1849, despite its



dilapidated condition, became the seat of the first Anglican Bishop. A large structure with ninety-two pews and eight square seats, it accommodated the Selkirk settlers, and the active and retired Company's officers who had settled near the Upper Fort. St. John's was by far the wealthiest and most pretentious of the Red River congregations. In 1824 Rev. David Jones built St. Paul's, also known as Middle Church, on Image Plain six miles downstream from St. John's. In general, its clergyman ministered to the retired servants and to some of the less prosperous retired officers and their offspring. The majority of the English-speaking Halfbreeds, however, worshipped thirteen miles further downstream at St. Andrew's, a wooden structure some fifty by twenty-two feet, that had been established by William Cockran in 1832. On the other hand, the Christian 'Indians' some of whom were likely mixed-blood descendants of fur traders, frequented St. Peter's, built in 1836, yet another thirteen miles downstream from St. Andrew's.

By 1870 the number of churches had grown from four to eleven. In 1851 the Selkirk Presbyterians finally obtained the services of a Presbyterian clergyman and formed their own church at Kildonan. Two years later, Rev. G.O. Corbett established Trinity Church at Headingley some twenty miles below Saint-François-Xavier among the twenty families living there, while Rev. W.H. Taylor became the first incumbent of St. James, two miles upstream from the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers amongst the 414 settlers there. Cockran founded St. Mary's at Portage la Prairie in 1856, which in the next years so expanded as to cause the founding of St. Margaret's at High Bluff and St. Anne's at Poplar Point along the Assiniboine, east of Cockran's original settlement. In 1861 the last pre-confederation Anglican parish, St. Clements, was formed north of St. Andrew's.

The Catholics were generally housed in less pretentious churches, but they did have the largest and most architecturally imposing edifice in Red River, measuring 100 feet by 60 feet with twin towers 108 feet high, as their cathedral after 1837. Saint-Boniface, the cathedral church from 1852 for the Bishop of Juliopolis *in partibus infidelium* (after 1847, the Bishop of Saint-Boniface), was the centre of Catholic life in Red River. During the great Christian festivals of the year it was filled with as many as 600 of the faithful from all the Catholic parishes.

The two parish churches with resident priests and sisters, Saint-François-Xavier, established by Father Destroismaisons in 1828, and Saint-Norbert, founded in 1855, were wooden structures of substantial size, the former measuring 80 feet by 30 feet. In the 1860s the Métis parishes began to expand on both sides of the Red River. The establishment of a convent in Saint-Vital caused a parish to grow there in 1860, while irregular services were also provided at Sainte-Agathe, Sainte-Anne-de-Chenes, and Saint-Charles.

The following chapters will argue that in this background of economic, demographic and leadership crisis, the churches and their clergy were the catalysts that precipitated a radical change in Red River society, as evidenced by the Riel Resistance of 1869. The Protestant clergy were particularly instrumental in this process, especially after 1830, given their slavish devotion to the creation of a society that they believed was European, and which became exclusionist and inward-looking. They believed and spread through their teachings at the mission schools that the dilution of the Britannic race and its civilization by degenerate Indian blood was especially disastrous. Since the Protestant half of Red River contained the most influential citizens, quarrels over status with the mixed-bloods and the Company's officers, and religious debates with their Catholic counterparts became particularly divisive in the decades following their most intense activity in the 1840s. These conflicts, especially those over race and religion, inevitably filtered down to the Halfbreeds and the Métis. Indeed by 1851 Red River experienced open social warfare and by 1865 extreme tensions existed between the French and English-speaking Halfbreeds. Evidence will be produced to suggest that had Red River had a sound economic base and a social structure unaffected by both the racism of the Company and unaffected by a declining access to land, the clergy may not have been so corrosive a force. But their impact in this environment of economic and demographic unrest, was such as to precipitate a major conflict amongst Red River groups — the final expression of which would be the Riel Resistance of 1869.

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Alexander Christie, Governor of Assiniboia (1833-39 and 1844-55).

2

A Question of Leadership

This study of the disintegration of Red River society from 1820 to 1870 revolves in large degree around the question of leadership.¹ Red River like many communities had both formal and informal leaders and the two frequently overlapped. The formal institutions which provided leadership to the community were the Company, the government (specifically the Council of Assiniboia), the churches, the schools, and the military. Rank in any one of these institutions immediately granted the possessor social status. Equally, social status usually placed an individual within one of the formal institutions, especially after the broadening of the Council of Assiniboia in 1835. Members of the formal leadership were expected to adhere to a definite set of social standards and to provide the community with direction. While designated status did define one's position within the social structure, ability and personal characteristics had a great deal to do with success and acceptance as a leader. Informal leaders included those whose status was achieved by economic success, prowess in the various activities deemed important to the community, family connections and wisdom.²

Leadership evolved through three stages in Red River. From 1820 to the early 1850s the principal settlers, primarily retired gentlemen traders, the Company-appointed Governor, officials of the Hudson's Bay Company and the clergy offered example and direction and accepted institutional appointments as recognition of their roles. The evolving tensions within and between the clergy and principal retired settlers and Company officialdom and the impact on the character and destiny of the settlement are the topic of the following chapters. The newness of the settlement dictated an inevitable struggle for social supremacy. In the 1830s the arrival of white women introduced the element of race as another criteria determining suitability for social and community leadership.

In the late 1840s and early 1850s a new leadership emerged in both English-speaking and French-speaking Red River. The principal settlers were not replaced with new retired gentlemen from the trade, although there were some; rather, their place was taken by their children, relations and protégées. None of these children attained as high a status as their father within the Company. They refused, however, to accept the economic and social limits imposed by the Company's hierarchy and sought, with varying success, status outside its formal organization. The descendants of the principal settlers were supplemented by the occasional military officer, medical doctor, or clergyman. For the first time influential leaders from minorities like the Selkirk settlers were also formally recognized.

During the 1860s the leadership within Red River underwent yet another radical challenge — from the new Canadian settlers. French-speaking and English-speaking Red River responded differently to the Canadians. In English-speaking Red River the children of the principal settlers found themselves unable to provide leadership in the troubles of the 1860s and were prepared to seek direction from the new Canadian settlers. Within Métis Red River, the children of the first generation were able to provide leadership to thwart what was in their minds the bigotry of the new Canadians. What the Métis were not able to do was to convince the English-speaking mixed-bloods of the settlement of their common interests. The growing divergence of the interests of the two halves of the settlement are complex and are the subject of the next chapters.

The visible leadership of Red River was determined by the hierarchical and quasi-military structure of the Hudson's Bay Company.³ Legally at the top of the hierarchy were the Governors of Assiniboia. Those with sufficiently long tenures to have impact were Donald McKenzie (1825-1833, retiring to New York), Alexander Christie (1833-39 and 1844-48), Duncan Finlayson (1839-1844), Major W.B. Caldwell (1848-1855), and William Mactavish (1857-1869). What is remarkable about these gentlemen is that, while appointed from London, they were closely linked by family to the fur trade and Red River. Only Caldwell was the exception. All had access to power and money. To Red River their lives symbolized the epitome of success.

During his eight-year tenure Donald McKenzie, connected by his second marriage to the Swiss settlers, was known by some as a generous caring individual who achieved much by example. Simpson himself expressed serious reservations about McKenzie:

He is not at all fit for the Charge [of Red River] being the most indolent useless man I ever knew the fact is, I never knew McKenzies habits of body or mind until this past Winter, had I been acquainted with them sufficiently early, he never would have been a Govr..⁴

It would seem that McKenzie was not able to meet Simpson's standards.

Alexander Christie, Governor from 1833-39, and again from 1844-48, had connections to the principal settlers through his wife, the mixed-blood daughter of John Thomas.⁵ In 1845 during his second term, his wife arranged for the marriage of their daughter to John Black, then clerk, but future Chief Trader and Recorder of Rupert's Land.⁶ James McMillan, another retired trader wrote

Mr Christie makes a most excellent Governor. The people have the outmost confidence in him he keeps free from nasty intrigues he is never found out in any thing but down right sterling truth and firm enough in his way of acting. We live quit happy under him.⁷

Finlayson, married Nov. 1838 to Simpson's sister-in-law, Isobel, struck a different note within the settlement. In 1842 he confessed to Simpson

I must again repeat that I am heartily tired of this place... The present system of living by sufferance, will not last long... the Half-breed part of the population have already had too much of their own way.⁸

Major Caldwell, commanding officer of the Chelsea pensioners who came to offer security to the settlement, and Governor of Assiniboia during its most critical period 1848 to 1855, was an absolute disaster if contemporaries can be believed. Although he was nominated by the colonial office, and appointed by the Company in the

first real attempt to separate the government of the settlement from the affairs of the Hudson's Bay Company, he had the respect of neither the principal settlers nor the Company's officials.⁹

Red River was more fortunate in its later Governors, particularly William Mactavish, whose leadership was critical during Red River's last decade. Connected by family to many of the old families and principal merchants, he represented the epitome of the ascendancy of the old families. The Company was prepared to allow Mactavish his way on matters relating to the settlement and acceded to his suggestions as to appointments to public office. Having little use for the new Canadian settlers who came into the settlement in the late 1860s, he preferred and was part of the old comfortable order.¹⁰ To him the Canadians were little more than transients.

In the 1840s as the leadership in Red River matured, the first indigenous leadership developed within the settlement, outside that recognized by the Company. During those years Andrew McDermot, an ex-Company clerk, through his personality and wealth based on independent freighting and trading, became so popular and influential that he and his partner James Sinclair could have taken over the settlement in the unrest of the later 1840s. During his lifetime McDermot was admired as having all the attributes of the perfect Red River man.

He could speak the language of the Indians better than the Indians themselves, ... he could run like a deer and endure cold like an Eskimo ..., and ... there was no better judge of men and horses in Red River, or any man who was his equal in address and accommodating qualities, in humor and shrewdness and the power of making money.¹¹

McDermot came out with the second group of Selkirk settlers, and married the mixed-blood Sarah McNab. The marriages of his fifteen children (nine daughters and six sons) provided connections throughout Red River. One married Richard Lane, a Company clerk; another, a Bird son; another, a mixed-blood Truthwaite from St. Andrew's; another, William Mactavish, the Governor of Red River; and yet another, A.G.B. Bannatyne who would become McDermot's successor as Red River's wealthiest merchant.¹²

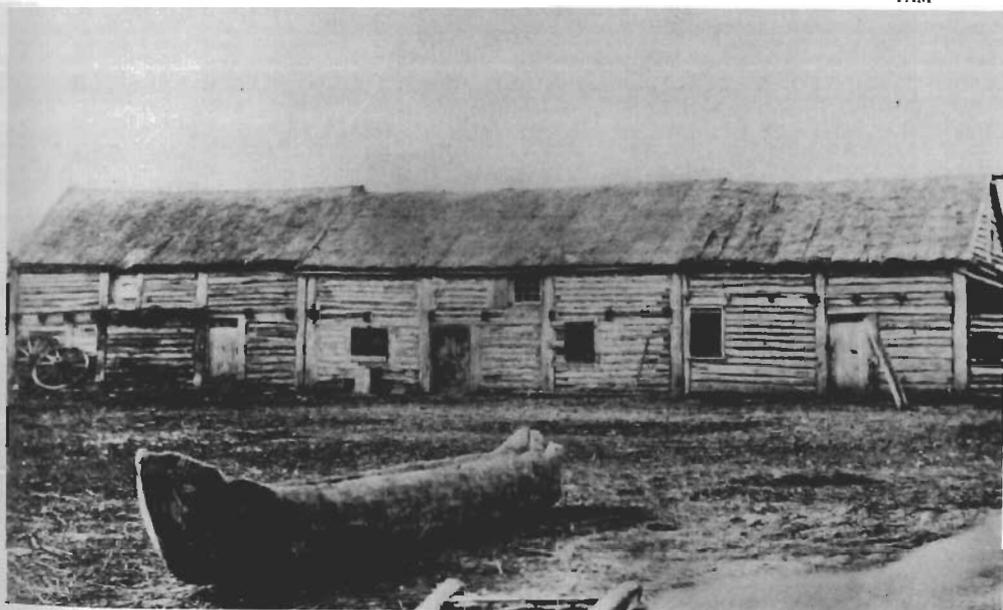
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*Andrew McDermot,
from an oil
portrait, undated.*

*Mr McDermot's store where many
meetings were held to discuss the
Hudson's Bay Company's opposition
to free trade. H.L. Hime, 1858.*

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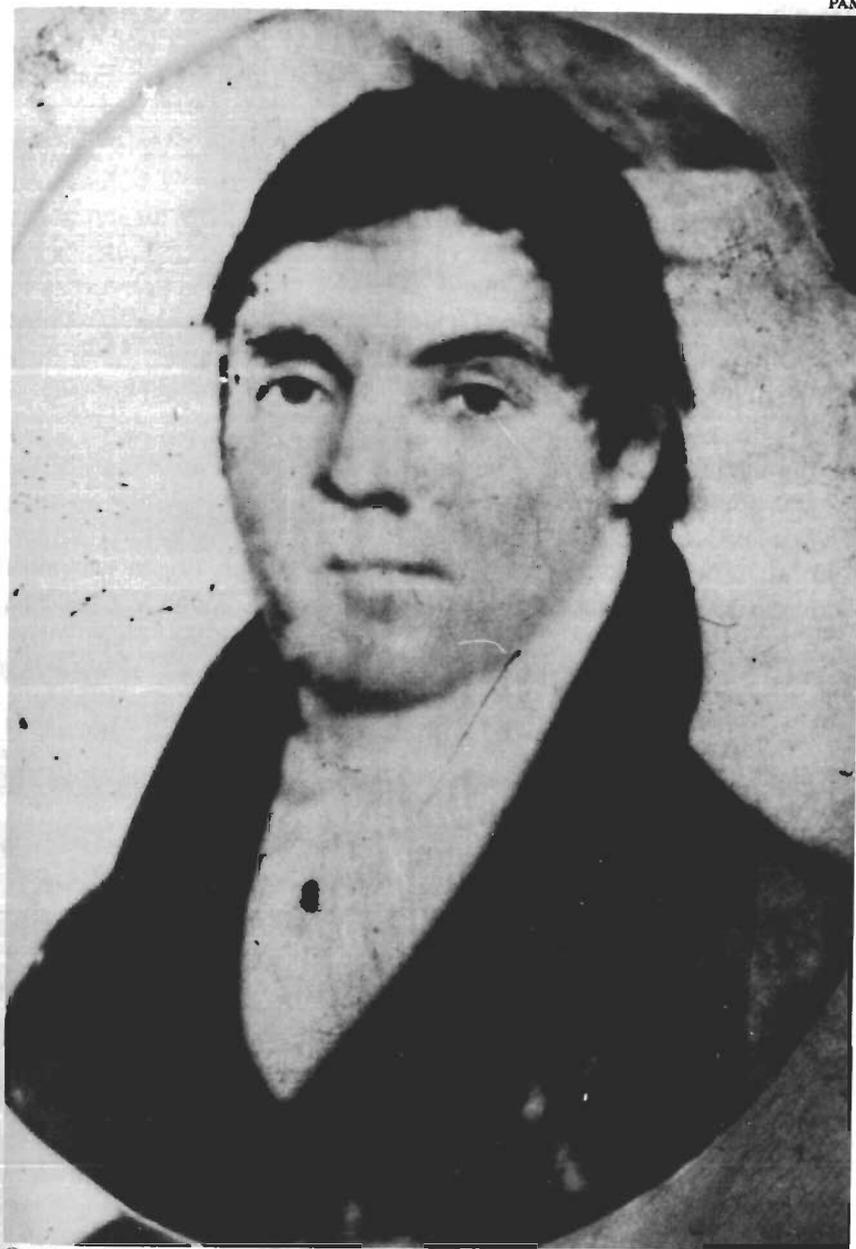
McDermot was also clever enough to connect with well-placed Halfbreeds like young James Sinclair. Sinclair, who became his partner was the son of William Sinclair, an important Hudson's Bay Company officer who died in 1818. James married the mixed-blood, Elizabeth Bird, daughter of a retired officer and principal settler, James Bird. James's sister was one-time country wife of George Simpson. During the turbulent 1840s Métis and especially English-speaking mixed-bloods looked to Sinclair and McDermot for leadership. Indeed, many of the meetings which were held to discuss opposition to the Company's increasing opposition to free trade in the later 1840s were held in McDermot's house.¹³

For reasons that cannot now be known both McDermot and Sinclair abdicated leadership in the post-1849 movement against free trade, a position that the mixed-bloods wanted them to take. Perhaps McDermot was paid off by the Company, which was prepared to allow him to continue his private and profitable ventures. By the early 1850s it is clear, however, that McDermot had chosen not to exercise his political influence. Sinclair was part of the same decision, and became involved in the Columbia enterprises which eventually cost him his life in 1856.

Cuthbert Grant was another of the mixed-blood retired fur traders who had incredible influence over the Métis from 1816 to 1849. Born at Fort Tremblante of a Métis mother and Cuthbert Grant Sr., Grant was educated in Montreal and Scotland. When he returned to Rupert's Land in 1812, at age nineteen, he was thoroughly knowledgeable of his European and Christian cultural traditions. He enjoyed what were in effect country marriages: one with the daughter of John McKay, a Hudson's Bay Company Postmaster (1812-1817), Elizabeth McKay who disappeared shortly after the marriage with a small child; another with Madeline Desmarais from a well-known Métis family (1818-1820), and the last and final, Marie McGillis, elder daughter of Angus McGillis. The frailty of the first two marriages may be due to the fact that they were 'à la façon du pays'. Only the last was by clergy — and in Saint-Boniface Cathedral.

He led the Métis on the buffalo hunt, and persuaded them to settle along the Assiniboine and Red rivers, particularly at Saint-Boniface and Saint-François-Xavier. After his appointment to the Council of

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Cuthbert Grant, from a tintype copy of an earlier portrait, undated.

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Assiniboa, and his equivocation on the free trade unrest of the 1840s, his influence diminished substantially. Indeed in 1849 George Simpson did not renew his appointment as Warden of the Plains, a position he had held since 1828.¹⁴

The appointments to the Council of Assiniboa and its various committees, especially after 1835 when its membership was broadened to include the influential of the settlement, give some indication of the formal recognition of the leaders of the settlement. It also is indicative of the passing of the first generation of leaders in the late forties to mid-fifties. John Pritchard and Thomas Thomas were first appointed Councillors in 1815, and served on its various committees until their deaths in the late 1850s. In the early 1850s both were still adding their weight to various petitions, although health precluded either from becoming more involved. James Bird was quite active during the 1840s, attending twenty-nine meetings of the Council and holding various offices including those of Receiver of Import and Export Duties, Justice of the Peace and Magistrate. Robert Logan was most active in the 1830s and 1840s as Justice of the Peace, and as Chairman of the Committee for the Management of Public Works. Other members active in various capacities were Alexander Ross, John Bunn, Andrew McDermot, Cuthbert Grant, and John Peter Pruden.

Several characteristics rendered the second generation of leaders distinct from the first. First, there were no single dominant men like Cuthbert Grant to lead the Métis community. He was replaced collectively by his relatives and friends. Second, with the abdication of McDermot and the death of Sinclair there was no single focus for leadership, especially in English Red River. Thus the collective leadership of the principal settlers can be said to have been broadened and diffused by their children to include previously excluded groups like the Selkirk settlers. Third, the children of the principal Métis or Halfbreed settlers had little sympathy for the Company. Yet they acknowledged it as an economic force, and from time to time worked for it as licensed traders and freighters.

Amongst the Métis who succeeded Cuthbert Grant as leader in the early 1850s were Pascal Breland, Salomon Hamelin, François Bruneau, Narcisse Marion, Henry Fisher and Louis Riel Père. Most were well educated and had accumulated more wealth than any of their

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Pascal Breland, a prominent leader of the Métis people. Undated.

Maria Grant (right), wife of Pascal Breland with their daughter.

La Société Historique de Saint-Boniface



fellows through the fur trade and agriculture. In 1849-50 for example, Grant had twenty-seven acres under cultivation, fifteen carts and forty head of cattle. Breland had sixty-one animals, thirteen carts and six acres; Hamelin had four carts, and twelve acres; and Bruneau, twenty animals, six carts and ten acres. As well, Louis Riel Père and Cuthbert Grant ran the largest accounts with the Hudson's Bay Company.¹⁵

The importance of these Métis was further indicated by their role in the Council of Assiniboia. François Bruneau, born in Rupert's Land in 1810, and educated in St. Boniface where he briefly taught school, attended his first meeting of the Council in 1853. In the following years he served as Magistrate, Petty Judge, member of the Board of Works, census taker and collector of duties. The public career of Pascal Breland, Grant's son-in-law, during the 1850s and 60s included the offices of Councillor, Magistrate, Petty Judge, and census taker.¹⁶ W.L. Morton and Margaret Arnett MacLeod in their *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown* (Toronto, 1963) make the important observation that these successors to Grant were either related through marriage, were his immediate neighbours, or had engaged in business partnerships with him.¹⁷

What is curious is that Louis Riel Sr. was never offered a public position. Perhaps his vocal anti-Company activity in 1849 was too strident. Perhaps his following was marginal. Perhaps Grant and Riel never got along that well. Riel's challenge to his leadership in the 40s was perhaps too open. Possibly, too, Grant's successors did not want their status usurped by someone who had apparently never been of their group.¹⁸

The leadership of English-speaking Red River underwent a similar evolution. The reluctance of the McDermot-Sinclair pair to assume a firm role left the leadership of that half of the settlement to the children of the principal settlers and the Hudson's Bay Company. With the passing in the mid to late 1850s of the principal settlers, their children assumed formal control, taking the positions held by their parents. What is so important about this new leadership is the degree of family connection. William Ross, Alexander Ross's eldest son, had by 1855 succeeded to all of his father's offices, which included Councillor, Sheriff, Keeper of the Jail, and Postmaster. Thomas Sinclair, son of William Sinclair, brother of James Sinclair and married

into the Pruden family, was a successful private trader and freighter. He became Councillor in 1853 and served in the next decade as census taker, Superintendent of Public Works, Auditor of Public Accounts, and Tax Collector. Thomas Thomas, son of the retired Chief Factor of the same name, became active in the Council of Assiniboia in 1850 and remained so until his death in 1859. Thomas Bunn, a retired Company officer and a grandson of Thomas Thomas, became active in the 1860s and served as Magistrate, Postmaster, and in 1868 as Councillor of Assiniboia.¹⁹

Another figure of some interest is John Black who managed to transcend both the first and second generations of leadership. Black came to the settlement in 1839 as a clerk with the Hudson's Bay Company, and assistant to Adam Thom. In 1845 he married a mixed-blood daughter of Governor Alexander Christie. When Black became involved in the legal disputes within the settlement he tended to side with the élite: the Governor, the Anglican Bishop, and the other clergy. He was finally placed in control of the trade of the Red River District in 1852 by the Hudson's Bay Company and in 1854 retired to England. After a second career in Australia, he returned to Red River in 1862 as Recorder to preside over the Corbett trial, and the bitter litigations by the Canadian, John C. Schultz. Both served to mark the end of the dominance of the old families of Red River. Black became involved then in the passing of the old order, which he defended and with which he identified.

In the early 1860s a new element was introduced into the settlement hierarchy, so cozily occupied by the descendants of the principal settlers — the Canadian immigrants. The leader of this group was the extremely abrasive Dr John Christian Schultz, publisher of the *Nor'-Wester*, medical doctor, Canadian annexationist, and merchant. His friends and sometime enemies included the dentist and sometime newspaper man, W.R. Bown, the son of a Canadian member of parliament; Charles Mair, paymaster and sometime poet; and Schultz's half-brother, Henry McKenny, merchant, magistrate, sheriff and governor of the jail. Schultz challenged the Red River court system and the close-knit network of the Council of Assiniboia with some success. However, as the subsequent chapters attempt to prove, the English-speaking and French-speaking mixed-bloods were at odds by the 1860s

and would not unite against the Canadians. Furthermore the English-speaking mixed-bloods, despite their dislike of Schultz, had transferred their allegiance to the Empire and Canada in the early 1860s.

The clergy in Red River were a critical element in the moral, social and political leadership of the settlement. The Anglican clergy, financed primarily by the evangelical Church Missionary Society in London, until 1851 represented the only Protestant denomination in Red River. They sponsored over thirty-five missionaries in Rupert's Land from 1820 to 1870, most of whom spent a considerable time in Red River. The Presbyterian clergyman, arriving in 1851, exercised considerable influence among the Selkirk settlers. The presence of the Church of Rome in the settlement was reinforced by the presence of approximately thirty priests between 1820 and 1870. Until 1844 they were largely secular clergy, under Bishop Provencher. After that they were supplemented by French Oblates and the Grey Nuns.

The clergy, regardless of church, saw themselves as exercising leadership through example and teachings, and on occasion through direct intervention. They held and attempted to force on others their understanding of social structure and political leadership, and the nature of pre-ordained hierarchies. Frank Peake, one of Canada's leading church historians, has argued that:

The young men, usually married, selected for this work came generally from what would have been described as the lower orders. They were of little education or means and could not have hope for ordination in England ... the missionaries ... did.²⁰

These concepts did not always coincide with those of the principal settlers or their children. The clergy introduced conflict by attempting to challenge the existing social and moral leadership of the settlement.

The comings and goings of the clergy coincided with and reinforced the generational cycles of Red River leadership. The first Anglican missionary, John West, Chaplain to the Company, stayed for three years from 1820 to 1823. He had spent fifteen years in curacies, the last of which, White Roding, Essex, was not particularly flourishing. After completing his term in Red River in 1823, he became Curate

of Chettle to which in 1834 were added the Parish of Farnham and the chaplaincy to Viscount Duncannon.

Of his successors, Rev. David Jones in Red River from 1823-1839 and Rev. William Cockran from 1825-1865, little is known. Jones, the son of a Welsh farmer, spent two years at Lampeter seminary, after which he finished his studies under a Church Missionary Society tutor; even then he was unable to support himself. In 1823, he was sent to Rupert's Land. After his return in 1838 he was appointed Professor of Welsh at St. David's College and curate to the attached Parish of Lampeter. Both positions were probably obtained through the influence of the Church Missionary Society.

The Rev. William Cockran, the most famous and long-lived of the clergy of the pre-1870 West, came from a similar background. A vigorous under-bailiff, farmer and reputed Presbyterian, Cockran flourished in the settlement. His agricultural ability and the acquisition of two 200-acre plots made him one of the more prosperous Red River farmers. With the assistance of the Church Missionary Society he was able to send his son to University College, University of Durham. Both were invited or sat on the Council of Assiniboia, and were instrumental in the establishment of the settlement's English educational system. William Cockran, who would dominate clerical circles and the parish of St. Andrew's for forty years, arrived in 1825 to stay until his death in 1865.

The arrival of Bishop David Anderson in 1849, which coincides with the last years of the dominance of the principal settlers, the growing free trade unrest and the rise of the second generation, marked the growing influence of the Church of England in the settlement. Short of stature, with balding head and deep sunken eyes, and with affectations of dress and habit, Anderson was a weak-willed though kindly individual, unable to discipline his contentious and divided clergy.

His clergy were variable in their abilities. Some became principal figures in their individual parishes. Rev. G.O. Corbett in particular seemed to be able to align a large portion of the English-speaking settlement behind him. Before being stationed in Rupert's Land, Corbett served as a Scripture reader at the Church Missionary Society's Islington Institute, and then as a catechist in the Diocese of Montreal.

When the Bishop of Montreal refused him ordination and a parish of his own, he resigned. Fortunately for Corbett the Rev. W. Williamson of Headingley, Leeds, offered to support a missionary in Rupert's Land, and he was transferred there in the summer of 1852. After an uncharacteristically quiet three years, Corbett again resigned, perhaps to further his medical education but probably because of poor health which could not have been eased by his inadequate stipend. The curacy he then received in Northamptonshire apparently proved unsatisfactory, and in January, 1856, he attempted to persuade the Colonial Continental Church Society to allow him to return to Rupert's Land, but the Society refused. Corbett was too troublesome, it argued with some justification. Only after Bishop Anderson made a plea in person did they accede to Corbett's second Red River odyssey and to his demand for a five-year guaranteed stipend of £150 per annum. Once again in Red River, Corbett became the focal point for unrest in the settlement until his forced departure in 1865.

While Anderson could manage his diocese, given the benevolence of the children of the first generation, he could not manage the dissension created by the Canadians who came in the early 1860s. The chaos they created drove him and some of his associates from the settlement and for all intents and purposes marked the end of the missionary period. His successor, Bishop Machray, managed to guide the English-speaking settlement as best he could into an accommodation with the new reality — annexation to Canada.

The clergy of the Church of England were unusual in that while they were active in providing leadership to the settlement, particularly at the parish level, they never became part of the Red River family fabric. The missionaries were either already married, or devoted bachelors, and their children if they married in Red River tended to marry other missionaries. The daughters of William Cockran certainly did so. This sometimes placed their families at social disadvantage. As the wives and children of clergymen they had social status, but it had to be exercised with the greatest discretion. As will be seen, this was not always possible. The first Presbyterian clergyman who confined himself to the Selkirk community married an Alexander Ross mixed-blood daughter. This certainly aligned Black with the English-

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*Rev. John Black, the first Presbyterian clergyman,
who married a mixed-blood daughter of Alexander Ross.*

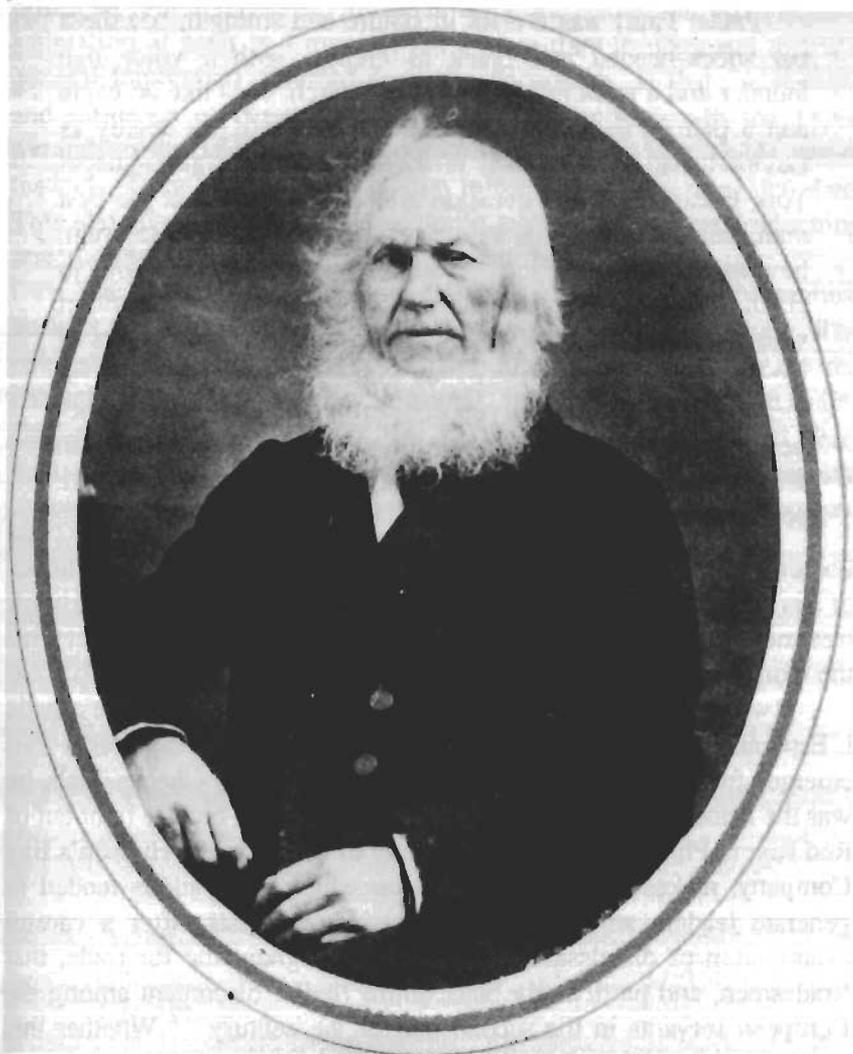
speaking children of the principal settlers. Amongst the clergy, however, his marriage was unusual.

What is critical is that from their first arrival in 1820 these clergymen attempted to reform the raw settlement which despaired as to the future, was rife with discontent, and was ineffectively ruled by the Company. They struggled to recreate the English rural parish, a little Britain in the wilderness, with the parson as a major landowner, teacher, custodian of charities, and law-giver. They saw themselves sharing these tasks with the other members of the elite: the squirearchy, and later their children, the Company's officers and the settlement's Governor. The clergy's plans for this society placed them at the helm and made outcasts of all who did not comply. It is to be noted that, while initially the church was represented by the clergy and bishop on the Council of Assiniboia, in the latter decade of the 1850s only the bishops attended.

The Catholic Church and its missionaries were active in the Métis half of the settlement. The Hudson's Bay Company considered that, other than Cuthbert Grant, the clergy were responsible for the care and, to a degree, for the leadership of the Métis. They expected the clergy to maintain some sense of order within the Métis half of the settlement. Those expectations were not entirely realistic, and during the 1840s, the period of greatest discontent, Rev. G. Belcourt became the focal point of discontent. He provided much of the leadership to the point that both his Bishop and the Company attempted with some success to neutralize him. In the 1860s Father Ritchot assumed a similar role to Belcourt in Red River.

It is much more difficult to come to grips with the attributes that the lower orders sought in their own leaders. What caused any one individual to rise above the rest and assume to offer direction? John Foster has offered some interesting insights in his article 'Some questions and perspectives on the problem of Métis roots'. He argues that 'attributes associated with occupation, experience, age and kin, or ethnic ties' determined social distinction within mixed-blood culture. Foster uses the biography of Paulet Paul, a Red River Paul Bunyan, to illustrate the 'world of adult males in the fur trade'. Paul was the leader of his boat brigade. Foster quotes Donald Gunn:

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Donald Gunn, correspondent with the Smithsonian and one of Red River's intellectuals c. 1863.

[Paulet Paul] was a giant in stature and strength, beardless but shock-headed and black as erebus; with a voice like thunder and a manner as blustery as March, eyes like an eagle and a pair of fists as heavy, and once at least, as deadly as cannon balls... champion When the different brigades met at York Factory, and the question which could produce the best man, came to be mooted over a regal[e] of Hudson's Bay rum, he was ever the first to strip to the waist and stand forth to claim that honour for the Blaireau[x]. Michael [sic] Lambert who on such occasions would step forward in the interests of the Taureau [would] shake hands with Poulet [sic] and then for the next half hour or so proceed to enhance his picturesqueness.... the championship of all the west tossed back and forth with Poulet's [sic] ferocious pounding and the lightning-like science of Lambert.²¹

Foster pointed out that Paul was responsible not only for the conduct of his men, but for leading them when they were displeased with treatment by the Company even if this meant risking his contract with the Company.

Two of the most famous Métis Red River tripmen were Alexis L'Esperance and J.B. Bruce. William Hallett is another name that emerges from the record. In the 1860s, according to Charles Mair, he was the leader of the English-speaking mixed-blood buffalo hunt out of Red River. Philip Goldring, in his study of labour in the Hudson's Bay Company, makes other suggestions on which occupations tended to generate leaders amongst the trades. He suggests, after a careful examination of dismissal of tradesmen throughout the fur trade, that 'tradesmen, and particularly blacksmiths [led]... discontent among the European servants in the second half of the century.'²² Whether this was true of Red River cannot be determined.

What is true, however, is that there were leaders at the parish level, although these cannot now be identified with any certainty. We know, for example, that James Stewart of Headingley, a former employee of John Christian Schultz, had influence in that parish in the 1860s. Donald Gunn, the correspondent with the Smithsonian and one of Red River's intellectuals, had influence in St. Andrew's. These

positions were, however, informal ones and based on Red River's estimation of each as a man. What is important to note, and this is a general impression obtained from the documents, is that the number and influence of parish leaders increased over time. In the 1820s through to the 1840s there do not seem to be any identifiable parish leaders. They only emerge, at least in the documents, after that date. This should not be unusual since only after then was the frightening uncertainty of the first decades at least partially resolved.

The evolving leadership in the settlement is something that must be kept in mind during the reading of the unfolding of events. The conflict and the resolution of the conflict depended much on the characters and their place within their generation. While the major characters and their place in the generational cycle are noted here, many others are left to weave themselves through the subsequent chapters which attempt to account for the conflict that so dominated life in Red River.



*The church and mission school built at the Upper Settlement
by the Rev. John West. From West's journal published 1827.*

3

The First Years

Before 1818 Red River was subject to two agents of European culture: the fur trade and the Selkirk settlers. Of these the fur trade was by far the more important in Rupert's Land. The relatively disciplined, legal, and contractual organizations of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies combined with Indian custom to produce a unique community, at once European and Indian, structured and free. The two traditions of the fur trade companies were based on the shared experience of the fur trade, on a close male camaraderie, and on the family. During their first years in the settlement the clergy called this society, whether the Hudson's Bay Company or North West Company strain, into question. Kinship, they said, must be sanctioned by holy matrimony, and the Company hierarchy could only be effective if it recognized clerical social supremacy. The 'half-European, half-Indian' existence that they saw in the fur trade was denounced at every turn.¹

The Church of England, represented first by John West who arrived in 1820, attempted to reform what it perceived to be a barbaric and fallen Red River, where the moral obligation of marriage 'the parent ...not the child of civil society' was absent.² It would be a major struggle to recreate the English rural parish in Red River with the parson as a major land-owner, teacher, custodian of charities, and law-giver. Yet flat, desolate Red River could never be a duplicate of England; not only because of the wretched climate, but because, or so the clergy thought, those less fortunate than themselves in matters of race, the mixed-bloods, could never completely assimilate the elegance and sophistication that was England.³ But they would try, however difficult the task, to bring civilization to the wind-swept, locust-infested colony. While the attitude of the clergy of the Church of Rome was not much different, their approach was. The first priests were interested primarily in Christianity; they believed that the Métis would require the

continuing direction of the Church before they would emerge as truly civilized, sedentary Christians. Unlike their impatient Protestant brethren who demanded immediate results, the Catholics in Red River were prepared to wait, if necessary, for generations.⁴

The clergy's sense of self-importance had a profound impact on their relations with the 'retired gentlemen,' who saw themselves as the settlement élite, and on their relations with the mixed-bloods. The efforts of most of the Protestant clergy — usually from modest backgrounds — toward self-aggrandizement created tensions within 'genteel' society; this, despite the tendency of some retired officers of the Company, the social patriarchs of Red River, to band together with the clergy to control the unruly mixed-bloods so recently blown in from the various corners of Rupert's Land. Of course some of the retired officers were themselves damned by a number of the clergy as uncouth and uncultured.

The Catholic clergy, because of their religion, language, and Quebec origins, were excluded almost entirely from the British-oriented English-speaking Protestant group that ruled Red River, and were initially unaffected by the pursuit of status at the Upper Fort. Instead, they concentrated their efforts on the Métis at Pembina, White Horse Plain and Saint-Boniface, carefully co-opting those who exercised authority. Cuthbert Grant, the leader at Grantown on the White Horse Plain and baptized a Presbyterian, became a stalwart supporter, perhaps utilizing the Church to maintain his position. It can be argued in these early years that the Catholic clergy reinforced and became part of that Métis community. However, the Council of Assiniboia, the fur traders and associated legal issues did force the Catholics to come to terms with the Protestant social set who influenced Company and social order.

Many of the Protestant and Catholic mixed-bloods were not reluctant to seek leadership from their clergy. Jacqueline Peterson in her 'Many Roads to Red River' traces a discernible Métis identity by the early 1800s in the Great Lakes area rooted in the French fur trade and missionary experience of a century earlier.⁵ By the 1820s she estimates that a mixed-blood population of between ten and fifteen thousand had settled in small communities of one hundred or less on the south and west shores on Lakes Superior and Huron. They were

connected by marriage and trade to the mixed-bloods of the Canadian interior. In the 1820s, following American settlement of the area around the Great Lakes and the end of the period of competition between the two companies, the Great Lakes mixed-bloods migrated to Red River to join the plains Métis.

In Western Canada the first mixed-bloods were likely the 'homeguard' natives who provisioned the Hudson's Bay Company's posts by the shore of the Bay. Others were associated with the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company plains posts and the pemmican and buffalo-provisioning trade. Other Métis worked as fishermen, voyageurs, or private traders. Many of these elements were united by the struggle between the Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company which culminated in the Battle of Seven Oaks, 16 June 1815.

Whatever their origin, the fur trade had taught dependence by providing authority, credit, and supplies — a ready-made lifetime framework, except that the system was a fragile unreliable one. In the 1820s in particular, with the union of the companies, the demand for labour was significantly reduced. Abandoned by the newly amalgamated Company and encouraged to drift to Red River, many looked to their clergy for food, clothing, and agricultural instruction. The difficult years when crops failed and when need was particularly severe, ensured that the mixed-bloods would submit themselves to clerical direction. This is not to deny that many mixed-bloods experienced relative autonomy in the interior (indeed some were 'gens libre'); only that many were aware of the paternal role of the fur trade companies and missions, and had been exposed to it at one time or other in their lives, and benefited from it in times of scarcity. Although the Church may have been absent from their lives for a generation, it would not be wrong to suspect it would be part of their traditions.

The Anglican clergy were most articulate in their vision for mixed-blood Red River. Firm in their conviction that 'civilization must go hand in hand with Christianity', they preached the virtues of nineteenth-century England as fervently as the Gospel, since without the former the latter could not take root. A sedentary life tied to the soil was mandatory. If John West, the Church Missionary Society's first

agent, itinerated, it was only out of necessity. He demanded of his parishioners a settled life. Agriculture would be 'the pillar of society'. Rev. David Jones, West's amiable successor, would, for example, never minister to the English-speaking Halfbreeds on the plains, for he believed that the habits of the hunter were inseparable from 'prodigality, and idleness', and that his constant condition was one of 'beggary and extreme want.'⁶

Barbarism (defined by the missionary as an unchristian nomadic lifestyle) was believed to be the very cause of indolence which in turn led to poverty, want and debt; while work was glorified as the 'greatest friend Piety has on earth.' But work in the ordinary sense, or for its own sake, was unacceptable. It had to be work for the glory of God. Work was rewarded by worldly comfort, but more importantly, it freed man from his struggle for survival and allowed him to contemplate the nature of his existence and his God. Idleness was the first step to Hell. Adherence to a Christian morality, especially reflected in an acceptance of Christian marriage, was demanded with equal vigour. It was considered 'the Parent ... not the Child of Civil Society.' From this a stable family life would follow. The long fur trade tradition of marriage after the 'fashion of the country' must be rectified.⁷

The values that the mixed-blood held as paramount differed radically from those of the missionaries. Alexander Ross offers insights into Métis values, values which, it must be emphasized, he did not share. Métis centred their values on the community of men of which all were part. A man's value was measured by his freedom, and his ability as a tripman, a buffalo hunter, and a horseman. Stature within his community of males and kin was dependent upon his ability at provisioning. Commitment to the plough and the church, demanded by the missionary, was alien and not likely to be viewed as contributing to status. Those central activities that were critical to Métis status and identity, the cult of the horse and the hunt, were precisely those the missionary identified with leisure.

It was the duty of the Anglican clergy and their families to preach this gospel of civilization and Christianity and to 'act it forth in [their] life.' As members of the 'superior' order, they, along with the 'gentlemen' and the state, were to provide their 'inferiors' with leadership in all aspects of life. Since the Métis, the English-speaking

Halfbreeds and the Indian were subordinate, they could never approach the Englishman in civilization, and would always need the beneficent clergyman. These beliefs were held without compromise. Morality, religion, and agriculture were the foundations of civilized society under the paternal and ever watchful eye of the clergy and the state.⁸

These beliefs, when combined with the class origins of the clergy and the pretensions of the commissioned gentlemen, could only lead to social conflict, since the fur trade officers were by no means willing to consider the clergy their equals, or their mixed-blood wives and children inferior. Although it is quite conceivable that the first Anglican missionary, Rev. John West, was moved by genuine evangelical zeal in accepting the £100 per annum Company chaplaincy, the consideration of prestige must have figured prominently in his decision. Indeed, the chaplaincy was tailored for the forty-two-year-old cleric finally to advance himself.⁹

His successors, Rev. David Jones and Rev. William Cockran, experienced equal rise in status. Jones was the son of a farmer, while Cockran was a farmer and under-bailiff. In Rupert's Land, Jones became a social leader and educator of the children of the wealthy. He would hardly have been so influential in England.¹⁰

Cockran apparently lacked Jones's formal higher education and sophistication. For him the move to Rupert's Land was irrevocable. With substantial influence over the colony's government and its 'better' elements, and as dictator of his congregation's morals, he had undeniable status.¹¹

Individual clergymen, then, experienced a considerable rise in status in Red River. From farmers or marginal clerics with few prospects they became influential and, in some cases, prosperous bulwarks of society. From a previous position of inferiority and dependence, they assumed a sense of superiority and independence.

The rise in status, however, could not be realized until the clergymen were accepted by the trade's 'gentlemen'. Since the parsons attacked their way of life, their morals and their means of subsistence (the fur trade), they were generally greeted by hostility and suspicion. The clergy, it would seem, were not without some justification in their suppositions. Red River's squirearchy — John Clarke, Thomas

Thomas, James Bird, W.H. Cook, Robert Logan, and John Pritchard, all connected with or former officers of the fur trade, were viewed by Simpson to be at the best a motley group of bickering old men. Simpson was a misanthrope and his confidential assessments reflect that fact. His observations, however, were not without some validity and carefully shared by the clergy and other traders.

Clarke was considered even by the generous Catholic clergy to be a man without spirit, without education, and without morals. Thomas, Bird, and Cook, who led a cat and dog life at Image Plain, were judged equally harshly. Thomas, an extremely wealthy miser, was thought to be such an inept agriculturalist that many felt that his thousand-acre grant could never provide a model for encouragement. James Bird was considered vain, selfish, and 'illiberal', out to cheat everyone he could, and he commanded equally little respect, despite the fact that he had built one of the most pretentious homes in Red River and eventually became a successful farmer. According to Simpson, Cook was another known misfit, an 'extraordinary mixture of generosity, eccentricity, religion, drunkenness, and misanthropy.'¹² Reputedly unable to get along with anyone, he changed his residence about a dozen times in the first years of settlement, although once he made up his mind he became a focal point for his extended family. In 1822 only Robert Logan, until 1814 a Nor'Wester, connected with a wealthy sugar family and not without money himself, and John Pritchard, also a former Nor'Wester who in 1814 joined with Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company, were considered by Simpson, who had Nor'Wester sympathies, as diligent, sober, and industrious. By 1827 Pritchard was a reputed drunk and responsible at least in part for the demise of the Buffalo Wool Company, a chimerical scheme to give Red River an economical base.

Yet these principal settlers had much in common. All had been connected with the fur trade and had achieved their status, in large part, from it. John Pritchard had been a clerk; James Bird, a Chief Factor; Robert Logan, in charge of a number of posts such as Ile à la Crosse and the Rock Depot; and W.H. Cook, a Governor of York Factory. The Company deliberately set out to encourage its retired gentlemen to settle at Red River where they could superintend, control and govern the new society forming there. Not only were the gentlemen allowed a modest pension, but they were given land grants ranging from 100 to

1,000 acres. Some managed to purchase much more. By 1835 Robert Logan was the largest land holder in Red River with 1,500 acres. James Bird had 1,000, while lesser notables like Thomas Bunn and Alexander Ross usually had from 100 to 200 acres.

Most of the retired gentlemen were of a rather advanced age, were loath to leave Rupert's Land and realized that they, and more importantly their wives and children, would probably have limited entry into Canadian or British Society. Most had Indian or mixed-blood wives and were very reluctant to part with their families. Mrs Bird's pigtail would hardly have been acceptable in fashionable English parlours. While most had been married 'à la façon du nord', a variable custom at best, some of these marriages were stable and most of the 'gentlemen' accepted their financial responsibilities dictated by custom.¹³ When William Connolly, a Chief Factor, retired to Montreal with his Indian wife Suzanne in 1831, and then married his socially more acceptable white cousin two years later, he nevertheless continued to support Suzanne, although she returned to Red River in 1840. Certainly if Letitia Hargrave is to be believed, the unsavoury reputations of Chief Factor John George McTavish, and Governor George Simpson attest to the fact that there was great opportunity for shocking behaviour. Despite a few indiscretions many others led stable lives, and the lengthy marriages of Madame McTavish (despite its deplorable end), Madame Bird, Madame John Clarke, and Madame Logan were typical. Even in their lapses the gentlemen never forgot their European heritages and corresponded with reasonable regularity with their overseas and Canadian relatives. Given the opportunity, they would marry, baptize their children, and devotedly sing their psalms. They did not consider themselves inferior to any clergyman, nor did they have any reason to do so.¹⁴

Quite distinct from the retired gentlemen were the well-educated and well-connected aristocrats of Red River, the Governors, not one of whom had any intention of spending his life in the North-West. Andrew Bulger stayed for only one year; and Robert Parker Pelly, cousin of Sir John Henry Pelly, Governor of the Company, remained for two years. Residing at Fort Garry, they were patrons of charity, the schools, and the churches. Along with the clergymen in Red River they ought to have behaved with the greatest caution. The God-fearing

principal settlers were aware of their own moral frailties and were anxious to correct them. They were not, however, ready to have an Episcopalian parson or his wife sniff at the racial misfortunes of their wives and bastards. The rush of some of the principal settlers — the Logans, Birds, and Thomases — to marry and baptize their children, would be taken as an indication of the eagerness with which they sought to recreate a little England in the wilderness rather than a desire to subordinate themselves to the clergy. It should also be noted that a few high-ranking fur traders like Peter Skene Ogden and John Rowand, away from the pressures of Red River, would not succumb to the pressure to marry in the church — some because they did not want a formal link and others because they felt a country marriage valid. Nevertheless for most it was to be a little England with enhanced social status for both the retired fur trader and the clergy.¹⁵

Rev. John West irritated and, indeed, sometimes infuriated the gentlemen by his constant exhortations to morality, and his damnations of previous degeneracy, accompanied as they were by implications of his own superiority. Many were anxious to prove that West was no better than themselves and Simpson's unkind assessment probably reflected that of the rest of the community.

I have reason to believe that Mr West is more actuated by the prospect of gain and self interest...than the pure love of doing good he is quite a calculator and looks to percentages and whether his plans succeeded or not, if attempted, he would mount up a Bill of Expense and Pocket something out of it. Talent he possesses none and is not sufficiently dignified for his office, he eats and drinks [I cannot say to excess] with any and everybody, in short he is neither liked nor respected.¹⁶

Furthermore, not only was he a dreadful preacher, an unpardonable affliction in society where the Church was a chief source of entertainment, but he threatened the profits of the trade by advocating Indian education and a ban on liquor. When he left, Simpson made certain he did not return.

The Rev. David Jones was more careful and took great pains to ingratiate himself with the principal settlers and the Governors. He was instructed by Josiah Pratt, corresponding secretary of the Church

Missionary Society, to confer with the Governor 'freely and confidentially', on all matters. Conflicts of personalities were to be avoided. He was warned not to expect to find everyone supporting his views. 'Friendly discussion' would remove their objections and conciliate their minds.¹⁷

In his first year Jones lived at Fort Garry with Governor Pelly, who became his most intimate friend. He even sat on the Council of Assiniboia, although he resigned after he found that the position placed him between the Governor and some of the discontented principal settlers. His affability became well known and he further increased his popularity when, with Pelly's advice, he dismissed 'Old' George Harbidge, West's drunkard school teacher. Harbidge, it seems, had had the audacity not only to assume himself equal to the best at Red River but to attempt to perform marriages. Jones found Governor Donald McKenzie, Pelly's successor, less congenial and he drew even closer to some of the principal settlers, playing up to the Presbyterianism of some by modifying Anglican practices, and by encouraging the prayer meeting.¹⁸

In 1825 Jones was joined by Rev. William Cockran, an industrious and, for the first few years, unobtrusive parson. While Cockran's first residence was at the St. John's parsonage, he was mainly interested in the English-speaking Halfbreeds, Orkney men, and Scots at Grand Rapids. His diligence and hard work could only have created a favourable impression. There is some indication, however, that Jones and Cockran did not get along well, although the rift was never an open one. Jones was too much of a 'gentleman', and not sufficiently interested in farming for Cockran's tastes. Cockran also found him too concerned with the goings-on at the Fort Garry dinner tables, and not involved enough with the spiritual welfare of his charges.¹⁹

Actually few of the active 'gentlemen' employed by the Hudson's Bay Company were admirers of the clergy, even of men like Jones. While few in number (there was a total of 18 in the Northern Department in 1821 and 1831, 12 in 1841 and 15 in 1851) they had considerable social and economic influence. Nevertheless, they feared interference with the trade and with their social position. They retaliated with the traditional mechanisms of social control — gossip

and ridicule. James Hargrave, a clerk stationed at Red River in 1826, thought that the church services and Wednesday evening prayer meetings reeked of vulgar enthusiasm. He and Donald McKenzie found the 'love meetings' of the righteous disgusting, the 'holdings forth' of regenerate Halfbreeds and Orkneymen 'detestable', and the 'homilies of endless duration on the gift of continence, platonic love, and evils of sex' by some 'vulnerable father of a Seraglio', ridiculous. The barbs seem to have been aimed at the principal retired settlers, especially those formerly employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. Hargrave himself entered the North West Company in 1820 and it is not surprising that he and some of his Nor'Wester friends held these views. However faded by time, they had that Nor'Wester in-group sense of superiority. This division within the élite between old Nor'Wester and Hudson's Bay Company gentlemen certainly did not encourage a united front against the clergy. It would further appear that Duncan Finlayson and John George McTavish, both commissioned gentlemen, agreed with Hargrave, since it was to them that he expressed these very private sentiments.²⁰

If Jones was liked by and reasonably successful with most of the principal settlers and the Governor, he nevertheless failed to gain the allegiance of the Presbyterian Kildonan settlers. Disturbed by the continued failure to obtain a Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian parson, they never became reconciled to the Episcopalian clergy despite Jones's efforts to cater to their liturgy. Unfortunately Jones's confidential assessment of Red River and its settlers was allegedly accidentally printed in the 1827 Missionary Register. He lamented,

that there is an unchristian like selfishness and narrowness of mind in our Scottish Population, while they are the most comfortable in their circumstances of any class in our community....The Orkney Islanders are a far more promising and pleasing body of men.²¹

The Scots had not given as much as Jones thought they should in support of his schools. The Selkirk settlers were furious at the accusation, and petitioned again with renewed vigour for a clergyman of their own, but Jones intervened and persuaded a willing Company to refuse the petition. Thereafter Cockran and Jones were only

grudgingly paid the respect due them. The Kildonan Scots refused to labour the six days a year for their clergyman as demanded by their land tenures. Even the tithe for the support of the Church of England was commuted to one twenty-sixth of their harvest; the Presbyterian Scots only paid it with great reluctance. Jones's indiscretion was not forgotten.²²

In the rest of Red River, especially in the poorer Halfbreed parishes, Protestantism made few gains in the first two years after West's arrival. Less than fifty of an approximate Halfbreed population of eight to nine hundred trudged to church each Sunday, and the Sunday and day schools were also thinly attended. The 'general habits of the settlers [remained] those of lounging and idleness.' The change after 1823 was astonishing. By 1827 church attendance had increased to six hundred, while the number of communicants had increased to seventy-three from six. As early as February, 1824, the first Sabbaths were observed on the buffalo hunt, in spite of the missionary's refusal to condone the nomadic life.²³ Cockran, in writing to the Secretaries back in London, was most enthusiastic about the progress of his converts.

The people pay the highest reverence to the Sabbath, and endeavour to spend it in the very manner which God requires it to be spent. I see gossiping habits are laid aside and private and public worship is regularly attended to. In the morning the works of necessity and mercy are done, they are succeeded with family prayers. They then repair to Church, and join in the Services there. When service is over they return home, spend the evening reading the word of God with their families, and catechising their children. Those who cannot read themselves frequently go and spend their evening with those who are able to read them.²⁴

There were, of course, the 'unregenerate' who found their lapsed state enjoyable and remained staunch to their 'household deities', the bottle and sex, and enjoyed these blessings to 'surfeiting'. But, under pressure from the Company and the community, they went to church and kept the Sabbath even on the hunt. Cockran was, of course, putting the best foot forward in his report to the London Secretaries.

He was as often willing to censure his flock's weaknesses, and the quote has the ring of Cockran's sincerity.

Superficially, on the eve of 1830 all was well. The Church of England's prestige and support appeared visible and substantial, with the principal settlers, the commissioned gentlemen, the Governor, the Selkirk settlers and the Halfbreeds all attending church. The illusion of success and Christian unity, however, was likely to be shattered by the first major crisis. The Selkirk settlers would need little prompting to leave the Church. The mixed-bloods, on the other hand, became increasingly devoted to their religion. They looked to the Church for leadership, a leadership which, as will become apparent, the clergy were not always willing to provide. Too often they were torn between the Company or their congregation, inevitably choosing as they must the Company, the constituted authority. Antagonisms were inevitable.

The approach, although not necessarily the *ultimate* goal of the Roman Catholic Church to Red River, was markedly different from that of the Church of England. The Métis were only expected to comply with the moral and ethical rules of the Church as enunciated in the catechism and even these — the ten commandments, the six commandments of the Church,²⁵ and the sacraments — were compromised in the first year to accommodate the wayward. The priests made no emphatic demand for civilization, since Christianity, not civilization, was at the heart of gospel. In essence their attitudes were simply those of French Canada. The French-Canadian priest did not see himself as the scion of a great empire, and he rarely possessed the racial arrogance of his nineteenth-century Anglican counterpart. More importantly, as a French-Canadian he had long ago come to terms with the river lot, the bush, and the mixed-blood marriage. The fur trade, the hunt and the fisheries were hardly alien.²⁶

Undeniably, Rev. Joseph-Norbert Provencher, the first Catholic Bishop and one of the first missionaries in Red River, urged the sedentary life upon his charges but he was not vigorous in his demands, never formulating a coherent program for the teaching of agriculture. Sedentary life was valued only because it allowed the clergy unrestricted access to the Métis. Since it was the lack of supervision on the plains that led to gross immorality, it was simpler to encourage the priests to tend to the moral needs of the Métis there.

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The Rev. William Cockran who arrived at the Red River in 1825 and stayed until his death in 1865. From an undated sketch by E. P. Gibson of the Winnipeg Tribune.

The clergy's view of themselves as sole regulators of society's relationship with God also militated against the spread of the gospel of sedentary life. Temporal instruction of children in agriculture and carpentry was considered the responsibility of lay assistants or religious orders, as it interfered with spiritual duties and tarnished the dignity of the priest. Like the Anglicans, the Catholics were also firm in the belief that it was their duties to uphold and to add to the dignity of the state. Church and state were mutually supporting and inseparable.

Superficially the means of persuasion were the same as those of the Protestants: the church service, the school, and the pastoral visit. The broad techniques, however, were vastly different. While the evangelical Protestants laid great stress on individual conversion, the Catholic Church considered it secondary to the Christianization of society as a whole. The founding of a Christian community, it was believed, could not be accomplished by the indiscriminate multiplication of converted individuals. The aim was not to make instant Christians, but to lead the entire community, gradually if necessary, into the Church of Rome. The converted were not asked to abandon immediately all former allegiances and habits. As a result, if at first many of the converted were weak Christians, the priests nevertheless hoped that in time all members of society would grow into the Church together.

To achieve mass conversion, influence was exerted through the traditional sources of authority, the Company and the Métis leaders. Conversely, the Protestants demanded that the converted abandon all former pagan allegiances. There was no compromise. It was required that the clergy, the principal settlers and the Company immediately act out their rightful position at the apex of Red River society.

Red River's first Catholic clergy, whose duty it was to disseminate these doctrines, were for the most part descended from marginal Quebec farmers. They came either from small livings or directly, and sometimes unordained, from the seminary at Nicolet. Jean Harper, educated at the seminary in Quebec City, was the only exception. Bishop J. N. Provencher, one of Nicolet's first graduates and a former instructor, had sufficient influence to ask for recruits from the institution. For most of these priests, Red River was one of their first

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Bishop J. N. Provencher who came to Red River at age 31, and reluctantly devoted his life to the settlement. Undated.

charges, a stepping stone to a more lucrative living. Harper was twenty years of age when he went West; Charles Poiré, twenty-one; Richard Destroismaisons and François Boucher, twenty-four; and Sévère Dumoulin, twenty-five. Provencher was the oldest at thirty-one. Of these first priests, Dumoulin stayed five years, Destroismaisons seven years, Harper nine years, and Boucher six. Only Provencher devoted his life to Red River and he did so very reluctantly. When he returned to Quebec in 1820 he was offered the temporary charge of Yamachiche, a parish on the north shore of Lac St Pierre, ten miles from Trois Rivières in Quebec. It was only under great pressure from Bishop Plessis of Quebec, who enticed him with the title, Bishop of Juliopolis, that he came back. After Dumoulin and Destroismaisons returned to Quebec in 1823 and 1827 respectively, Provencher had to rely entirely on young unordained seminarians. Even Harper's and Boucher's nine and six years in Red River give a deceptive impression of continuity. They were shifted from Saint-Boniface to White Horse Plain, to Pembina, to Lake Manitoba, or to the plains. It would appear that the burning zeal of the Catholic missionaries was dampened by the physical rigour of the frontier, and the lack of a common regulated life and fellowship which the religious institutes and seminaries of Quebec offered. Also, in these years before 1840 there was little or no opportunity to develop lasting relationships with the congregations that were available to the later clergy.²⁷

In the first decades the influence of the Catholic clergy was not substantial, although this did not necessarily indicate a lack of interest on the part of the Métis. In fact, they so cherished the faint memories of their Catholic heritage that in 1817 they petitioned the Bishop of Quebec for a missionary.²⁸ While after 1818 marriage and baptism were frequent, these were often mere tokens of Christian acceptance, and, at least in the mind of the priest, conversion was not complete. Provencher frequently had to qualify the rules of the Church by requesting dispensations from Rome to accommodate the strange marriage entanglements of the Métis. Immorality and violence still plagued the settlement, at least in the eyes of the Church. At most, the Métis were becoming increasingly aware that God might be the Great Protector; they were propagandized that in Rupert's Land they were his chosen people; and they knew from experience that the clergy would

intercede with God and the Company on their behalf. God, it seemed, was able to protect them against failure on the hunt, against the marauding Sioux and against famine.

An examination of the Church's labour problem and the move of the Métis from Pembina to White Horse Plain [Saint-François Xavier] in 1822 makes apparent the steady, if unspectacular growth of the clergy's influence. Initially, the Church assumed that it would be able to rely on the requisite six days of labour per year from all Catholic landholders. Stipulated in their property titles, this 'corvée' was directed to the construction of the mission buildings. But in 1823, only three of the eight labourers that the clergy had requested appeared. Since Andrew Bulger, the Governor, maintained that he had no power to compel the people to fulfil their obligations, labour had to be commuted to 1/26 of the settler's produce, more in line with the traditional tithes of old Quebec. This, however, proved equally impossible to collect. The clergy had to be content with importing labour from Quebec.²⁹

The minimal involvement of the clergy in the movement of the Pembina Métis to White Horse Plain in 1822 is also illustrative of the limits of the clergy's influence. By 1822 Pembina, on the Red River just south of the recently established international border, had become the chief Catholic mission and Métis settlement. The Company, concerned that Pembina was becoming a haven for all the 'idle and unsettled' Métis and a source of the illicit fur trade, insisted that the settlement be concentrated at either White Horse Plain or Saint-Boniface for the purpose of closer scrutiny. When at first the Métis refused to move, John Halkett, executor of the Selkirk estate, thought it the fault of meddling priests.³⁰ But the Rev. S.N.J. Dumoulin was hardly the obstacle. The buffalo and the possibility for illicit trade were the chief attractions of Pembina, not the Church. Actually Dumoulin was already tired of his seemingly fruitless and exhausting years at Pembina and was ready to leave of his own volition. While Father Provencher is credited with bringing the Métis to Red River from Pembina, it was in fact the prairie fires, the Sioux, and the closing of the Company's trading post that pushed the Métis north. Unfortunately, after the move no provision for the migrants had been made at Saint-Boniface. Only after Cuthbert Grant, a mixed-blood Nor'Wester

who was greatly admired by the Métis, retired and moved to the White Horse Plain did the Métis join him. There, Grant and not the clergy set the example for settlement and agriculture, though he was supported by the clergy in his endeavours.³¹

The clergy, however, should not be denied all influence. Missionaries were beginning to go on the occasional buffalo hunt and those who did go established a close rapport with the Métis who looked to them for spiritual, moral and political guidance. These adventuresome clerics were frequently willing to give political advice when the Bishop at Saint-Boniface under the scrutiny of the Hudson's Bay Company was not.

The Catholic clergy were never close to the principal English-speaking settlers or the Governors. Generally language and religion prevented any intimacy beyond the occasional dinner. Some of the élite were Catholic like Alexander Macdonnell, the Grasshopper Governor; Captain Matthey, the unscrupulous leader of the de Meurons; and Andrew McDermot, a future Red River merchant prince; but their influence was limited. Relations with Donald McKenzie, a later Governor of Assiniboia, were good but distant. Most important, the Métis had no group comparable to the principal settlers. One searches in vain for an Alexander Ross, Donald Gunn, Thomas Thomas, or John Pritchard. The only comparable figure was Cuthbert Grant, the Nor'Wester turned Hudson's Bay man, who was in part responsible for the horrors of the Seven Oaks Massacre. He was a clerk for the Company for two years (1822-1824) until he decided in 1824 to become a settler. It was in 1828 that he was made Warden of the Plains at £200 per year by Simpson because of his influence with the Métis, and because Simpson wanted to keep him from meddling in the fur trade.³²

It is likely that the clergy sought out Grant because of his recognized and Company-supported influence with the Métis. He was already a convert to Catholicism, and by associating themselves with him they hoped to be able to exert greater influence over his followers. Grant thus became the chief patron of the Catholic Church at Red River. Indeed, for the first years at Saint-François-Xavier, the church service and the school were at his house. Grant, for his part, probably

realized that in the future the Church would provide him with as much support and prestige as he was now providing it.

One of the most important effects of the different teachings of the various missionaries was the increase in religious distance between the Métis and English-speaking Halfbreeds. In 1824 Rev. David Jones caught one of his school boys berating a Catholic for his Church's practice of Latin preaching, image worship, and various other heathen rites. The Catholic became so incensed that he ripped the catechism out of the Anglican's hands and threw it in the fire.³³ In 1826 William Cockran found that Catholic voyageurs despised him as a 'heretic, with a perfect hatred', and that their actions were governed by the 'same bitterness of spirit'. They not only stole his provisions, but as a final insult they dropped his baggage in the water.³⁴ William Cockran may have misunderstood these pranks. The Métis may have been testing him by harassment, a different cultural style which he bore poorly. The subsequent evidence offered in the following suggests that this was probably not the case. Religious feelings were real. In the 1820s another painful issue was that of religious holidays, which the Company allowed both Protestant and Catholic servants. The Catholics, it seemed to some Protestants, had more than their share, a jealousy that tended to inflame general animosities. Hostilities increased.³⁵ The ties of Indian blood that united the English Halfbreeds and Métis could only be weakened by these religious conflicts. Of course the clergy unknowingly were widening a separation that already existed between the two mixed-blood groups because of the differences of the primary social antecedents — the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company.

HBCA/PAM



Frances Simpson, at 18, married her cousin George Simpson and brought 'an air of high life and gaiety' to Red River. Photograph of a miniature in the possession of Mrs. G. Haddon, Scotland.

4

A Little Britain in the Wilderness

Although the efforts of the Protestant clergy in the 1830s to ensure the purity of the thoroughly British society they were attempting to create were often comical, their social and racial repercussions were serious. The Rev. William Cockran, a man of considerable influence, was firm in his belief that the European was superior to either the Indian or the Halfbreed and that he who married an Indian or a Halfbreed had debased his race, his culture and his religion. During the 1830s this belief found its way increasingly into the hearts of Red River Europeans and seriously affected the relations between them and the mixed-bloods. In order to re-establish their Christian respectability in the eyes of their peers, and of their clergyman who represented to so many the epitome of British civilization, a number of the most influential of the Company's retired gentlemen sought, whenever the opportunity presented itself, to replace their native wives with white ones. The clergy did little to make the transition an easy one. They and their wives found most of the new white women socially unacceptable. It will be seen that, conversely, some of the 'better' white women found the clerical establishment tainted with lower-class origins. A vicious and uncompromising war of gossip broke out among the new white women, the clergy's wives and the threatened native women, fracturing Protestant Red River into its Indian, Halfbreed, and European parts. The continual threat of insurrection by the Métis and some of the Halfbreeds during the 1830s and 1840s forced the retired officers and clergy to display a superficial unity, but the scandals of the early 1850s finally separated the clergy from both the mixed-bloods and European upper crust.

Since Catholic Red River was culturally and racially homogeneous except for the small group of French-Canadian settlers and priests, it avoided the racial conflicts that were to plague the

Protestant half of the settlement with its Kildonans, fur trade patriarchs, and military. Furthermore, there was little social interaction between the clergy and the laity, in large part because the clergy had no wives to complicate their lives, but also because the Church failed, in spite of vigorous attempts, to recruit priests from among the Métis.

Not all of the Catholic clergy fell easily into the rhythmic life of Red River marked by the hunt, the trip, and the plough. There was a serious split between the sedentary and the nomadic clergy, specifically between Bishop Provencher and Father G.A. Belcourt. The split was not yet serious but dangers were evident in the late 1830s. By his silence the Catholic Bishop tended to support the Company in all its endeavours, while censuring the nomadic priests who tended to sympathize with the Métis. As a result the Métis, an increasingly religious people, in their fight against the Company and the Sioux sought direction from the nomadic priesthood, rather than the Bishop and his establishment at the Forks.

As Protestant Red River settled into a semi-isolated and rhythmic existence, in large part at the urging of the clergy, it attempted to become more sedentary and agricultural. The clergy saw themselves as warriors in a moral battle against the diabolical temptations and licentiousness inherent in the vast barbaric wilderness — to them the very antithesis of civilization. The Protestant missionary was convinced that the Indian, Métis, and Halfbreed were infected by the contagion of barbarism, and that they were lost to civilization. Cockran made it quite clear that 'the Dominant Race of this Continent are the English' and that the Indian and Halfbreed would always be immoral, capricious, intractable, indolent, callous, prideful, wayward, extravagant, ingracious, improvident and careless.¹ The clergy urged Red River to turn inward from the interior and outward to cultivate its European heritage and to resist the pull of the wild, in order to avoid the fate of the Halfbreed and the Indian.

Turn inward Red River did. Its imitation of European tradition and prejudices became more slavish, evidenced by the monogrammed silver service, the fine glass goblet, the expensive cariole, and the acquisition by several of the senior fur traders, both active and retired, of white wives. The ability to support a white woman reflected wealth and status, and was a sign of resistance to the degenerate barbarism of

the wilderness. However genteel the moccasined Indian or Halfbreed wife might be, she had no place in the resurrected memories of Scotland, England, Canada, and the Orkney Islands that were evoked by the clergy. Of equal importance was the growing concern with social status in Europe. An Indian wife might well mean no promotion and a loss of position in the eyes of one's peers. The result was that some of the Halfbreed and Indian wives were 'turned off', that is, either abandoned or, more often, placed under the protection of another fur trader.² This is not to suggest that the clergy were the single cause of white marriages — only that their preachings and example were a critical factor.

Until the 1830s, Mrs Cockran, Mrs Jones, Mrs Pelly (Governor Pelly's ailing wife), along with the Selkirk women were the only white females. An influential minority of the fur traders took a succession of mixed-blood or Indian women, and actively attempted to ensure that the number of white marriages remained minimal. European women were considered fragile, demanding and, perhaps more important, useless in forming trade alliances. Chief Trader Donald Ross, Chief Trader McVicar and Chief Factor Clarke were at some point chided by the Company for their marriages to Selkirk and Swiss women. Even then, Hargrave thought Mrs Ross, a rough unrefined Selkirk, little better than an Indian woman in her habits. Simpson's desire to curb this trend meant that some of the commissioned gentlemen with racial and social sensibilities and concern for their future in the Company, such as James Hargrave at York Factory, would remain bachelors though certainly not monks until suitable white women were available, and not until they could afford to keep the fragile creatures in comfort.

The shift from native to European wives was made by small but influential numbers of the fur trade's élite in the early 1830s. The insistence of the clergy upon Church marriages caused, encouraged or gave excuses to a few well-placed commissioned gentlemen to reconsider their liaisons 'à la façon du pays' and to seize the opportunity to dispose of an 'old concern' and acquire a newer, younger and lighter-skinned wife. Simpson himself made the best known transition by 'turning-off' both Betsey Sinclair, a daughter of Chief Factor William Sinclair and Nahovway, an Indian woman, to Robert Miles, the clerk and later the Chief Factor at Moose Factory; and Margaret Taylor, the

Halfbreed daughter of George Taylor, a former York sloop master, to Pierre Leblanc, the mason for the Lower Fort. The latter bargain required a £200 inducement. How many other Halfbreed or Indian wives were 'turned-off' in Rupert's Land is difficult to assess.³ Yet, not all who now married white women 'turned-off' their wives. Some had never married, while others waited for their Halfbreed wives to die. But a noticeable number of new wives were white. The school mistresses were all that was available to those who did not relish wife-hunting in Europe or Canada, or could not persuade the Selkirk women to marry outside their community. After the death of his Indian wife, James Bird, the wealthiest of the retired Chief Factors, married the Widow Lowman, the school mistress who came out in 1835. Red River gossips had it that Bird, unkindly referred to as an 'old shrivelled bag of bones', had to purchase 'the fresh morsel of frail humanity, soul and body' for £3,000 made over to 'her and her heirs forever'. Miss Armstrong, Mrs Bird's successor at the school, married John Peter Pruden, a retired Chief Trader of crude habits but of kind heart and of generous pocketbook. Miss Allen, a fussy spinster who came out with James Hargrave's wife, Letitia, was on the verge of marrying James Sutherland, a retired Chief Factor of modest means. If Letitia is to be believed, Sutherland fortunately died of an overdose of calomel. These women, along with the wives of the clergy, formed Red River's new upper crust.⁴

With the new white wives came a new life style, approved by gentry and clergy alike. Simpson's new wife, his eighteen-year-old cousin, Frances, gave Red River 'an air of high life and gaiety' with a 'painted house of state, the Piano-forte, and the new fashioned Government Carriole.'⁵ Even James Sutherland, by no means wealthy, felt that he had to keep up the pace and set about acquiring the symbols that signified membership in that very exclusive circle setting the conventions for Red River.

We have now here some rich old fellows that have acquired large fortunes in the service, have got married to European females and cut a dash, have introduced a system of extravagance into the place that is followed by all that can afford it.⁶

PAM



Anne Armstrong who married retired Chief Factor J. P. Pruden.

The Halfbreed wife was too often oddly dressed, as was Mrs Gladman, the wife of the accountant at York Factory, who appeared 'in a Waterloo blue Merino, moccasins, and a straw bonnet lined with lilac satin, and was not considered sufficiently civilized to merit a place in this new society.'⁷

As wives of the retired and active commissioned officers, the new white women found themselves at the very pinnacle of Red River, presiding over the community's social life and being treated with deference and ceremony. For most, marriage had meant a considerable rise in status. Former farmers' wives, widows and teachers became the dictators of fashion and etiquette. The transition was a heady one. No native, irrespective of her position, and no clergyman's wife was allowed to compromise the newly found status. Yet the clergymen's wives felt themselves a cut above their Indian and Halfbreed friends, and would not tolerate the questioning of their status. The new white women resented, as did the native women, the parson's wife's role as watchdog over Red River's morals. The inability to accommodate one another's status led to exclusiveness and hostility.

George Simpson's attitudes were typical of those held by the élite towards the parson's wives and the natives. Only Mrs Jones, the wife of the sociable parson, was found 'possible'. Cockran's wife was rejected by both George Simpson and the 'blues' — the term frequently used by Red River to refer to the retired gentlemen and their families — because she had the misfortune to be 'a Dollymop or some such thing.' George Simpson further maintained rather viciously, although not without some truth as the scandals of 1851 would show, that Mrs Cockran's 'Puritanism...ill concealed the vixen', and that she only 'shined when talking of elbow grease and the scouring of pots and pans.'⁸ Frances Simpson would generally take communion in private with the parsons' wives,⁹ and she was forbidden to favour the native ladies of Red River with her company. Simpson, for example, refused to allow Theresa Chalifoux, the wife of Chief Factor Colin Robertson, the privilege of visiting Frances, possibly with some cause. Apparently only two Halfbreeds, both servants, were allowed in Mrs Simpson's presence and by 1833 all of Halfbreed Red River avoided her.

Mrs Simpson left in 1833, in ill health, destitute of company, never to return to the settlement she had grown to dislike. Yet she alone

was regarded as a social equal by the parsons' wives. The white Mrs Bird, who attempted to replace her by holding sumptuous dinner parties and a variety of balls and dances, was only ridiculed. The vicious fur trade rumour-mill circulated the story that, contrary to Mrs Bird's firm insistence, her first husband might still be alive. Miss Armstrong, now Mrs Pruden, was put down by rumours that she had been in the 'habit of sleeping with Cap'n Graves on the voyage out.'¹⁰

The clergy were equally critical of the Halfbreeds that Mrs Cockran found 'indolent and licentious'. Their habit of going in all manner of 'detestable conversation' was condemned. They must be led out of their former ways and into the path of industry and discretion.¹¹ Although these comments were made specifically with regard to the poorer mixed-bloods, Mrs Cockran's attitudes to others of quality would have been similar, if perhaps kinder. The mixed-blood and Indian wives of the Red River 'blues' were aware of the disdain in which they were held. Mrs Alexander Ross and Mrs Robert Lane, the latter the wife of a respectable Red River merchant, seldom made their appearance except at church.¹² A new white society composed of the clergy and the commissioned gentlemen with white wives had displaced that of the Halfbreeds. They were now the indisputable leaders of society.

The outward sign of the tendency to exclusiveness was a significant increase in gossip. From 1830 to 1850, the period of the greatest changes in Red River society, the correspondence of the fur trade contained progressively more invective and gossip. Because gossip was informal and confidential, it was the best weapon for carrying out social warfare. Since everyone in Red River feared for his newly achieved position or was upset over his apparent decline in status, each combatant compiled an arsenal to be used both offensively and defensively against the most serious social rivals. A condescending superiority towards supposed social inferiors was the least harmful outcome; open social warfare was the worst and Red River was to experience both.¹³ Up to 1850, however, no open social warfare was to break out, at least not seriously enough to cause violence. The threat of insurrection on the part of the Métis and Halfbreeds may have forced the 'blues', irrespective of race, and the clergy to unite. Equally important, the clerical establishment was still quite small, consisting of

only Rev. W. Cockran and Rev. D. Jones and their wives. John Macallum, a graduate of King's College in Aberdeen, came out in 1833 after his graduation to assist Jones as schoolmaster, but he was not ordained until 1855. He was never a star in the clerical constellation. Open tensions, then, did not break out until 1850 after the clergy numbered half a dozen or more, and after the Church had glorified itself with a Bishop.

Gossip was especially used to minimize the threatening social influence and attempted dominance of the clergy. Cockran's decision to arrive, mounted atop a cow, at one of Mrs Simpson's dinner parties, Mrs Cockran's unfortunate social background, and Rev. Jones's misfortunes with the Presbyterians were discussed with relish. So was Cockran's all too evident lack of tact and education. Donald Ross unkindly informed Hargrave that Cockran had spun 'out his long yarns as usual, murdering the King's English most unmercifully in flights of pulpit eloquence and veiling [hinting] occasionally at the immoral habits of the fur trade.'¹⁴ If such criticism was circumspect, it was only because the clergy were reckoned as powerful enemies. In discussing the general temperament of the missionaries one fur trader was convinced that they would 'pursue the object of their hatred...to the extremities of the earth, nay even to eternity if they could to obtain revenge.'¹⁵ The private parlour and the pages of the confidential letter provided the best places for criticism of the clergy.

Despite Cockran's efforts, however, it was the moral deviations of the 'blues' and the mixed-bloods that served as the mainstay of gossip. While many of the attacks by the fur traders on each other were made with regard to alleged immorality — James Hargrave's romp in the bushes at York with Madame L'Esperance, the wife of the famous fur brigade leader had many aghast — the clergy seemed for the most part immune from sexual innuendo even when the opportunity presented itself.¹⁶ When a commissioned officer's daughter, 'a poor half dead and alive stubborn silly thing' who went wrong with some of the young recruits from Canada in 1832, debauched an Indian boy who served in the kitchen at Jones's boarding school for young ladies, the parson got none of the blame. Instead he received a great deal of sympathy. Both Simpson and Hargrave were upset that Jones was in agony over the event, and indeed feared that this might mean the end

of the boarding school. Hargrave put the blame squarely on the Halfbreeds. After all, 'everyone at all conversant with the morality of the Half Caste Race at present must be persuaded that absolute purity cannot be attained in one generation.'¹⁷

It would seem that no one was willing to accept the social condescension of the clerical establishment; neither were the 'blues' willing to see the representatives of their highest goals morally criticized. The reasons for the failure to seize the opportunity for attack are by no means certain. Yet the mixed-bloods and the Whites did accept the brands of civilization and Christianity preached by the clergy, and scrambled to attain its perfection. Any moral shortcomings of the clergy would have illustrated that they had succumbed to the sensual evils of the wilderness. If the clergy were not immune from the contagion of barbarism, the fur trader would certainly be beyond redemption and forever doomed.

Since the clergy considered themselves equal, if not superior to the Red River élite, and since the clergy considered themselves the guiding light of civilization, they worked closely with the élite to ensure that the little Britain they were carefully building on the banks of the Red River would flourish. Their support of the private boarding school and their participation in the Council of Assiniboia reinforced the position of the élite, and tended to alienate further the majority of Protestant Red River already slighted by the marriages of the 1830s. The latter came to feel that the retired officers and the Company were the major concern of the clergy, and that they were of minor importance. There was sufficient evidence to support their fears.

In 1832, the Rev. David Jones, at the prompting of the fur trade's gentlemen, established a 'respectable seminary' on a large scale for the sons and daughters of Rupert's Land's gentlemen. The roster of surnames reads like a 'who was who' of the active and retired fur traders. John Stuart, John Lee Lewes, Francis Heron, Roderick McKenzie, J.D. Cameron, Allan McDonell, Donald Ross, Thomas McKay, F.N. Annance, William Todd, Donald Robertson, P.C. Pambrun, Thomas Thomas, Colin Robertson, Robert Miles, and Alexander Christie all sent their children. The fees were kept at a stiff £30 per annum (a Chief Factor realized about £500 per annum) to deter the socially unqualified, although it did not keep out those on the margin with money like

Heron, McKay and Annance. 'A lady regularly bred up to the situation of Governess and qualified to instruct the children in the ornamental...branches of Education, in short an accomplished and well bred lady, capable of teaching music, drawing &c &c of conciliating disposition & mild temper' was to be brought over from England.¹⁸ When Miss Armstrong was found to be unqualified to teach these subjects the Chief Factors threatened to withdraw their daughters. The boys and girls were separated from each other as well as from the native elements and their relatives in the settlement. They were to be English ladies and gentlemen. The two abandoned Halfbreed daughters of Kenneth McKenzie (since the 1820s, of the American Fur Company), Margaret and Isabella, for example, were forcibly kept from their Indian mother and whipped by John Macallum, the school master, when they attempted to give the poor ragged woman desperately needed clothing.¹⁹

The less fortunate mixed-bloods were taught by Peter Garrioch, educated by the Church Missionary Society; John Pritchard, a former Nor'Wester and principal settler; Donald Gunn, the Red River historian and correspondent for the Smithsonian Institution, and Rev. W. Cockran, at schools at the Upper Church, Frog Plain, Middle Church and Grand Rapids. The quality of education available to the run-of-the-mill mixed-blood was decidedly inferior to that offered the offspring of the Company's officers. They did not accept this situation without protest. In 1834 the Indian boys, who until this time had been educated by Jones and apparently associated with the boarding school, were transferred to Cockran at the Lower Church. The Chief Factors were fearful that they might corrupt their children, especially their daughters. The Halfbreeds of St. Andrew's, whose children were under Cockran's supervision, were not pleased. Cockran said that they argued that

If these Indian boys are so bad as to corrupt and seduce the bastards of the Chief Factors, surely [they] will never [be] allow [ed] to enter the school where our children and daughters are educated. And again, we have married our wives and are endeavouring to train up our children according to christian principles, but still the bastards of the Chief Factors are more esteemed by our Ministers.²⁰

The clergy also became tainted by their involvement in the Council of Assiniboia, the legislative body controlled by the Company, which regulated the day-to-day affairs of the Red River. The Minutes of the Council of May 4, 1834, concerning pigs and stallions roaming at large, fires, statute labour for the improvement of roads, public fairs, haying privileges, tariffs and the like, illustrate the scope of its influence. In 1835 the Hudson's Bay Company resumed possession of Red River from Lord Selkirk's heirs, and immediately set about to reform the Council by inviting the most influential of Red River's clergymen to become members, the intention being to make it more palatable to the mixed-bloods. Among the first new appointments of February 1834 were the Rev. David Jones and the Rev. William Cockran. The Catholic Bishop, Provencher, only attended as an observer and was not made a permanent member until 1837. This was probably due to his absence in Europe from 1835 to 1837, rather than discrimination.²¹

It is difficult to determine the role played by the clergy in the proceedings of the Council. Votes were not recorded until the 1850s and then only infrequently. It is equally impossible to determine the amount of legislation initiated by the clergy. All that can be ascertained is that Jones, Cockran, and the Bishop rarely missed meetings. They joined their old friends George Simpson, James Sutherland, John Pritchard, Alexander Christie, and W.H. Cook, and must have been in agreement over the regulations concerning the keeping of pigs, the hay privilege, and the occasional £50 given to the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches for educational purposes. Law and order and the state-supported church would never be opposed.

The widening of the membership of the Council could only be effective if the majority of Red River's inhabitants were willing to allow it control and had respect for the judgement of its members. The Selkirk and other principal settlers would accept, even if sometimes reluctantly, the usually mild dictates of the Council, especially since most of its regulations were for their benefit. The Halfbreeds, although accustomed at the interior fur posts to the military-like structure of the Company, required additional persuasion. This, Cockran provided as the leader of his Halfbreed congregation in all matters temporal and spiritual. They allowed him 'to teach, admonish, exhort, reprove, warn,

advise, console, with the greatest freedom.' That his influence was substantial can be seen by the fact that marriage and baptism were becoming increasingly common. In 1831 Cockran was ecstatic in his letter to the Church Missionary Society — there were only two recorded illegitimate births among a population of twelve hundred Protestants, most recent converts to Christianity.²² While Cockran's claim might be treated with scepticism, he wrote enough of his failures that the occasional triumph is credible.

By 1835 this optimism had begun to fade. Rev. David Jones could boast readily enough that the settlement was 'becoming a stronghold of Christianity in the centre of this vast wilderness.' He complained, however, that two clergymen were not sufficient to minister to the four Red River congregations. As a result they were losing 'the hold on the minds of the rising generation [they] once unquestionably possessed.' The situation had deteriorated even further by 1839. Jones again commented that while the native and 'Half Castes' were becoming daily more enlightened, they were in equal measure becoming 'disaffected to the ruling power, [and] the general system of things at head quarters.'²³

There seems to be no indication, however, that the brief bizarre flash of General James Dickson's Indian Liberating Army, made any impact in Red River itself. Dickson, possibly a mixed-blood son of a British trader and a leader in the War of 1812, sought to establish an Indian kingdom in California. Aware of Cuthbert Grant and the military prowess of the Red River Métis, Dickson intended to recruit them to this 'army'. From Red River he planned to march to Santa Fe, 'free' the Indians and establish his kingdom. On their way from Montreal, where Dickson had recruited some anti-Company Métis, he was shipwrecked. Some of his men were arrested. Finally in December 1836 with only eleven officers he arrived at the settlement. W.L. Morton, who provides a brief humorous account of the episode, noted Simpson's effective dealings with Dickson. He had Dickson's bank drafts refused, and he offered employment to his mixed-blood men. Dickson befriended Cuthbert Grant, but in the spring he left, his resources even scarcer than those with which he had arrived in the winter. The Métis considered him a heroic buffoon, if Pierre Falcon, the well-known Métis bard, is to be believed.²⁴

The social exclusiveness of the clergy must have exacerbated the disaffection between the groups. The clergy were closely identified with the Hudson's Bay Company, its retired officers and its government. Fear that the clergy cared more for the Company and the 'blues' appeared justified by the events of 1834 and 1835. The Métis and Halfbreeds were threatening insurrection because of racial slights, inadequate prices for pemmican and agricultural produce, and the uncertainty of land tenure. A seriously provocative incident occurred when Antoine Larocque, a Métis, was struck by Thomas Simpson, the cousin of George Simpson. The Halfbreeds, connected to the Métis 'by a spirit of national sympathy' had cause to join the protest. One of their number, William Hallett, had recently been denied permission to marry the daughter of Chief Factor Allan McDonnell by the Governor of Assiniboia, on racial and status grounds.²⁵ The situation was serious enough that many of the whites and 'blues' threatened to move to Canada or the United States. Drastic measures were needed. At the prompting of George Simpson, the clergy and élite of Red River on the Council of Assiniboia formed a volunteer corps, with Alexander Ross as Commander over a Sergeant Major, four Sergeants and fifty-four Privates. While nothing much came of the corps, the measure must have had an impact on the mixed-bloods. Here were the clergy and 'blues' making a concerted effort to suppress what they considered serious grievances. Fortunately exhortations by Cockran, Jones, and Belcourt and the success of the next summer's hunts saved Red River from insurrection.

By 1840, then, it appeared that the Protestant clergy had made common cause with the 'blues' of Red River. They attended their parties, they sat on their councils, they attempted to enforce their laws, and they gave special consideration to their children. This is not to say that the clergy were without criticism of the Company's policies. The criticism, however, concerned the problems of the missionaries more than the Halfbreeds. Cockran, for one, had many grievances against the Company, but he was warned by his superiors, the Secretaries of the Church Missionary Society, not to 'cast any reflection on any of the servants of the Company,' including Simpson.²⁶ Cockran was upset with Simpson's reluctance to allow an Indian settlement at Sugar Point near the outlet of the Red River. Indeed he more than once announced

his doubts about the need for the fur monopoly. But he would oppose the intransigent Company, only peacefully, constitutionally, and circumspectly. The conclusion reached by his congregation, bred in the tradition of violence that characterized the relationship between the fur companies in the pre-1821 period, could only be that Cockran was under the Company's thumb. Of Jones, the jovial companion of the Company's officers, they would have no doubt. Reform therefore came to mean opposition to clergy as well as Company.

The Catholic clergy were relatively immune from developments on the other side of the river. They were as yet emphatically not listed among the élite of Protestant Red River, and did not expect to be.²⁷ An invitation to the occasional social gathering and representation on the Council of Assiniboia were all they merited. There was no comparable group to the Thomases, Simpsons, Birds and Bunns at Saint-Boniface, Pembina, or Saint-François-Xavier. Cuthbert Grant and Andrew McDermot, both prosperous traders, were the highest placed Catholics Red River could muster in the period before the free trade movement.²⁸ The extent of the Catholic exclusion is apparent upon analysis of Red River gossip. They never once provided the grist for the English or French Red River rumour mill, in spite of the fact that the Métis were as adept at gossip as their Protestant counterparts. When the clergy gossiped, it was to their superiors in Quebec about each other, not about Red River. The Catholic clergy were not linked by marriage to their congregations, despite the fact that they were an integral part of Métis society, and provided both spiritual and secular leadership. They had no blood connections with their charges, and made no progress in their efforts to change this situation by the recruitment of an indigenous clergy.

The composition of the Catholic clergy also changed little from the 1820s. Not only did Nicolet remain the principal training school for Red River's Roman Catholic clergy, but turnover continued at an alarming rate. Bishop Provencher, himself away in Canada or Europe in 1831 and from 1835 to 1837 was assisted by a succession of priests; Father Jean Harper, Charles Poiré, Jean Baptiste Thibault, and G.A. Belcourt. While Poiré, serving at Saint-François-Xavier from 1833 to 1839, was the chief cleric, Father Belcourt, arriving in 1831 and founder of the *Saulteaux* Indian mission at Baie Saint-Paul, managed to

gain the greatest influence over the Métis at Saint-François-Xavier, six miles to the east of the Indian Mission.

Among these priests two distinct types can be discerned, the nomadic and the sedentary, the former having the greatest contact with the Métis. Among these can be included J.B. Harper, F. Boucher, Charles Poiré, G.A. Belcourt, and J.B. Thibault. In the period prior to the free trade troubles of the 1840s, Provencher himself was the most important sedentary priest. This had serious implications. Provencher was forced, largely by the nature of his position but also by his predilections, to an existence in his cathedral, to a seat on the Council of Assiniboia, and to reconciling policy with the Company. He would be considered unsympathetic, as indeed he was, to the cause of the Métis free traders.

Provencher refused to visit the remote parts of his diocese, failed to travel even to the Saint-François-Xavier mission, and completely avoided the hunt. If Pembina was visited, it was because it was en route to Canada. He spent the greatest part of his energies administering a diocese of from three to five priests, building an enormous and expensive cathedral, and assisting in the ecclesiastical squabbles of Canada. He had little patience or love for the great Northwest. His aim was to isolate himself from the surrounding barbarism, to create a civilized Catholicism at the Forks, letting it drift outwards from there. Until then, his clergy could care for the more nomadic parishioners.²⁹

The Bishop could have brought the Cathedral establishment closer to the Métis, and avoided future difficulties by the establishment of an indigenous clergy. He failed, not because of a lack of effort but because of the refusal of the Church of Rome to relax the rigorous training required for ordination. There were four schools, by no means comparable to the Protestant academy under Jones and Macallum. One was located at Saint-François-Xavier with three others at Saint-Boniface, attended by approximately forty students at the first school and as many as eighty per school at Saint-Boniface, depending upon the time of year. From June to August when the hunt was on, and in the winter when food was scarce, attendance was negligible. Provencher had six Latin scholars under his care as early as 1834, but again success was not great. Few families devoted themselves to the service of the Church, with only the daughter of Augustin Nolin working for the

clergy as a school teacher at Saint-François-Xavier and Baie Saint-Paul. This apparent lack of interest was more due to the lack of education than a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Métis. The consequences, however, would be the same; clerical aloofness from the Métis, especially those at Saint-Boniface where most of the schools were located.³⁰

Provencher's conflicts with *all* of his itinerant clergy, most of whom had close relations with the Métis, must have alienated some of the faithful. Neither Harper, Boucher, nor Poiré left Rupert's Land on good terms with the Bishop. Unfortunately those who were concerned refused to discuss specifics. Only Belcourt had the audacity to write his bishop, the Bishop of Quebec, about his problems, a privilege rarely exercised by the clergy of subordinate co-adjutor bishops like Provencher. Belcourt's problems with Provencher centred on principle as well as personality. The Bishop demanded an itinerant mission: Christ first, then settlement and the physical necessities like a chapel. A missionary, not a chapel, captured souls. Provencher found Belcourt's attempts at agricultural settlement a waste of time and an unnecessary drain on the funds of the diocese. Belcourt, conversely, complained that the Bishop failed to support the outlying missions as he should. The Bishop and his priest never became reconciled to their conflicting points of view. Provencher also became increasingly annoyed with what he believed were the priest's gross exaggerations of his success at Baie Saint-Paul, the Saulteaux mission six miles east of Saint-François Xavier on the left bank of the Assiniboine, and his continued delay completing his dictionary of the Cree language.³¹

But, if Belcourt's efforts at Baie Saint-Paul were a resounding failure, he did manage to cultivate the Métis. The extent of Belcourt's influence is, however, almost impossible to determine. He never fully discussed his role in the incidents of 1834 and 1836 with his friends and superiors in Eastern Canada. All conclusions must remain supposition. Although he never went on the buffalo hunt before 1838, he had adequate opportunity to cultivate contact with the Métis in his first year at Saint-Boniface. At Baie Saint-Paul he would have had less contact, except during frequent visits to Saint-François-Xavier. Perhaps his rather flamboyant personality and anti-Company stance won favour. Whatever the cause of his influence, he was definitely involved in

quieting the December 1834 unrest over Thomas Simpson's striking of a drunken Métis, and the August 1836 York brigade rebellion, one of many about which little detail is known except that the Métis swore on a cask of sacramental wine to refuse to work for the Company.³² Apparently neither Provencher nor Poiré, at Saint-Boniface during the 1834 incident, was involved. Why did Belcourt and not the Bishop quell the riot? Had the Bishop lost influence because he was identified with the Company? He had, after all, attempted to curry favour with constituted authority at every opportunity. Did the Métis follow Belcourt because he was known to be at odds with the Bishop and therefore presumably with the Company? One can only speculate, but given the events of 1846 and 1849, the above suppositions are not baseless.

Instead of a society delicately balanced between Protestant and Catholic, English and French, Métis and Halfbreed, Red River was exhibiting signs of fragmentation. Whites and mixed-bloods lacked internal consensus and there were serious incidents of conflict. Racial divergence became apparent as some native wives were discarded and others prevented from realizing a social position. Whites were opposed to mixed-bloods, Anglicans to Presbyterians, Catholics to Protestants, and Halfbreeds to Métis. It would take little to cause outright hostility. If Red River did not break out into open social war, it was because many of the tensions were still latent. It would be the free trade crisis of the 1840s, and the scandals of the 1850s that would cause an obvious divergence amongst the fragments that constituted Red River.

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*Sir George Simpson by
Stephen Pearce, 1857.*

5

Free Trade and Social Fragmentation

The 1840s were a period of intense struggle between the Hudson's Bay Company, the Métis, and to a lesser extent the English-speaking Halfbreeds for the right to participate in the pursuit of the good life. In the North-West this meant the fur trade and all its attendant support activities, especially the interior trade in buffalo hides for carriage robes, and freighting.

Since 1819, when Red River sent an expedition to Prairie du Chien for desperately needed seed grain, a considerable and for the most part unopposed trade had developed between the United States and Red River. Up to the mid-1830s the Company was prepared to sanction certain independent freighters, guides and traders like Alexander Ross, Andrew McDermott and James Sinclair, and to tolerate the Métis smugglers operating in the Pembina area. Although some attempt was made to control the petty trade, only in 1844 did the Company move decisively to protect its monopoly by censoring mail, by seizing goods and by introducing a new land deed which made tenure conditional upon adherence to the Company's monopoly. The cultural arrogance of Adam Thom, the Company judge and architect of most of these measures, aggravated the situation to crisis proportions. Petitions were organized by an aroused Red River in 1846, carried to England in 1847 by James Sinclair, and presented to the Colonial Office the same year by A.K. Isbister, a successful Halfbreed lawyer and educator resident in London. The ensuing investigations favoured the Company. A large detachment of the Sixth Regiment of Foot, the Royal Warwickshires, was even sent in 1846 ostensibly to stave off American aggression but actually to stifle incipient rebellion in Red River. The arrest of Pierre-Guillaume Sayer, a Métis, in 1849 for illicit trading brought the free trade issue to a climax. The Company, unwilling to antagonize the Métis to the point of rebellion, effectively

capitulated and suspended Sayer's sentence. It was quickly assumed, and rightly so, that the monopoly could now be violated with impunity.¹

The churches of Red River were intimately involved in the free trade disputes. The mixed-bloods and Indians became especially disillusioned with the inability of the churches to come to grips with the serious secular problems of Red River. Indeed it was only a few individual clergymen like Father Belcourt and the Rev. William Cockran, both ostracized by their peers and the Company élite, who were willing to fight the status quo. Cockran, however, refused to countenance armed action or any measures that involved support by the Church of Rome. In the Protestant community the free trade tensions were aggravated by the refusal of the clergy to treat the few mixed-blood catechists (the foundation of a future 'native' self-supporting church) on equal terms with their European counterparts in Red River. Although most were from lower-class families, this was even true for Joseph Cook, the son of W.H. Cook, a prominent settler. The English-speaking Halfbreeds consequently were excluded by race from full participation in church life, and by religion, culture and Company background from consorting with their racial brothers, the Métis. Belcourt conversely strengthened the identity of the Métis by giving the impression that God and the Church sanctioned their endeavours. Only his energies secured the dominance of the Catholic clergy and prevented the Métis from becoming alienated from the increasingly distant and pro-Hudson's Bay Company establishment at Saint-Boniface.

Many of the problems which faced Red River in the 1840s can be better understood when the changing nature of the clergy of the Church of England is examined in detail. Had a more effective, more seasoned clergy been in the majority, and in the positions of influence, much of the tension and conflict could have been avoided. The vigorous and entrenched Rev. W. Cockran and Rev. D. Jones were supplemented by a group of mediocre products from Islington College, the Church Missionary Society's institute for the training of its agents. The course of studies was an intense three to four-year curriculum of theology, Hebrew, Latin, English, grammar, astronomy, arithmetic, philosophy, and chemistry. No practical subjects like agriculture were taught.

The best of the College's students were sent to India, where the Church Missionary Society had extensive operations; the most marginal came to Rupert's Land, an area of peripheral interest to the Society. The Rev. John Smithurst and the Rev. Abraham Cowley are two cases in point. The first, in Rupert's Land from 1839 to 1851, was considered of superior quality in Rupert's Land's traditions, but was referred to by his referees as 'ambitionless, and without sincere Xtian motivation.' Even two years after his admission, the principal of the college confessed that Mr Smithurst was 'not a man of shining talent', although he was of 'decided piety' and would likely pass a 'respectable examination' for ordination. Mr Abraham Cowley, in Rupert's Land for all of his lengthy and famous career, had been initially rejected as a missionary candidate. The principal found him to be 'much behind in knowledge', rough in manners, afflicted by conceit, and 'infirm of temper', although he was conceded considerable mental powers and great piety. Both Smithurst and Cowley were accepted on condition that they commit themselves to the frozen wastes that were thought to be Rupert's Land.

The Rev. Robert James, also educated at Islington, merited neither praise nor criticism. Only John Roberts, the catechist from Newfoundland, came from a school other than Islington, and he left in a huff shortly after 1844, having been considered unsuitable for ordination by the Bishop of Montreal. The only link with the past remained Cockran, and he was absent for most of 1846 and 1847, the years of crisis. He would never be reconciled to the recently arrived clergy, and was at odds with them for the remainder of his career at Red River.²

The clergy were unaware of the compromises necessary with Presbyterian practices, with the Company and with the life of the Halfbreed, if the Church were to flourish and to act as a unifying force in Red River. The first conflict resulted in a permanent breakdown between Company and clergy. George Simpson and Adam Thom, both of the conviction that the Church of England in Rupert's Land was attempting too rapid an expansion into the interior and was too outspoken in its criticism of the Company, wanted to end the presence of the Anglican Church in Red River. Instead of ignoring the plot which would in any case have failed, the Church chose to fight.

The plot was quite complex. The Rev. William Cockran, who was disgruntled with Red River, its social system and animosities, was scheduled to go in July of 1842 on a lengthy and perhaps permanent leave to Canada. Simpson suggested that Abraham Cowley and John Roberts, both of whom had just arrived and were as yet unordained catechists, ought to proceed to Montreal with Cockran to seek ordination by Bishop George Jehosaphat Mountain of Montreal. This would have left Smithurst, the only ordained Church of England clergyman in the settlement, in charge of four widely distant and demanding congregations. Simpson intended to ask James Evans, the mercurial superintendent of the Methodist missions resident at Norway House since 1840, to take over the Upper Church and the Company's chaplaincy, both vacated by Cockran. Simpson was certain that Evans would be securely in the Company's pocket. Dr Alder, the chief secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, and Simpson's friend, assured Simpson that he would never permit Evans to run counter to the Company's dictates.³

The success of Simpson's scheme depended upon his ability to persuade the Church of England's clergy, especially Smithurst, of the inability of Bishop Mountain to ordain clergy in Red River. Adam Thom, a staunch Presbyterian, argued Simpson's case. The issue centred on whether the Archbishop of Canterbury could invest the Bishop of Montreal, a colonial bishop, with the authority to ordain clergymen on his behalf in Red River. Thom argued that only the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London could ordain clergy for the colonies in the absence of a local bishop, and that they could not authorize the Bishop of Montreal to ordain clergymen on their behalf in Rupert's Land. Smithurst argued that the Archbishop could empower the Bishop of Montreal. The heated argument continued for two years. Nasty letters were exchanged, and in the end the two men were permanently estranged. Thom would attend Anglican services and the missionary meetings, but he refused to speak to Smithurst, and became an even more fervent supporter of the Presbyterian cause. In the end, of course, the unpleasant exchange of letters had been unnecessary. The final decision was made by the Church Missionary Society and the Company in favour of Smithurst's point of view, not because of his arguments, but because of those of the Company's London lawyers.

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Bishop George Jehosaphat Mountain of Montreal who travelled to Red River in 1844.

The Bishop came in 1844 as planned, and ordained Abraham Cowley and John Macallum with the blessings of the Company. Throughout the next decade, as long as the incident was remembered there was a distinct coolness between the Company and the Church of England, disguised only by the opposition of both to the free trade movement.⁴

The seventeen-day visit of the Bishop of Montreal, which saw the ordination of two clergymen and the confirmation of 846 Episcopalians, alienated not only Adam Thom but the Presbyterian community at Kildonan, who for lack of a minister of their own had been attending Anglican churches since 1820. The Presbyterians, led by Alexander Ross, the Sheriff and a Councillor of Assiniboia, felt that the Bishop's robes and his attempt to push the altar into prominence at the expense of the pulpit, smacked of popery. Discontent increased after the Bishop's suggestion that their churches be used for the ordination ceremonies.⁵ When the Anglican clergymen, including Cockran who had previously accommodated Presbyterian practices, began wearing the vestments and began pressing for the consecration of the churches, the lobby for a Presbyterian clergyman was resumed and another petition to the Church of Scotland was circulated throughout Kildonan.⁶

The increasing Episcopalian dogmatism of the new Anglican clerics like Smithurst and Cowley, and their constant criticism of the low church Cockran, alienated the Grand Rapids congregation. If these people sometimes disagreed with Cockran they nevertheless loved him. Smithurst questioned Cockran's extemporaneous sermons and his 'irregularities in the reading of the Liturgy, omitting and altering so as not to hurt the feelings of his congregations.'⁷ Both Smithurst and Cowley were badly received at Grand Rapids when they attempted to read their sermons and prayers, a practice foreign to Red River. The English-speaking Halfbreeds, some of them well-educated and capable of appreciating a well-expounded argument, remarked with reference to read sermons that *they could do that at home*, thus forcing the inarticulate, mumbling Cowley to request a transfer to a distant Indian station. Cockran emphasized to the Secretaries 'the necessity of making the missionary student learn the habit of speaking extemporaneous [sic],' for if they did not the Halfbreed would desert the Church of England for the first Presbyterian minister.⁸

The Grand Rapids and St. Paul's congregations, whose racial sensibilities must have been deeply hurt by the abandonment by some, of native for white wives in the 1830s, were extremely critical of the discrimination against the Halfbreed catechists by the white clergy of Red River.⁹ This new dimension to the race problem was created by the wish of the Church Missionary Society to end 'paternalism.' The ultimate goal of the Society for Red River became 'self-support, self-government, and self-extension'; that is, the development of a native Halfbreed and Indian Church of England clergy, independent of Church Missionary Society assistance. Unfortunately, during the initial stages when there would have to be both native and European catechists dependent upon the Church Missionary Society for support, the two were not equitably treated. Mr Roberts and Mr Cowley, white catechists, were given greater remuneration and responsibility than their Halfbreed counterparts: Henry Budd, Joseph Cook and Charles Pratt. Cook was upset at being treated as only 'half an Englishman,' and expressed his discontent to the Church Missionary Society Secretaries.

I can assure you sir we are rather beginning to get disgusted with our situations and the treatment and the distinction which has been made between us and the European Catechist and the too much Lordship being exercised over us.¹⁰

The ordination controversy, the Bishop's visit, and racial tension intensified the impact of the free trade question on the Church of England. St. Peter's, the Indian parish, became the focal point of Protestant discontent, in large part because of the ineptitude of Smithurst, the resident missionary. It is to be emphasized that many of the Indians in the settlement were descendants of early Hudson's Bay Company liaisons — the homeguard.¹¹ The first major crisis occurred when Major Caldwell (both the pro-Company commander of the Chelsea pensioners and the Governor of Assiniboia), an 'elderly, dull-witted giant', destitute of business sense and of the art of governing, was requested to investigate the mixed-blood and Indian charges levelled in 1849 against the government of the Hudson's Bay Company.¹²

On 26 February 1849, the Major, a good friend of the Anglican clergy and especially of Cockran, asked Smithurst to comment on

alleged injustices by the Company towards the St. Peter's Indians. Unfortunately the specifics of the charges cannot be determined now. Smithurst reported that the charges were totally unfounded. The Indians in turn accused him of being in the pay of the Company. When Smithurst assembled the Indians in an effort to explain the situation, they balked at his high-handed expulsion of an Indian who had questioned the investigation. All but a few left the meeting in protest. Smithurst not only reprimanded the Indians who had walked out of the meeting, but threatened to strike from the communion list all who did not repent. 'Resistance to "the powers that be" is a crime against which the punishment of damnation is threatened in Scripture.'¹³

Smithurst had drawn upon the ultimate weapon in his arsenal and the impact was clear and immediate. When a French and English-speaking mixed-blood mob (precisely who and how many are not known though the total was over 100) appealed to the Indians for support in a planned show of force at the Upper Fort during the trial of Guillaume Sayer, the Indians refused to become involved; nonetheless they smarted under Smithurst's liturgical blows and talk of moving to Pembina away from him and the Company. Smithurst never regained the respect of his charges.

Similar threats of violence at Grand Rapids (St. Andrew's), the Halfbreed parish, during the 1849 crisis were prevented by the eloquence and persuasiveness of Robert James and Rev. W. Cockran.¹⁴ All of the Anglican clergy, whatever their opinion of the fur trade monopoly, were in full support of law and order and they rushed to the assistance of the Company. Clearly the Halfbreeds of Grand Rapids would have joined in the uprising had Cockran provided the initiative. Cockran was on exceedingly poor terms with the Company and had good cause for opposition. Furthermore, he disliked his fellow clergymen as much as he disliked the Company, and would have enjoyed pitting his former congregations against Smithurst or Cowley. He disagreed, for example, with Smithurst's concept of the purpose of mission. Conversely, Smithurst condemned Cockran to the Secretariat for concerning himself 'too much with the temporal wants of his people, as if civilization was primary and evangelization a secondary object.'¹⁵ More than one clergyman would have been convinced that

'Mr Cockran the head of the Episcopalians was a very bad man [and] his wife *one devil*.'¹⁶

But Cockran did not assume leadership of the dissent against the Company. He considered the violent opposition advocated by the Métis and some of the English-speaking Halfbreeds as un-British and tantamount to rebellion against the Crown. Most importantly, Cockran, like the rest of the clergy, was convinced that the unrest was an evil 'Jesuitical plot' to increase the power of the Pope in Red River. Smithurst likewise was frightened of the influence of Father Belcourt. His fears were only confirmed when four or five of his St. Peter's Indians bitterly remarked that only Belcourt had their interests at heart. Support of the free traders then, was quickly associated with the Church of Rome, in the minds of the Protestant clergy.¹⁷

Given Cockran's firm allegiance to the British Crown, his equally firm belief in the virtue of law and order, and his virulent anti-Catholicism, his support of Adam Thom and his censure of the Métis and Belcourt during the 1849 crisis was not as unreasonable as it might first appear. Cockran's speeches at St. Andrew's, in support of Thom, the mixed-blood's arch villain, thoroughly alienated his congregations, who threatened to burn Cockran's house in protest. The clergy, they felt, had forsaken them in their hour of need. At the same time the anti-Catholic tone of Cockran's exhortations had its effect amongst the Halfbreeds. The clergy continually emphasized the positive nature of Protestantism and the evils of Catholicism. Since the anti-Company movement had been painted so convincingly in a Catholic hue, it became generally felt that any assistance to the Métis would place a Protestant's soul in mortal danger. Henceforth there would be even less co-operation between Protestant and Catholic Red River, despite the fact that the influence of the Episcopalian clergy became increasingly confined to religious matters.¹⁸ In summary, then, it would seem that anti-Catholicism was invoked by the Protestant clergy to suppress the tendency to racial and occupational cohesiveness. Protestant questioning was enough to freeze the English-speaking mixed-bloods and Protestant Indians to immobility.

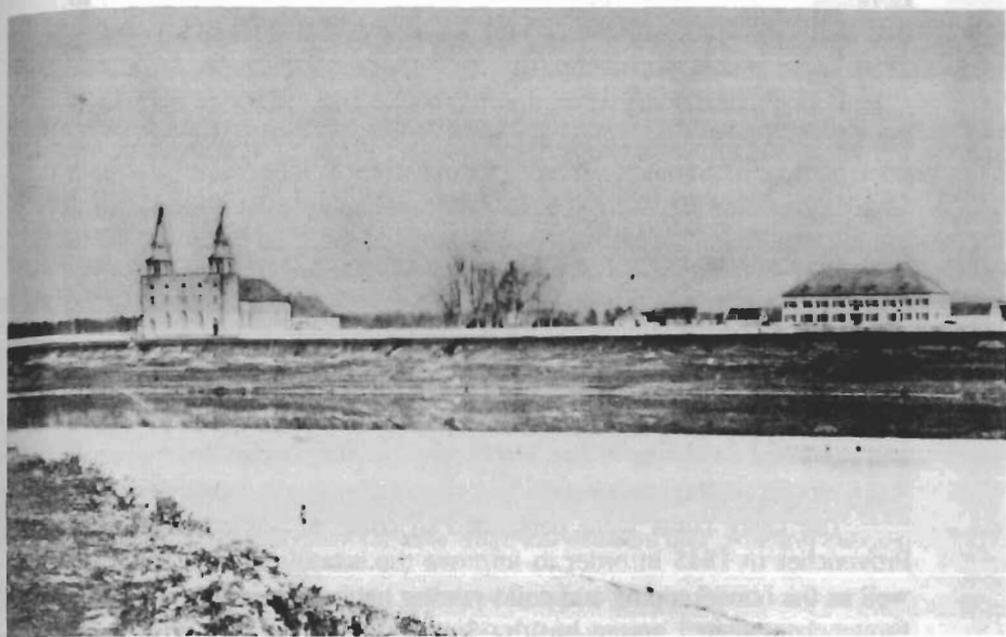
The tendencies of Catholic Red River were similar to those of Protestant Red River. Schism within both the Church and the laity became increasingly serious. Rev. Belcourt, on poor terms with the

Saint-Boniface clerics, grew progressively more radical and was the only clergyman to support the demands of the Métis in the free trade controversy. Provencher, on the other hand, grew closer to the Fort Garry clique, the Company's gentlemen and their followers, quietly supporting their stand, and obstructing Belcourt and the rebellious Métis whenever possible. All tensions were heightened by the drastic changes in the composition of the Catholic clergy. Their number increased from four to thirty between 1845 and 1855. This was largely attributable to the coming of 'Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée', a French order founded in 1816 for work among the poor in Provence, and 'Les Soeurs Grises [Les Soeurs de Charité]', a French-Canada order founded in 1755 for similar work in Quebec. The Oblates and Grey Nuns were perhaps willing, but certainly unable to establish intimate relations with their Métis charges. Both regarded the Métis as decidedly inferior, and the Oblates, all except one of French birth and training, viewed the French-Canadian secular priests with particular disdain. The lines were drawn: the Bishop and Oblates tended to support the Company; the secular clergy stood squarely with the Métis.

The first representatives of the Oblate order had arrived in Canada in 1841. They entered the West only in 1844, despite the fact that Provencher had attempted to persuade any order to supply the West with desperately needed clergy as early as the 1830s. The Hudson's Bay Company had not treated the Bishop's request with any enthusiasm; but, when faced with a *fait accompli* and a reasonably poor order which seemed incapable of limitless expansion, the Company raised no objections.

Provencher was emphatic that the Oblates be Canadien, not French, not only to avoid cultural and racial antagonisms but to avoid the large turnover which he felt would be inevitable with a clergy unaccustomed to Rupert's Land rigorous climate. But few Canadians experienced any interest. By the end of 1850 there were four Oblates: A.A. Taché, a Canadien; and three Frenchmen — Antoine-Augustin-Louis Maisonneuve, Joseph-François-Xavier Bermond, and Pierre Aubert. Maisonneuve served at Saint-François-Xavier from 1848 to 1850, at Saint-Norbert from 1852 to 1855 and at Saint-Boniface in 1868; Bermond was at Saint-François-Xavier from 1846 to 1851 and Saint-Boniface from 1850 to 1856; and Aubert served in Saint-

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The cathedral of Saint-Boniface and the nunnery, on the banks of the Red River, September-October 1858, Photograph by H.L. Hime

Boniface from 1845 to 1850. By 1850 the Company was surprised to find that the Oblates dominated the diocese of Saint-Boniface and in 1854 Taché was made Bishop.¹⁹

It is impossible to determine the social and economic origins of the Oblate Fathers with any degree of certainty. Most were born of poor parents in Southern France, though later Fathers were recruited from Ireland and Brittany. They were given no specific education for the mission field, but on coming to Canada they may have chosen to read the *Jesuit Relations*. Unlike the French-Canadian secular clergy, they had no experience with the frontier and refused to consider it an environment in which Christianity could flourish. They did not go on the hunt, even when in charge of Saint-François-Xavier, nor did they initially show an inclination to speak Cree and Michif, the principal and preferred language of the Métis. The propagation of their French and Catholic heritage among the Métis was their main charge.²⁰

The Grey Nuns were persuaded to come to Saint-Boniface by Provencher in 1845 in order to improve the schools of Red River, as well as the housekeeping and child-rearing habits of the Métis women. Provencher wanted young healthy Sisters, not novices or postulants, who would provide maximum benefit to Red River and a minimum burden to his establishment at the Forks.²¹ While it would appear that the Canadienne Sisters of varying backgrounds were generally capable, in the first years Provencher had to be on constant guard against the Mother House's tendency to send the least useful Sisters to Red River. Some were illiterate and incapable of teaching the Métis, while others were so old that they were nothing more than a burden to the establishment.²² The Sisters nevertheless persisted and their numbers grew from four in 1845 to nine in 1846. They operated day and boarding schools, and cared for the poor, sick and widowed in their modest convent next to the Cathedral.

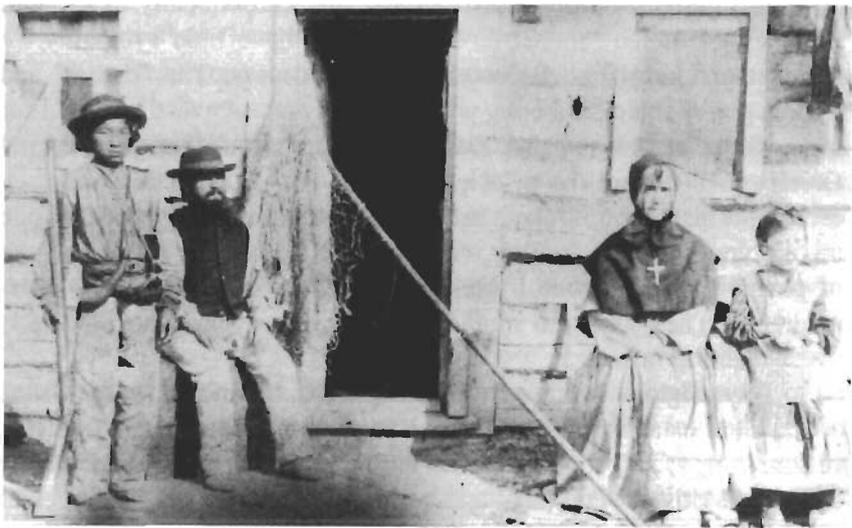
The Sisters were an important asset to Red River, providing the only real opportunity for the Métis women to become involved in the Church. The Sisters had to recruit circumspectly, however, since the Pope did not provide them with a dispensation to allow illegitimate children of Métis ancestry to join Orders. Provencher himself was also opposed to Métis postulants, and the four expensive years it took 'pour se mettre du plomb dans la tête.'²³ Nor were the Sisters themselves

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Grey nuns, presumably with Catholic Halfbreed children, their principal charges. Undated.

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particularly anxious to have the poverty-stricken and usually illiterate Métis enter the novitiate, despite the irony that this implied. There were instances where legitimized Métis were allowed to enter, but only those who were of the best Métis families, more European than Cree in their culture and who were sought after for their prestige and wealth as much as their piety. Six Métis actually entered the convent, but only one took final vows.²⁴

In spite of the daily contact the Sisters had with the Métis children, as well as the sick, poor and aged, they played no role in attempting to reconcile the Métis to the establishment at Saint-Boniface. The four Sisters from Montreal viewed their Indian dress, their ignorance of European etiquette, their curious habits of visiting the convent in gossiping groups of ten or twelve, with considerable condescension and disdain.²⁵ The poorer Métis were taught at the day schools and segregated from the children of the Catholic Halfbreeds who were the principal charges of the Sisters. The poor French-speaking Métis were seen merely as objects of charity and concern, to be pitied, but not to be treated as equals. Connected by sentiment to their protector, the Bishop of Saint-Boniface, and consequently to the Red River establishment, the Sisters appeared to have little sympathy for the secular clergy like Belcourt and their causes. The 'dames' and 'élèves pensionnaires', among whom were listed such distinguished fur trade names as Rowand, McTavish, Kittson, Farquharson, Fisher and Deschambault, were the principal objects of their affection and concern.²⁶ This group can be delineated as bilingual Catholic mixed-bloods. These families, connected to the fur trade élite because of position, and Catholic by religion, acted to some degree as intermediaries. They were too small in number, however, to have had any overwhelming influence.

The religious orders attached to the Bishop and in charge of the educational establishment at Saint-Boniface remained aloof from the secular clergy; indeed, Provencher had little use for the secular clergy and the Métis at Pembina and Saint-François-Xavier. The secular clergy at Red River, unlike the Oblates, accompanied the Métis on the buffalo hunt, provided them with spiritual and political leadership and preached in their language. They increasingly came to fill a leadership vacuum left by the aging Cuthbert Grant. This is particularly evident

in the events of 1846 and 1849 which increased the separation of the Roman Catholic establishment from the Métis, both at the Forks and at White Horse Plain. This is not to suggest that there was a decrease in religiosity — rather the opposite; otherwise the secular clergy would have been unable to exercise their considerable influence. It is simply the clearest example of the visible division and implicit tension within the clergy between secular and Oblates. This tension permeated Catholic Red River society and prevented close relations between the Oblates and the Bishop on the one hand and the Métis on the other.

In 1845, one year after the Company had imposed strict regulations on illicit trade, unrest among the Métis reached the point of open rebellion. James Sinclair, a free trader of recent Presbyterian expression who saw himself as the successor to Cuthbert Grant as Warden of the Plains, and Andrew McDermot, an Irish Catholic who had made a substantial fortune as a Company transportation agent and private merchant, openly threatened the Company. Both were involved in the near-riots of 1846. In the winter of 1845-46 Adam Thom seized a number of people and their furs, gave them a perfunctory hearing and then jailed them. In retaliation an armed mob of Métis threatened to march upon Fort Garry and seize control of the government.

The insurgents, aware of Belcourt's popularity, requested his assistance. He consented, without the approval of the Bishop, hoping to mitigate the tension and perhaps air his own problems with the Company. On 20 January 1846 he had requested from Alexander Christie, the uncompromising and suspicious successor to the easy-going Governor Duncan Finlayson, permission to trade provisions for furs in cases of necessity, and to accept furs in support of the Church. His request was refused.²⁷

On February 11 at McDermot's house near Upper Fort Garry, a mass meeting was held to plan the release, forcibly if necessary, of the prisoners in the Company's custody. Belcourt was invited to take charge of the meeting. In spite of his hatred for the Company and its charter, which he thought a chief cause of the Métis failure to abandon the nomadic for the sedentary life, he urged that '*comme chrétiens nous devrions souffrir nos supérieurs civils, même méchants,*' and that constitutional rather than violent protest ought to be the course of action. Since he was one of the few literate individuals present, and

because he commanded a great deal of respect, he was asked to draw up and deliver a petition to the Imperial Government.²⁸

Provencher, well aware that the Company would soon rule on his application for missionary expansion into the interior, not only forbade Belcourt to present the petition to the Imperial authorities, but requested the Bishop of Quebec to recall Belcourt before Simpson could make a similar suggestion. Simpson was convinced that Belcourt was on the verge of quitting the priesthood and of establishing himself as a free trader. He indicated that if Belcourt followed such a course, he would have him forcibly removed from Rupert's Land. As an outcome of this campaign against Belcourt, the Bishop's rejection of an appeal from the White Horse Plain laity on 15 November 1847, and his frequent communications with Simpson and Christie, Provencher was thoroughly discredited among the Métis. It was their general opinion that the Bishop had sold himself to the Company for an annual £100 stipend.²⁹

When Simpson realized that Belcourt, who had the ear of the Bishop of Quebec, was as dangerous outside Red River as he was in it, he reluctantly accepted Belcourt's explanations that he had prevented rather than initiated revolution, and invited him back to Red River.³⁰ The reason for the invitation may have been that Simpson was aware Belcourt was planning a mission south of the border at Pembina, and that at that distance he would be outside the Company's and Provencher's jurisdiction. Indeed had it not been for Provencher's loathing of Belcourt, the priest might even have returned to Red River as Bishop coadjutor. Belcourt further exasperated Provencher by ignoring everyone and moving to Pembina anyway, where he lobbied unsuccessfully for his own diocese.

Within two years of 1847, over three hundred Red River Métis were persuaded by Belcourt and their relatives already south to shift their centre of activities there. He appeared to offer a real alternative to the oppressive government of Red River. Belcourt had believed that the American Government would assist him in encouraging the Métis to a sedentary rather than a nomadic existence; but trade and the hunt, not agriculture, were the most important activities at Pembina. Belcourt showed considerable insight by submerging his original design and encouraging the Métis in these familiar occupations.

La Société Historique de Saint-Boniface



Abbé George Belcourt, who travelled, worked with and had the support of the Métis people.

The close family ties and trade connections between the Pembina and Red River Métis and the visit Belcourt made to Saint-François-Xavier in the spring of 1849 reinforced his sympathies for the plight of the Métis settlement on the Red. Provencher observed with a great deal of annoyance and discomfort that 'Mr B. est l'homme du peuple, on ne juge, on n'opéra que par lui.'³¹

It was hardly a surprise to Simpson and Christie, then, when the more influential of the Red River Métis called upon Belcourt for advice in the crisis precipitated by the arrest of Pierre-Guillaume Sayer of Saint-François-Xavier and three others for illicit trafficking in furs. In early May Belcourt addressed two letters, one to Pascal Breland, a prominent Saint-François-Xavier Métis, and another to Louis Riel 'Irlande', the focal leader of the discontent.³² The second was read near the Cathedral on 13 May 1849, four days before the trial, and three days before the Métis attempted open rebellion. Belcourt urged the Métis to resort to arms to secure their rights, especially if the Company decided to preserve their monopoly by armed force.

With the departure of the Sixth Regiment of Foot in 1848, and its replacement by the Chelsea Pensioners, the law was more fragile than it had been for some time. Governor Caldwell was in charge of the pensioners. But his disputes with his Second-in-Command, Captain V.C. Foss, and Chief Factor Ballenden, as well as his general ineptitude, made the maintenance of law and order difficult. The President of the Court on 17 May 1849 was Governor Caldwell, who because of his dispute with Foss could not bring the Pensioners to protect the court. Neither Alexander Ross nor Cuthbert Grant, both Sheriffs, would call out the special constables, since they did not want to arouse the ill will of the Métis. Sayer, the first to be tried, was represented by James Sinclair. While Sayer was found guilty, the crowd gathered outside the court house assumed that the recommendation for mercy was equivalent to acquittal.

Shortly after the trial (Sayer was given a suspended sentence) James Sinclair and nine other Métis, perhaps at the prompting of Belcourt, formally signed a petition demanding the removal of Adam Thom, the bigoted Company judge who sat at the trial.³³ Simpson, knowing that the Métis had more than once considered either hanging

the Recorder or setting him adrift in a leaky canoe, persuaded Thom to retire from active office.

Provencher, aware of his declining influence with the Métis, had no hand either in Thom's removal or in the 1849 unrest. Any move on his part to quiet the situation would have been construed by the Métis as a pro-Company move, just as any hint of support for the Métis would have compromised him with the Company.

The growing distance between Catholic and Protestant clergy and their charges was further accentuated by the exclusion of the Catholic clergy from the almost totally Protestant colonial élite. Clearly, the escalation of this division between the two halves of Red River would lead to a serious weakening of the colony's government; and an effort would have to be made to accommodate the Catholic element. Even when Simpson requested Provencher's advice regarding the nature of the Métis grievances, the Bishop could only suggest a measure of which Simpson was already fully aware — the recommendations from the May 31 meeting of the Council of Assiniboia, that five Métis of suitable intelligence and education be appointed to the Council. All the appointees, wealthy traders, had interests in freighting and they hoped through their Council positions to increase their share of Company and Red River business.³⁴ Rev. Louis Laflèche, Provencher's agent and future coadjutor, was a sixth choice, probably to ensure the continuing influence of the clergy.

The Oblates, like the Bishop, remained aloof from the crisis and had kept either to their missions in the interior or close to Saint-Boniface. There is, however, some indication that the Grey Nuns may have been actively involved in fomenting dissent. The Rev. John Smithurst alleged that it was a well-known fact that the Nuns were going from home to home urging Métis women to pressure their husbands to insurrection. The Bishop would not, however, have countenanced such activity. The tale is probably a figment of Smithurst's paranoia. He saw the Catholic Church behind all dissent in Catholic Red River and considered any Catholic complaint of the existing power structure as a direct threat to the Protestant community.

The 1840s, then, in summary, were a decade which saw the accentuation of divisions among the various racial, religious, and status groups of Red River. Both the Anglican and the Catholic Churches

were divided internally: the Catholics between the sedentary clergy, usually the Oblate Fathers, and the nomadic clergy, usually the secular priests. The Anglicans were divided between the old clergy and the new recruits from Islington College. These divisions tended to aggravate the tensions between the élite, who were the concern of the Oblates, the Sisters, the Bishop and the new Episcopalian clergy, and the poorer members of the society, who were the concern of the secular Catholic clergy and the old Anglican clergy like Cockran. But there was one essential difference between the secular Catholics and the Old Anglicans. While the Roman Catholic laity found religious and political leadership among the secular priests, of whom Father Belcourt is the best example, the Anglicans of Red River lacked such a forceful combination of political and religious guidance. Cockran, the only clergyman in a position to provide it, simply refused to assume the position. In effect, it can be argued that the Halfbreeds were directionless, unacceptable to the Protestant élite, and openly regarded as inferior by the clergy. At once they were both persuaded by their religious leaders to be compliant to the powers that be, and threatened with damnation for consorting with Catholics. Prevented by race from participating fully in the social life of their Church, the Halfbreeds found themselves increasingly isolated and confused. They were increasingly part of neither the European nor the sedentary life in Red River. This is not to argue a passivity on the part of the Halfbreeds, rather that they did not see themselves as part of the European or Métis forces. Individual or collective actions on their part must be sought elsewhere. Indeed, as will be seen, they did act in the 1850s and again in 1863 to assert themselves.

The Métis, on the other hand, were encouraged to assert their rights by their religious leader, Father Belcourt who, in spite of his belief in the sedentary life, spent much of his time as a nomadic clergyman. This served to reinforce them in their conviction that they were a nation with special rights in the West. Indeed, they had no serious internal social or racial divisions to compromise such a belief. Intentionally or not, the pervasive influence of the churches had accentuated the wedge between the Métis and Halfbreed communities, communities already separated by their differing fur trade traditions — the former, North West Company and the latter, Hudson's Bay Com-

pany. It is equally important to remember that the crisis of race and religion exacerbated and was exacerbated by the crisis of the land.³⁵

Archives of the Cathedral
Church of St John



*The Right Reverend David Anderson, First Bishop
of Rupert's Land from 1849 to 1864.*

6

A Strife of Blood

The entire complexion of the Church of England and of Red River society changed in the fifteen years following 29 May 1849, the day the Right Reverend David Anderson, D.D. was consecrated for the newly founded Bishopric of Rupert's Land. This change, however, only served to intensify the social and demographic tension that had arisen within Red River. Twenty new clergymen — four Cree Indians, four Halfbreeds and twelve Englishmen — were priested. Two new missionary societies, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and the Colonial and Continental Church Society, were introduced into Rupert's Land under Anderson, and a cathedral, St. John's Upper Church, was consecrated.

The numerical and financial increases that accompanied these changes belied deep social problems. Bishop Anderson failed to control his motley clergy with their many divergent viewpoints in the social and political ferment that was Red River. He could do nothing to prevent their polarization into two factors, one opposing and the other supporting the Rev. William Cockran, the oldest and most influential of the missionaries. This lack of direction reinforced the growing isolation of the clergy and accentuated the divisions within Red River Protestantism between clergy and laity, and between the Scottish Presbyterians and the Halfbreed Anglicans.¹

Indeed, if the more cynical members of the settlement are to be believed, Anderson was under the influence of his spinster sister, a vicious, supercilious, and 'straight-laced' gossip. It was observed that 'this she-dragon is ruining the poor man in every possible way and all the more recklessly because she has only a temporary interest in the Country.'² Her excessive criticism of Red River's morals and her uncompromising hatred of the English Halfbreeds won her few friends. Her administration of the Red River Academy resulted in the hostility

of most of the prosperous Halfbreeds who had children there. So great was the dislike for Miss Anderson that she was even blamed for the lice epidemic that broke out in the school in 1852. Miss Anderson also looked after the kindly Bishop's social itinerary, keeping him away from the immoral, the socially unacceptable, and the opponents of the Church of England. These categories included all of the Halfbreeds and many of the Whites — virtually everyone in the settlement except the best of the 'blues' — the settlement's name for the Governor, his intimate clique, and the retired gentlemen.

If Miss Anderson controlled the Bishop's social life, Cockran was his chief advisor with regard to ecclesiastical matters. No longer the man he had been in the 1830s when he was at the height of his powers, Cockran was at best venerable and at worst senile. His inflexibility had cost him the respect and devotion of both his congregation at St. Andrew's and the Company's retired officers. The Church Missionary Society would have been overjoyed had Cockran quit Red River in 1853 or 1855. Indeed he would have done so, had not his two daughters married missionaries in Rupert's Land. Cockran also forced the reluctant Bishop to approve missions at Beaver Creek and Portage la Prairie in spite of Company opposition. In 1851 it was Cockran who secured the dismissal of Rev. John Smithurst because of his alleged but never substantiated sexual involvement with young boys at St. Peter's. It was also Cockran who caused the alienation from the Anglican camp of John Ballenden, the Company's Chief Factor of the Red River District. Because Ballenden had refused to transfer personally to Cockran a piece of land donated to the Anglican Church, and because the Chief Factor had Presbyterian sympathies, Cockran branded him as hostile to the true Church and attempted to make his social life unbearable.³

This is not to say that Cockran was without a personal following amongst the clergy. His daughters had married Rev. Henry George and Rev. Robert Hillyer of the Church Missionary Society, neither one an outstanding figure in the western missionary annals. These, along with Rev. Thomas Cockrane, William Cockran's son, an embarrassing alcoholic who at least once attempted to conduct a church service while in a drunken stupor, formed the nucleus of a pro-Cockran group.⁴ They supported him in his quarrels with his superiors and with the other

Cathedral of St. John's Archives



The Rev. Henry Cockran, his wife and son.

clergy. Cockran, for example, was not at all in agreement with the newer policies of the Church Missionary Society. He opposed the introduction of native clergymen and saw no reason why they should be treated on an equal basis with the European clergy. His congregation also became increasingly difficult and indifferent, and it was this, in part, that prompted him to move to Portage la Prairie.

Cockran was hostile towards the clergy who came in during the late 1840s, especially those who worked in the Halfbreed parishes and had managed to cultivate some popularity. He made enemies of all except his sons-in-law. He disliked Rev. James Hunter, for instance, largely because he was an outstanding preacher, but ostensibly because he refused to sign a clerical petition to Eden Colville, the Governor, urging him to deny the Presbyterians their rights in the churchyard at St. John's.⁵ Rev. William West Kirkby, the famous northern missionary, was denounced while in Red River for his weak anti-Popery, his influence with Bishop Anderson, and his light jokes about some of the clergy. At a New Year's service he had even 'leapt up and kissed a tall girl on the threshold of the Church.'⁶ By 1854 Cockran had alienated most of the clergy except for his own petty following.

The presence of an Anglican Halfbreed clergy could well have broken the barriers that separated the European clergy from the lower class mixed-bloods. Because of the increased racial consciousness of the 1830s, however, they were not considered as equal to the European clergy and were never placed in charge of either the European or Halfbreed parishes in Red River. At best they were allowed to assist in the church services and to serve as schoolmasters at the Red River parochial schools. As well, they considered themselves superior to their fellow natives and attempted to form a social clique of their own in emulation of the European clergy. All of the catechists and clergymen such as Henry Budd, Charles Pratt, Luke Caldwell, James Settee, Peter Erasmus and Henry Cockran, for example, were closely related by marriage and formed a close cohesive group. Their exclusiveness accentuated that of the clerical establishment in general. These divisions within the clergy, but much more important between the European and mixed-blood elite, were exposed in the spring of 1850 with the most explosive scandal of Red River's history, a product of the deepening social divisions of the past decades.

The Cathedral Church of St. John Archives



The Rev. James Settee

The scandal began innocently enough.⁷ Apparently in the early spring of 1850, Mrs Ballenden and Captain Foss insulted Mrs Pelly and Mrs Black at the Company's mess in the Upper Fort. Mrs Ballenden, née Sarah McLeod, daughter of Chief Trader Alexander Roderick McLeod, had married a promising clerk (by 1850 Chief Factor) John Ballenden in 1836; Captain Vaughan Foss, a rather dashing individual, was second in command of the Chelsea Pensioners, a small number of retired military sent out in 1848 to replace the 6th Royal Regiment of Foot (the Warwickshire). Mrs Pelly, née Anne Rose Clouston, the daughter of Edward Clouston, an Orkney man, and sister of Chief Trader Robert Clouston, was wife of Chief Trader Augustus Edward Pelly, the Fort Garry accountant; and Mrs Black, a Halfbreed daughter of Chief Factor Alexander Christie, Governor of Assiniboia, 1833-39, 1844-48, was the wife of Chief Trader John Black, Adam Thom's legal assistant from 1850 to 1852 and chief accountant for the Company's Upper Red River District. The allegations of sexual improprieties against Foss and Mrs Ballenden, a Halfbreed woman of not inconsiderable beauty, were sufficient to cause the plainer Mrs Pelly, who considered herself one of the principal pillars of Red River society, serious illness. It is critical to note that the recently arrived and white Mrs Pelly was not amused to find that Mrs Ballenden was, by virtue of her husband, given precedence in the social circles at Red River. The fact that the rumours had spread throughout the settlement would have caused even greater consternation, and it was alleged that Mr Pelly himself was probably even more embittered by Mrs Ballenden's apparent resistance to his own improper advances.

Little could be attempted when the popular Ballenden was still in the settlement, but an opportunity for revenge occurred in June when Ballenden left to meet Governor Simpson at Fort Alexander. Black, Pelly, Major Caldwell (the Governor of Assiniboia) and the clergy, all of whom were good friends of the Blacks and Pellys, withdrew their families from all social communication with Mrs Ballenden who was purported to be carrying Foss's child, although it was, in faith, her husband's. Mrs Ballenden was deeply hurt by the taboo and sought sanctuary at the home of Adam Thom, who was not only a close friend of her husband, but on lukewarm terms with Black and Pelly. Thom was convinced of Mrs Ballenden's innocence and of an insidious

conspiracy to defame her character by the Pellys and Blacks. He apparently advised Foss to post, on the front gates of the Upper Fort, a notice cautioning Red River to refrain from further gossip about Mrs Ballenden until a public trial could be held. It was an unfortunate and rather peculiar step which could only have served to intensify hostilities and increase gossip. Black, who was in charge of the post in Ballenden's absence, demanded the removal of the notice, but relented when Foss threatened violence. Moreover, Ballenden was able to turn this apparent disaster into the device for her revenge. What better way to ridicule her tormentors than the chance offered by the procedure of a slander trial.

When Ballenden returned from the interior and learned of the events, he attempted to settle the matter where it ought to have been settled, and where in Red River most matters of this sort were usually settled — in private. But Black, out for revenge, pressed the case at the prompting of Pelly and showed Ballenden the sworn depositions of John Davidson, the Fort mess steward, and his English wife, implicating Mrs Ballenden and Captain Foss. Mrs Davidson had viciously spread all the gossip concerning the Foss-Ballenden relationship told to her by Mrs Ballenden's German servant girl, Catherine Winegarth. With much anguish, Ballenden approved a public trial under the urgings of the heated and partisan Adam Thom. He had finally come to believe that only a trial would vindicate his wife.

Captain Foss brought charges of defamatory conspiracy against John Davidson, A.E. Pelly and their wives. Something of impact of the trial on the settlement can be gained from Alexander Ross's sardonic description. Writs, he claimed, were carried

to every hole and corner of the colony, in high & low life: Knights, Squires, Judges, Sheriffs, Counsellors, Medicalmen, all the Nabobs of the Co., the Clergy, Ladies & Gentlemen, down to the humblest pauper were summoned, a glorious turn out. I happened to meet one of the officials, and he alone had no less than 52 summonses!... A special court was summoned & 50 jurors were in attendance. A Jury was impanelled, & the Court, & same Jury sat... three solemn days. The bible in the hands of the clerk of the court might well be hot!⁸

The trial was spectacular and resulted in the complete legal vindication of Mrs Ballenden and the acute embarrassment of the Pellys, the Blacks, and the clergy. Major Caldwell sat as the President of the Court, the only official member of that body in sympathy with the anti-Ballenden faction. Adam Thom, the Recorder as well as prosecutor, and principal advocate for Ballenden, conducted the affair in an exceedingly arbitrary manner. He accused two of Mrs Ballenden's most socially prominent enemies, Mrs William Cockran and Miss Anderson, the Bishop's sister, of perjury. He also chose to ignore substantial evidence that pointed to the defendants' innocence. Not only was the twelve-man jury packed with the pro-Ballenden faction, but the main defence witness, Catherine Winegarth, had been spirited out of the settlement before the trial. The final judgement came as a surprise: damages in the amount of £300 were imposed on Pelly and his wife, and John Davidson and his wife were required to pay £100.

For the most part the Ballenden affair was one of race and gender, but it also had overtones of Company and colonial social and economic politics that served to exacerbate and occasionally veil issues of race. In part the affair can be accounted for as simple colonial politics. A reasonably popular Chief Factor, John Ballenden, was cornered by his two main assistants, Chief Trader A.E. Pelly and Chief Trader John Black, and the unpopular civil governor, Major Caldwell. This sort of imbroglio is not without precedent within colonial societies, and offers insight into the Red River environment.

What is important is not the trial itself, but its impact on Red River society and the tendencies it reveals within that society. The principal result was the irrevocable splitting of Red River into two distinct and opposing factions, a development that had been in the making since 1830 and which was primarily based on social status, race, and Company affiliation. In effect the charges of adultery did not make the Foss-Pelly case so important. Racial bigotry inflamed the issue. Robert Clouston, Mrs Pelly's brother, maintained that 'it seemed to be a strife of *blood* — for even the Jurymen were all *Halfbreeds* or married to *Halfbreeds*.'⁹ Those who favoured Mrs Ballenden included 'the plainer folk and the romantics' and the mixed-bloods, while those who opposed her included the clergy, the Blacks, the Pellys, and Major

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Annie Ballenden who was said to look much like her mother, Sarah.

Caldwell.¹⁰ The Ballenden supporters were in the numerical majority and even included most of the mixed-blood élite, while her detractors had substantial influence in government and church circles, the centres of social power. It is also obvious, as John Foster has noted, that the former can be described as 'hinterland residents' and the latter as 'agents of the metropolis.' The ruling class had been grossly embarrassed and thus weakened. The struggle for the control of government and society began in deadly earnest.

As the Halfbreed wife of the Chief Factor, Mrs Ballenden saw herself as she indeed was, one of the 'first ladies' of Red River. She was not considered as such by most of the white ladies (like Mrs Pelly), all of the clergy, and a few of the élite mixed-bloods, like Mrs Black who had been accepted into the clerical social circle. Of course Mrs Ballenden was acutely aware of their opinions, but she in turn felt the clergy beneath her. While she 'might not have so much starch in her face,' she felt that 'she had as much virtue in her heart as any exotic [European].'¹¹ The mixed-bloods reciprocated the racial exclusiveness of the Whites. Mrs Pelly, for example, might try to ingratiate herself with the Halfbreeds, but she would always fail since she bore the 'ill-will of the class'. In other words she was 'not a native.'¹² The racial divisions should not be pictured as rigid and absolute; there were degrees of hostility, but it was becoming apparent that society was consciously divided between Whites and coloured, and that the two halves were openly hostile.

The insults hurled at the clergy's wives during the trial, especially at Miss Anderson and Mrs Cockran, caused the two women to become exceedingly virulent in their criticism of the Ballendens and their followers. The Halfbreeds were delighted when Mrs Cockran, already known for her disdain for the mixed-bloods, was accused of perjury, and when Miss Anderson was forced to 'disgorge in Court, the whole of the venom she might have swallowed in her parlour.'¹³ Miss Anderson's acute discomfort at being exposed as 'the confidential depository of so much single women are expected not to know' delighted the pro-Ballenden faction.¹⁴ Cockran was incensed by the insults hurled at his wife and became 'the chief horn blower' of the anti-Ballenden faction. It was not surprising that by 1851 neither party

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Margaret Anderson, sister of Bishop David Anderson.

spoke to the other. Even a month after the trial, Eden Colvile, the Associate Governor, found his attempted role as mediator impossible.

Altogether the state of things is most unpleasant, though somewhat ludicrous, withal. For instance, today the Bishop & his sister were calling on us & in the middle of the visit I heard a knock at the door & suspecting who it was rushed out & found Mr and Mrs Ballenden. I had to cram them into another room till the Bishop's visit was over, but as he was then going to see the Pellys he had to pass through this room, so that I had to bolt out & put them into a third room. It was altogether like a scene in a farce.¹⁵

The events of December 1850 and January 1851 typify the divisions that the scandal created within the settlement. Just prior to Christmas, 1850, the Bishop held a public examination of the students in his school, followed by a dinner party. Probably at the prompting of the Cockrans and Miss Anderson, only the anti-Ballenden faction plus the Governor and Mrs Colvile were invited. Ten days later Adam Thom examined his two pupils and held a similar party, inviting only the Ballenden sympathizers. Colvile was not inclined to show favouritism although he preferred the anti-Ballenden faction, but when he attended the Thom function he was severely censured by Black for 'patronizing the opposition examination'. Three days later an annual clerical meeting and dinner was held, attended by the clergy, Caldwell, Black and Pelly, followed by a lay missionary society meeting which included some of the opposition party. Cockran took the opportunity to throw barbs at the pro-Ballenden faction, while Thom insulted the Bishop in response. He stirred up such 'angry feelings' that the breach with the Bishop became irreconcilable.¹⁶

The social division accentuated by the scandal affected every aspect of life in Red River and either aggravated or created other conflicts. Tensions within the clergy increased, reaching schismatic proportions. Most important, however, there was dissatisfaction with the government of Major Caldwell, the Governor of Assiniboia, since 1846. As he had been closely connected with the Church Missionary Society in England and continued to maintain these sympathies in Red

River, criticism of his administration was seen as an attack on the Church and as a pro-Ballenden conspiracy.

The politics of the Presbyterian question were equally involved in the issue. The anti-Ballenden party was entirely Episcopalian and fervently anti-Presbyterian. The Ballenden group, while not solidly Presbyterian, were not as firm as their clergy and Bishop in the belief in Presbyterian wickedness, and were in favour of a conciliatory policy that would have allowed for close relations between the two communities. Indeed, there were even some anti-Cockran clergy who favoured a conciliatory policy but suppressed their views for fear of being stamped pro-Ballenden. Emotions were so intense that it became impossible for the partisans to separate the issues. If one were for Mrs Ballenden, it followed that he would oppose Caldwell as Governor while supporting the Presbyterians in their claims.

The scandal also exposed serious tensions among the Anglican clergy. Many of the clergy had grown to dislike Cockran for a multitude of reasons. They resented his influence and his presumption that only he understood or could respond to the needs of Red River. Although it is difficult to assess personality traits of the clergy's wives, Mrs Robert James tended to be somewhat transparent. Her husband was at St. Andrews from 1846 to 1854, and later became the curate of Ubbeston, Suffolk. John Black thought that

his wife is certainly a drawback, but then she had not been accustomed to be treated with much deference, and as she is a vain woman a little defence show *occasionally* turns her anyway. She is indignant at her Father being said to be a tavern keeper. After a strong speech about the quality of family, she would end up by letting [on] what he was, forget now what, but it was only a shade more respectable than a publican. She turns up her nose and talks of the low and depraved state of morality of the country generally and among the officers of the Fur Trade in particular.¹⁷

Given these pretensions, Mrs James must have resented the leadership offered by Mrs Cockran who was, after all, only an ex-scrub woman, if rumor was to be believed.

This lack of regard for the Andersons and the Cockrans was general throughout the colony and became apparent in the events following the Foss-Pelly case. Two months after the trial, the widow of Rev. John Macallum and the wives of Rev. Robert James, Rev. Abraham Cowley, and Rev. Robert Hunt, re-established polite though cool relations with Mrs Ballenden despite protests from Mrs Cockran and Miss Anderson. When Mrs Ballenden allegedly resumed her incredible affair with Foss, however, this small truce was broken and social hostilities again broke out. The Cockrans felt vindicated.¹⁸

Cockran's dispute with the Rev. John Smithurst at St. Peter's Indian Village was also escalated by the acrimony of the Foss-Pelly affair. Smithurst had had the audacity to visit Adam Thom, the most vicious of the pro-Ballendens, to enquire about the progress of a pupil.¹⁹ This was interpreted by Cockran as a major and serious break within the clerical ranks. Furthermore Smithurst's anti-Ballenden sentiment was not sufficiently strong to suit Cockran. He did everything in his power, especially after nasty rumours surfaced about Smithurst, to secure Smithurst's departure for England. It was clear that when the Ballenden threat eased, such a factionalization of the clergy could force the struggle for influence over the mixed-blood into the open.

On the surface the clergy presented a solid, anti-Ballenden front. Overtly, dissatisfaction with the Governor became the real issue. Discontent with Caldwell had been apparent from the date of appointment. He had failed to carry on the affairs of Red River in an orderly, business-like fashion and he had patronized the clerical party, a distinct tactical error. The climax came in July, 1850, following the Foss-Pelly trial. Not only did the magistrates and non-clerical councillors refuse to serve under Caldwell, but a petition demanding his resignation, which secured over 500 signatures (all contested by the anti-Ballenden faction), was circulated by Alexander Ross, Dr John Bunn, and Andrew McDermot.²⁰ The clergy interpreted the petition as a conspiracy on the part of the pro-Ballenden faction to remove them from positions of influence. Caldwell, for his part, was intent on maintaining his position and he refused to resign.

Eden Colville, the son of a Deputy Governor of the Company, was sent to smooth over affairs in Red River as Associate Governor of Rupert's Land. He persuaded Caldwell to cultivate support for his

'reinstatement' amongst the Métis. In this he had some success. The Métis had little desire to see a Company agent like Colvile replace an independent commander of the Chelsea Pensioners who had so readily succumbed to their demands in the free trade crisis of 1849. Feelings were particularly strong because of suspicions that Colvile had assumed Presbyterian, pro-Ballenden sentiments since he had, albeit with some reluctance, allowed his wife to associate with Mrs Ballenden. As a result of the agitation, in 1852 Caldwell was restored to the full exercise of his office by the London Committee. The Métis had no wish to see the Governorship of Assiniboia under obvious and hated Company control.

Until Caldwell's ultimate retirement in 1855 the clergy managed to dominate the Council of Assiniboia, much to the annoyance of the rest of Red River. Council meetings were characterized as services in an Irish-Anglican Cathedral, all clergy and no laity.²¹ This was doubtless an exaggeration, but with the anti-Ballenden forces consisting of two Bishops, two clergymen, Dr John Bunn, and Caldwell himself, they held a majority of two. Bunn, a Halfbreed son of Thomas Bunn, one of the first of the Company's servants to retire to Red River, had changed sides in January 1851. He apologized to both Black and Pelly for his past support of Mrs Ballenden and requested permission to join their forces. He was an influential addition. At various times he had been Sheriff of Assiniboia, Magistrate and Governor of the Gaol. He was the only Halfbreed, however, to cross lines.²²

Even before they had gained control of the Council, the clerical faction managed as much by fortune as design to secure the preponderant influence at the Upper Fort. Almost immediately after the trials Ballenden went on furlough, and John Black, Ballenden's immediate subordinate, was placed in charge of the affairs of the Upper Fort. Colvile, in order to cool the heated debates raging in the settlements, thought it best that at the end of his furlough Ballenden be removed to Vancouver. En route, in June of 1851, Ballenden passed through Red River and while the Ballenden faction offered to petition Colvile and the London Committee for his return, the opposition was too strong. Cockran vowed to drive him from the settlement if he did not leave of his own accord. Social stability finally returned to Red River when Ballenden left the settlement in August of 1851, Foss having left earlier

that spring. Unfortunately at this point Mrs Ballenden was too ill to accompany her husband and she was left in the settlement to face the hostile clergy alone.²³

Similarly, the Presbyterian question²⁴ that had vexed Red River for over thirty years reached both a climax and a solution in the early 1850s. Rev. John Black of Montreal had been appointed as the first Presbyterian minister since the coming of the Selkirk settlers. The ensuing bitterness with the Episcopalian Church over the property settlement created serious divisions within the settlement. The Presbyterians became more isolated than before, and the hatred created by the Ballenden scandal intensified. Adam Thom and the pro-Ballenden faction were again pitted against the anti-faction: the clergy, Black, Caldwell, and Pelly. Cockran felt that both Ballenden and Colvile were secretly in league with the Presbyterians and he probably persuaded Bishop Anderson of the same. The Selkirk settlers, Presbyterian to a man, were led by Sheriff Alexander Ross, a vehement pro-Ballenden, whose daughter was to marry Rev. John Black.

In the fall of 1850 Eden Colvile sought to appease the Presbyterian claims on the Middle and Upper Churches by offering land at Frog Plain and £150 for the building of a new church. Initially, the Presbyterians refused the offer, principally because Colvile would not pay over the £150 until the completion of the church. He wanted to be certain 'that both the money and the land be *bona fide* applied to the purposes of the proposed mission, and not diverted to the profit of individuals.' But in the end they relented and accepted Colvile's conditions. At the same time the Bishop purchased twenty-eight pews from the seceding members of the Upper Church for £56. Although it is difficult to determine how many Presbyterians left the Anglican Church once Black started his services at Frog Plain, it is known that only eighty to ninety communicants were left at the Upper Church and seventy at the Middle Church, where before there had been approximately two hundred. The Bishop retained only the Orkneymen, and some of the Episcopalian 'blues' like John Bunn. The parting would have been as amicable as any religious parting could have been under the circumstances, had not the Bishop attempted to consecrate the Upper Church and its churchyard.

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*St. John's, reinforced by supports after the great flood of 1852.
From a photograph by H.L. Hime, 1858.*

In the fall of 1850 the Bishop had intimated that he would allow the Presbyterians the right to bury their dead in the churchyard of St. John's where some 447 of their relatives lay. Two years later, however, on the eve of the consecration of the church, the Bishop denied making any such commitment and determined to include the churchyard in the ceremony. This meant that the Presbyterians could only bury their dead by Episcopalian rite — an abomination to the members of the Kirk. Because Colvile intervened in an attempt to ensure the Presbyterians their rights, rights which in fact had been promised to them by the Bishop, the situation verged on major conflict. Colvile attempted to persuade the Bishop to consecrate St. Andrew's instead, or to construct a new cathedral church unencumbered by Presbyterian claims. After Anderson refused, Colvile referred the matter to the London Committee who placed the burial yard under the control of the Company. This was a great blow to the 'Little Bishop' and considerably lowered his prestige in Red River.²⁵

So bitter were the feelings that the Bishop refused to accept any assistance from the Presbyterians after the great flood of 1852, which submerged most of the settlement. Presbyterian students were prevented from attending the Bishop's school, and the Presbyterian congregation was refused the use of St. John's while their church was under construction.²⁶ The situation itself repeated in January, 1853, at Middle Church when the Bishop purchased the proprietary rights of the congregation, ignored their protests, and consecrated the church as St. Paul's. Black, Caldwell, and the clergy supported the Bishop and Cockran, who had joined battle. A few, such as Rev. James Hunter, thought the Bishop's position unreasonable. Wisely believing that he ought to play a conciliatory part, Rev. John Black refused to become involved in any of the disputes. He recognized the explosive nature of the situation and did much in the next decades to mitigate the hostilities between the Presbyterian and Anglican communities. Indeed, all of the disputes of the 1850s were waged by the Presbyterians without his sanction.

The unity of the élite rapidly disintegrated under the pressure of the Foss-Pelly scandal and its aftermath. The scandal, the political crisis and the Presbyterian question were all interrelated and split the upper levels of the community along deep racial, status, and religious

lines. Even after the Ballendens had left the settlement, he in 1851 and she in 1852, the Presbyterian question and political-social struggles created such ill-feelings that the original causes of the schism were forgotten. There was no return to the placid society of the pre-Ballenden years. No one faction would emerge to dominate the new scene. Even when the clerical party was in control of the Council of Assiniboia, it lasted only until Chief Trader John Black and Governor Caldwell retired in 1855.

There is little indication that the lower orders took sides in the hostilities. An important question, however, is whether their sympathies lay with their race and the pro-Ballenden faction or with authority. Attitudes depended largely on each individual's opinion of the Bishop or of Cockran. The latter was highly respected in the mixed-blood parishes, irrespective of his racial sentiments, and so was the Bishop, if only because of his office. Ties to Cockran might have been strengthened because of their hatred for Adam Thom, who was on the opposing side.

There is an indication, however, that this was not the case. During the trial the admiration of the mixed-bloods for Adam Thom allegedly went up '500 per cent'.²⁷ Had he wished to leave the settlement at that point, they probably would have prevented him, such was his popularity. Race, kin and community, apparently, rather than religion, were still more important forces uniting the various sympathies in Red River. Had religion been paramount, support should have centred on the Episcopalian clergy. But in the final analysis, all that can be concretely determined is that there was no open display of discontent with either faction by the mixed-bloods. Indeed, many had little opportunity to become involved, since the trial was held during the summer hunt.

The Kildonan reaction is equally difficult to assess. Probably they would have sided with Alexander Ross, a pro-Ballenden who was married to an Indian. But Ross was not representative of the Presbyterian community. The vast majority of the Selkirk settlers were reluctant to intermarry with the Halfbreeds. They probably thought Mrs Ballenden typical of her race and worthy of condemnation; yet faults might have been overlooked, since her husband sided with them in their confrontation with the Episcopalians. It was the consecration question,

if anything, that assured the presence of the Presbyterians in what can be loosely called the pro-Ballenden group. But their interest never went beyond gossip.

Aspects of the Ballenden case both exposed and increased the distance between the Protestant and Catholic halves of Red River. Whereas in 1836 and 1849 there had been a tendency for the Halfbreeds and Métis to support each other on the basis of race, in the 1850s the interests of the two communities appeared increasingly divergent. One might expect the more respectable Métis like Peter Pambrun or Pascal Breland to have become involved in the racial issues, but the problems of the Ballendens, Andersons, and Cockrans were not those of the Bruneaus, Riels, Ducharmes, or the Catholic clergy.

The drifting separation of the two groups did not go unnoticed. Smithurst remarked, for example, that not only were the Catholic Bishop and his priests no longer invited to the Protestant dinner parties at the Upper Fort, but that there appeared to be a dangerous parting of the two communities.²⁸ One part of Red River was becoming sedentary, Protestant and English; the other nomadic, Catholic and French. Differences in community, originating in the unique North West and Hudson's Bay Company traditions, were accentuated and the bonds of Indian heritage diminished.

The Métis, then, saw the Ballenden episode in a different light from the Halfbreeds. They were hardly as charitable when it came to Adam Thom and were, because of his presence, the only group of the lower orders actively involved in the scandal. While they mellowed slightly (enough to permit Cuthbert Grant, a magistrate, to participate in the trial) they continued to press for Thom's removal. Simpson, fearing that if Thom participated violence would be the result, advised against it.²⁹ The advice was ignored. To the Métis, Thom was still the anti-Catholic and anti-French bigot, wholly in support of Company and monopoly. Under the imminent threat of further Métis violence, Thom was demoted to clerk of the court in 1851, dismissed in 1853, and finally persuaded to leave the country in 1854. Ultimately his pro-Ballenden stance with its racial implications had little lasting significance. Aside from their triumph over Thom, the Métis' main involvement in the scandal lay in the Caldwell affair. They saw Caldwell as inde-

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Adam Thom, Recorder of Rupert's Land

pendent of the Company and in opposition to Adam Thom. While it may appear at first that the Métis opposed Caldwell from their signatures on the pro-Ballenden petition requesting Caldwell's resignation, many of the names may have been forged. The 150 signatories from Saint-François-Xavier were known to be on the hunt, while those who knowingly signed did so with the understanding that Colvile would resign his commission as Associate-Governor before he assumed the Presidency of the Council of Assiniboia.³⁰ After his demotion Caldwell attempted to curry favour with the Métis, especially amongst Louis Riel Sr. and his rather limited following, in order to secure reinstatement. Ironically, Caldwell's activities also contributed to the ascendancy of the anti-Ballenden Protestant faction. The Métis still saw the problem as an extension of the free trade crisis of 1849. The Company and Adam Thom were the foe, and Caldwell the hero.

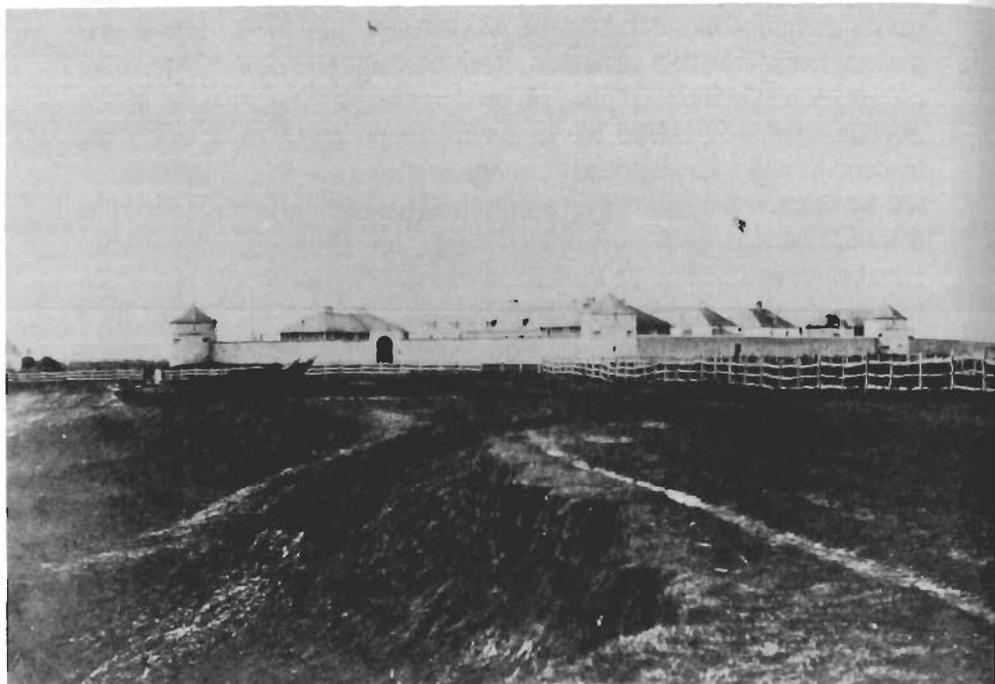
The Catholic clergy had played only a small role in the Ballenden affair. Eden Colvile was convinced that Father Belcourt was behind the Métis agitation for the reinstatement of Caldwell. The fact that the increasingly Oblate establishment at Saint-Boniface would not have supported such a move would not have mattered, since Belcourt was still at Pembina. At best they only influenced the Métis at the Forks to remain aloof. To what extent Belcourt was involved, however, is virtually impossible to determine. It may be supposed that he influenced Riel to support Caldwell in opposition to the Thom faction. He knew Riel and had had communications with him two years previously. If Belcourt was behind Riel, although the evidence is slender, Riel's actions become understandable. Belcourt was increasingly out of touch with the settlement and probably unaware of the real nature of the Ballenden scandal. All he would have seen was a Company attempt through Colvile to take over Red River's government. But whatever the case, Riel was not popular amongst the more substantial of the Métis, and his petty leadership was considered with disdain by Colvile.³¹

The precise cause of the feud between the pro-Ballenden and anti-Ballenden factions evaporated in 1852 but the divisions and hard feelings lingered, even after Adam Thom had left in 1854. After this, the most important social conflagration in Red River to date, the various groups that made up Red River moved in separate directions.

While the Presbyterians and Anglicans might hold successful united prayer meetings in the 1860s, the two communities lived separate and distinct lives. By 1865 even the prayer meetings had ceased. The élite, no longer unified, could make no pretence of offering a single, united direction for Red River. No one élite group emerged to seize the leadership and every important question generated only intense quarrelling. Rather than putting forward solutions, each faction advanced its own social and political ends, whether for Crown Colony status, annexation to Canada, or Protestant supremacy. Halfbreeds, uncertain of whether they owed their principal allegiance to their race, their religion, their kinfolk, or their Company heritage, were open to persuasion that it was religion, by any factious clergyman or demagogue who wished to use them to further his own ends. Indeed the problem is very complex. Religion reinforced past experiences, memories and kinship. The North West Company tradition separated the bourgeois from the *engagé*. The former were Scottish-Canadian; the latter Métis, French-speaking and Catholic. There were distinctions between master and servant based on culture, language, kin and religion. In the Hudson's Bay Company the social experiences were unique — there was in some ways a greater dependence on Company organization. Whereas before 1821 the two companies provided focus, after their union in 1821 there was one company which accommodated neither tradition in its entirety. The Church of England can be argued to have reinforced the Hudson's Bay Company's Protestant heritage, and the Church of Rome, the French Canadian one. In any case the roots were present for a contentious cleric to create problems.

The Episcopalian Rev. Griffiths Owen Corbett of Headingley parish was such a man. In the 1860s he would turn the Halfbreeds against their church establishment, with whom he had a score to settle, and against the Métis, who because of their Catholic faith were branded as the children of the Devil. By 1865 Red River would be on the verge of religious war.

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Upper Fort Garry at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. Hime photograph 1858.

7

*The Rev. G.O. Corbett
and the Uprising of the People.*

Red River changed in the late 1850s and early 1860s.¹ From a relatively quiet backwater, it became the confluence of the northward frontier of the American Republic and the western frontier of the Canadian colonies. In 1858 there were only a few buildings outside Upper Fort Garry at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine; but within ten years there was a drugstore, grist mill, gun shop, harness shop, bookstore, butcher shop, tinsmith, photography studio, carriage shop, two saloons, and newspaper office. Steamboats, the *Anson Northrup* (1859) and the *International* (1862), even attempted, although without great success, to navigate between Moorhead in Dakota and Red River.

Much of this change was due to a major influx of Canadian and American immigrants. Even before the immigration, however, Red River was changing of its own accord. During the six years before 1849, 1,232 new souls were added to the colony.² Since only twenty-eight families arrived in Red River between 1849 and 1856, and the baptismal records indicate a significant increase in the number of births, it must be assumed that growth was internal, rather than the result of immigration. This increase placed a substantial burden on the means of livelihood: the river lot, the hunt and the fishery. Because the family lands could no longer be divided indefinitely amongst the numerous sons, as had been the tradition, many moved to the plains along the Assiniboine River.³ The Rev. William Cockran had led the first such expedition to Portage la Prairie in 1854. Yet, not all were willing to abandon their friends, families and churches along the Red. Everywhere opportunities for the young became fewer and fewer. Because of the pressure, the more ambitious single males moved to the United States or into the western interior along the Saskatchewan River

at places such as Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and Victoria (now Pagan), Alberta. Indeed while in 1849 there were 137 more males than females, in 1856 there were 73 more females than males.⁴

The crisis of population coincided with and aggravated a crisis of identity amongst the Halfbreeds.⁵ Having been indoctrinated with Protestant religion and European culture, they were subjected to an insidious double standard when, because of their race, they were refused full acceptance into white Red River. Nor could the Halfbreeds turn to the Métis since they were adherents of the hated Church of Rome. Acceptable to neither community and lacking a strong identity of their own, the confusion and depression of the Halfbreeds was documented by the Rev. William Henry Taylor of the new parish of St. James on the Assiniboine. He was acutely aware of the consequences of this malaise although he did not perceive its roots.

There is an increase of those that drink... and sad and sickening of late have been the consequences of an excessive indulgence in whiskey. We mourn too over a recklessness of temper in some of the young of both sexes — a disposition to spurn advice & counsel — to set at naught ministerial and parental authority, and to follow the bent of their own sinful or vicious inclinations. Perhaps there is an increase of crime, & as the papers report the cases brought before the Court it may go abroad that we are a most immoral and iniquitous set of people.⁶

The Métis, for their part, were still able to cope with the population and economic pressures of the fifties and sixties. The faltering buffalo hunt was still reasonably profitable, and there was no open division within Red River Métis society because their strong sense of identity had been forged in the formative years of the settlement, and can be traced before in the North West Company. There may have been divisions between the *hivernants* and those who resided permanently in the settlement, but there is no evidence of such.

The clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, attempted to combat the evils of drink. The first Catholic temperance society was founded in the late 1850s, while the first Protestant society began on 25 March 1857 in St. Andrew's. Only the Catholic Society met with any great success,

however, since the St. Andrew's Society, under the presidency of Rev. James Hunter, experienced considerable backsliding and apathy.⁷

A considerable number also found both solace and meaning in Christian renewal. In the late 1850s, joint Presbyterian and Anglican prayer meetings enjoyed a brief popularity. There were definite signs of a nascent religious revival but Red River was not to be the scene of North America's next 'Great Awakening'.⁸

These movements for social and religious reform do not appear to have offered Red River any truly meaningful direction in this decade of turmoil. Furthermore, the political agitation over the present state and future prospects of Red River became of such overwhelming importance during the 1860s that matters of the soul and bottle seemed inconsequential by comparison. Nevertheless the temperance and prayer meetings did give the Halfbreeds experience in organization, and reinforced their tendency to turn to the Church for direction — a long-standing tendency that had been somewhat shaken by the sensational events of the 1840s and 1850s.

In the late 1850s both Canada and Great Britain began to show a peculiar interest in the future of Rupert's Land. Red River, of course, chased every rumour of change and there were as many factions as there were alternatives. A multi-faceted struggle thus ensued amongst the various groups. In the early 1860s Crown Colony status seemed most likely. The Duke of Newcastle, colonial secretary from 1859 to 1864, favoured the creation of a Crown Colony in Rupert's Land as a connecting link between Canada and British Columbia, all of which would eventually comprise a British North American federation. He was supported in his stand by substantial Canadian and British railroad and financial interests. But Red River was only vaguely aware of what was happening in the Colonial Office and at Hudson's Bay House. As rumour increased of Imperial support for the Crown Colony status after 1859, it seemed apparent to Red River that change of some sort was inevitable. The settlement hoped that it would be immediate. No firm plan was offered, however, by either the Canadian government, the Imperial government, or the Company. Confusion remained the only political certainty.

The most serious problems in Red River were those of the Halfbreeds. The central problem seemed to be one of identity

compounded by political, economic and social problems. Since the Halfbreeds had a tradition of religious leadership, it is not surprising that a cleric, the Rev. Griffiths Owen Corbett of the Church of England, would emerge to attempt to give direction to this need. Corbett was never much more than a contentious and difficult individual, spending much of his life quarrelling with his bishops, the Hudson's Bay Company, his fellow clergymen, and the Colonial and Continental Church Society who sponsored him.⁹

Corbett was hardly a charismatic leader. Rather, he was something of a gadfly, but he was a gadfly with strong convictions about the parliamentary rights of Englishmen, and even stronger convictions that these rights were being denied to the Halfbreeds by the tyranny of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Church of Rome. Even without charisma, he was a popular and effective speaker, and his views fell on the fertile ground of political unrest in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Corbett aroused the Halfbreeds and directed their energies against both the Company and the Catholics, convincing them that their future lay within a Protestant Crown Colony firmly affixed to the British Empire. Crown Colony status seemed to guarantee an extension of the full rights and privileges of the British constitution and offered a fellowship of English-speaking people, under the loose British nationalism with which the Empire had always anointed its subjects. It can be reasonably conjectured, and the evidence is substantial, that the Halfbreeds were coming to think of themselves as Englishmen rather than as mixed-bloods. This concept was not entirely new. Historian Jennifer Brown has convincingly argued that the old Hudson's Bay Company identity tended to divide between English and Indian. But by the 1830s this had been pushed into the background as a Halfbreed identity began to emerge. What is argued here is that it was Corbett who both rekindled and gave effective verbal expression to the Imperial-Canadian connection and pressed it over the Halfbreed one.

Because of the importance of these changes in the attitudes of the Halfbreeds, however, the limitations of the evidence must be noted. First, little of Corbett's correspondence survives, especially on the matter of Crown Colony status. Only his tract, 'Notes on Rupert's America' and a handbill, 'A Few Reasons for a Crown Colony', have survived among his own publications. While summaries of his

speeches on the subject of the value of the British constitution and connection were carried by the *Nor'-Wester*, these are brief and devoid of deliberation. But enough remains to indicate that his advocacy of Crown Colony status was unique, combined as it was with anti-Company and anti-Catholic rhetoric. Most in Red River wanted change within the Imperial context, but none presented the case as fervently or combined it as well with the increasing anti-Company and anti-Catholic sentiments of the Halfbreeds as did Corbett.¹⁰

When in 1862 Corbett found himself the centre of an unsavoury scandal and defended himself by identifying it as a Company plot to discredit him and his movement for Crown Colony status, feelings grew so intense that Red River split into two factions. The pro-Company group, who believed Corbett guilty, included most of the clergy, the Bishop of Rupert's Land, and the Métis who disliked his anti-Catholicism. The anti-Company group, who were the most fervent Crown Colony advocates, believed him innocent, and were composed principally of the Halfbreeds and the Cockran faction. The Colony verged on religious war between the Métis and the Halfbreeds, and the collapse of the Church of England in Old Red River appeared imminent. Most importantly, Corbett had persuaded the Halfbreeds that their Protestant and British heritage took precedence over the narrower racial and denominational allegiances.

The agitation for change in Red River's political status started in 1856-57 in Canada and filtered through to Red River via *The Globe*, the Toronto newspaper read by many of the informed and literate. As Corbett was not in Red River during this early agitation, the clergy appeared unified with the élite in the desire for change. William Ross, Halfbreed son of Alexander Ross, historian and former sheriff, expressed the prevailing sentiments.

We ought to have a flood of immigration to infuse new life, new ideas, and destroy all our old associations with the past, i.e., in so far as it hinders our progress for the future — regular transformation will sharpen our intellects, fill our minds with new projects and give life and vigour to all our thoughts, words and actions.¹¹

The first petition for change came from the clergy in June of 1856. Their demands were moderate, including only restrictions on the importing of alcohol and introduction of the elective principle in the Council of Assiniboia. They did not wish the removal of the Councillors, only that vacancies be filled by election, and that the settlement be divided for that purpose into districts.¹²

No serious pro-Canadian agitation developed until a few months later. On February 26, S.J Dawson of the Dawson-Hind expedition, sent by the Canadian government to assess the fertility of the Assiniboine-Saskatchewan country, gave a lecture: 'Canada Past and Present.'¹³ Interest was high and the Governor, the clergy, and some of the Company's active and retired gentlemen attended. There was, however, no open political movement at the parish level. Interest by the élite only turned into open agitation when William Kennedy returned to Red River 17 February 1857, after a number of years of anti-Company agitation in Upper Canada. Like his relative, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, who had been instrumental in the presentation of the 1847 petition to the Imperial Parliament, he was an embittered ex-Hudson's Bay Company employee.

From March to May, a number of meetings organized by Kennedy were held in the Kildonan school house and in the neighbouring Halfbreed parishes. An elder of the Presbyterian Church, Kennedy ingratiated himself with the Kildonan settlers, especially Donald Gunn, one of its leading members, and Rev. John Black who had strong Canadian sympathies. The Company was severely criticized and annexation of Canada advocated. When Governor F.G. Johnson, who had succeeded Adam Thom as Recorder, attended one of the first March meetings, he was requested to leave. Rev. James Hunter, there out of interest rather than support for any faction, implied consent for the expulsion by his silence. As a result of the meetings the younger settlers displayed their open sympathy with Kennedy and signed his petition for union with Canada. The older settlers, still believing that a certain deference was due the Company, hesitated to make a decision without the open approval of their respective churches.¹⁴

In May, Kennedy had actually convinced some in Red River — the exact parishes cannot now be known, but probably they were those between the Upper and Lower Forts — to elect five members, including



William Kennedy. No date.

himself and Isbister, to serve in the provincial legislature of Canada. The Protestant clergy (again it is not known exactly who was involved) claimed that they had the tacit approval of the Bishop. Kennedy for his part had allowed reports to spread that he was a representative of Canada. While he publicly denied these reports, he left the vague impression that he had to do so because he was a secret agent. The five members were actually sent off, but Kennedy had second thoughts about the legality of the proceedings. He chose to recall the delegates when he heard that Captain John Palliser was arriving at the head of the British expedition to the North-West, and that he might have some concrete instructions for Red River's future.¹⁵

This spelled the effective end of Kennedy's agitation. By the winter of 1858-59, the semblance of unity that momentarily had existed in Red River disintegrated under the force of new pressures. Rev. G.O. Corbett, arriving in the spring of 1858, was the cause. He and his cohort, Rev. John Chapman of St. Andrew's parish, the Company's chaplain, saw little advantage in a Canadian connection and in December of 1858 they circulated a petition advocating Crown Colony status instead. Corbett believed that annexation to Canada would place Red River 'altogether in the hands of a subordinate power.' He felt that if Red River were a Crown Colony, it would become the civil and commercial hub of the West, with its own elected Assembly — a feature that was central to all of Corbett's arguments. He believed that 'whatever advantages Canada enjoys, apart from her natural position, she derives these from her connection with England as Crown Colony.'¹⁶ Most important to the Halfbreed was his damnation of the Company for its alleged inability to maintain law and order and its obstruction of material progress. Both would be remedied, he believed, when Rupert's Land assumed its rightful place in the Empire as a Crown Colony.

Donald Gunn, William Kennedy, and James Ross, the leaders of the Canadian party, vigorously opposed Corbett and circulated a counter-petition advocating annexation to Canada.¹⁷ At this point William Kennedy and James Ross, both Halfbreeds with strong British-Canadian connections, still felt that Canada offered the best future — and that Crown Colony status offered continued domination by the Company. Both petitions were sent to the House of Lords where

they were ignored. Except for the Cockran clique, the Bishop of Rupert's Land and his supporters withdrew their support from the agitation when it became contentious and bitter. The Bishop became even more reticent and refused to countenance any criticism when the Company released its chaplain. The dismissal was considered as ample warning of what might happen to more difficult clergymen.

The Corbett agitation for political change assumed an even wider and more popular basis in the early 1860s. On 30 October 1862 the Council of Assiniboia petitioned the British government for troops in the face of a rumoured Sioux attack, a feared American invasion, and the growing local disaffection. The Council's petition made the rounds of Kildonan, Headingley, and St. Paul's parishes, gathering some 1,183 signatures from among the 'blues', the clergy, and many of the more humble elements of the settlement. As the petition was circulating, Rev. G.O. Corbett, Rev. John Chapman (the former chaplain), and James Ross, who joined Corbett's party when it became apparent that Canada was no longer interested in annexation, circulated a counter-petition condemning the Council of Assiniboia and the Company, and requesting Crown Colony status. Ross also refused to publish the Council's petition in his newspaper, the *Nor'-Wester*. The counter-petitioners claimed that troops were not so much needed as a more efficient government. There was considerable confusion as to who supported which petition since many attempted to delete their signatures from the Council's petition in order to support the counter-petition. The Company, as a disciplinary action, deprived Ross of his public offices of sheriff, governor of the gaol, and postmaster. Both petitions were ultimately sent to the Colonial office where they were ignored.¹⁸

The Council's petition was seen by the aroused Halfbreeds as a plot to crush their efforts to throw off the yoke of the Hudson's Bay Company. Consequently, when the lurid details of Corbett's presumed attempts to induce the miscarriage of his illegitimate child by Maria Thomas struck like a thunderbolt from nowhere, his protested innocence and his accusations of a Company conspiracy appeared completely credible to the Halfbreeds. After all, earlier that winter Maria had been persuaded in front of a magistrate to deny the rumours of an affair. The denial had been acceptable but when Corbett was jailed on the abortion charges and refused bail in spite of precedent for

granting such a request, the Halfbreeds were certain that the Company had resurrected a charge which had no substance and which had already been dismissed. Many were convinced that Maria Thomas's father, having pressed the charges, and Thomas Sinclair, the magistrate, were in the Company's pay. In effect, the question became not one of Corbett's guilt or innocence, but rather one of support for, or opposition to, the Company's supposed tyranny.¹⁹

Corbett was charged with violation of 24 and 25 Vict. ch. 100 passed in 1861. It states that:

Whosoever, with intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman, whether she be, or not be with child, shall unlawfully administer to her or cause to be taken by her, any poison or noxious thing, or shall unlawfully use an instrument or other means whatsoever with the like intent, shall be guilty of felony, and, being convicted thereof, shall be liable at the discretion of the Court to be kept in penal servitude for life, or for any term not less than three years, or to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour, and with or without solitary confinement.

In his charge to the jury on the ninth day of the Corbett trial which was published on 12 May 1863 in the *Nor'-Wester*, Recorder Black felt that he ought to elaborate on the law.

I may state that the law regarding this crime has within the last 35 years, undergone various changes. At one time the law made a distinction between acts in which the attempt was made on a woman quick with child and one not quick with child. Previous to the passing of the statute under which the prisoner is indicted that which regulates this offence made it material whether or not the woman was pregnant. By a subsequent statute 7 Wm. IV, and Vic. ch. 85, that distinction was done away with, and there were some light differences and alterations, which were embodied in the statute under which the prisoner is indicted.

The outcome of the case was not the result of this new 'mass' concern with abortion that swept America and Great Britain in the

1850s through to the 1880s.²⁰ Prior to the 1850s and 1860s life was construed to begin with 'quickening' or 'stirring in the womb', and abortion before 'quickening' was not a felony. Corbett attempted to abort Maria Thomas's and his alleged child after the fourth month. The scurrilous *Nor'-Wester* indicated that Corbett, whom they supported, had been unjustly accused of 'murder'. Nevertheless the abortion was not successful, and despite Maria Thomas's explicit testimony, Corbett was jailed for six months, an extremely light sentence given the damning evidence.

It is important to note that the case was an unusual one for Red River. It was the only abortion case ever brought to trial in the settlement, or mentioned in the Red River literature. Neither Sylvia Van Kirk in her studies on women in the pre-1870 West nor Jennifer Brown in her studies on fur trade families mention any incident of abortion. Clerical primary sources which are most concerned with social issues also never mention the subject, and this should be considered as surprising since some clergymen doubled as 'amateur' medics. It may well have been a subject that was not publicly discussed. Abortion before quickening may have been a normal form of birth control just as it was elsewhere in America in the 1840s. What is obvious from the record is that the public was not concerned with the issue of abortion, but rather of justice.

The trial commenced on Thursday, 19 February 1863, continued for nine days, and heard sixty-one witnesses. Rev. John Chapman described the shocking trial to the Secretaries of the Church Missionary Society.

What a spectacle...Mr Corbett in one box & Maria Thomas a young girl of 16 years in the witness box, with her babe in her arms which she declares is Mr Corbett's and whose embryo life he is charged with attempting to destroy by means of medicine, instruments &c.²¹

The Bishop appointed Archdeacon James Hunter to conduct an independent church investigation, and before the court made its own decision he pronounced Corbett guilty as charged. The court then followed suit. Corbett refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the Court of Assiniboia, or to accept its decision, and continued his

accusations of a conspiracy on the part of the Company and the Church of England. For the rest of his life, he insisted upon his innocence and he was supported in his view by many in Red River.

The Corbett case helped to precipitate the collapse of the deferential hierarchy in Red River upon which the Church of England depended for its informal control. The 'blues' had not been intimates of the Church since 1854; now a decade later the poorer members began to desert it. This is not to say that the Halfbreeds had ignored their Anglican heritage. But, because of the actions of the majority of the clergy and the Bishop himself, the Church of England in Red River was no longer the primary source of identity or direction for Anglican Red River.

The Church had refused to add its considerable weight to the cause of the Halfbreed, and they chose to act without it, taking the law into their own hands. Three times between December 1862 and April 1863 a crowd, mostly the poorer elements from the newer parishes along the Assiniboine, attempted to secure their own brand of British justice. Corbett had kindled their hatred of the Company by spreading the belief that it was intent on their oppression. The events suggest that the Halfbreeds, seeing themselves as the saviours of Red River, felt responsible for leading the colony into a new era of Protestant liberty and prosperity based on the fur trade.

The first incident occurred at nine o'clock on the morning of Saturday, 6 December 1862.²² In response to the denial of bail for Corbett, one hundred and fifty to two hundred persons, principally from Headingley but with groups from St. James, St. John's, St. Paul's and St. Andrew's, arrived at Fort Garry. Governor Dallas, Simpson's unpopular successor from the Pacific coast, favoured a hard line, but when riot was threatened he allowed Corbett to address the crowd. Corbett, for his part, encouraged all to continue their fight for justice. Finally James Ross, and ten to twelve of the more respected members of the crowd, persuaded Dallas that he would have to allow bail or suffer the consequences.

The second instance of mob rule occurred during the third month of Corbett's six-month sentence. On April 14, the Halfbreeds submitted a petition; the exact text could not be traced but it was signed by 552 of their number, requesting a pardon for Corbett. Six days later, after

Dallas had refused to consider their pleas, Corbett was freed by force. The Governor responded with a special body of twenty constables who arrested James Stewart, the mixed-blood schoolmaster of St. James parish school and a ring leader in the agitation.²³ The next day a group of thirty men led by William Hallett, a Halfbreed hunter of some repute, presented a demand for Stewart's release and, when the demand was refused, enacted a second forcible release.²⁴ The clear indication that any further attempts to impose their control on the colony would lead to complete insurrection rendered the Council of Assiniboia impotent. Nothing was done to recapture Stewart.

The situation had deteriorated to such an extent that late in May, one month after the Corbett escape, John Bourke, who had been involved in all three acts of defiance, and James Stewart went so far as to attempt the organization of a 'Provisional Government'. It is probable that Corbett himself was involved. Stewart suggested that Headingley, St. James, and Portage la Prairie should secede from Red River and form an independent colony subordinate only to the Crown. Ultimately the proposal failed to gain sufficient support, and the conspirators, who apparently lacked organizational ability, gave up the plan.

Within the colony generally, however, the jail breaks were followed by an increased questioning of the role of the Church and its old leaders. This allowed Corbett to return to Headingley where he assumed his clerical duties even after suspension by both the Bishop and the Colonial and Continental Church Society. The Bishop sent replacements, including William Henry Taylor from the neighbouring parish, but the congregation locked the church doors and refused admittance to any clergyman save Corbett. In a ludicrous climax to the issue, John Chapman, formerly Corbett's ally, finally forced the door and preached to an empty church. The Bishop then ordered Corbett to leave Rupert's Land by 1 September 1863, but even in this he was defied and Corbett remained in the settlement until the following June.²⁵

In the neighbouring parish of St. James the persecution of the pro-Corbett group was equally vigorous if somewhat less successful. While James Stewart was allowed to teach for two months following his escape, Rev. William Henry Taylor, on poor terms with Stewart because of an earlier dispute over the location of the school, hired a

replacement with the Bishop's approval. Stewart then opened a private school where the great majority sent their children, forcing Taylor to close his school. Taylor never regained his popularity.²⁶

The parishes along the Red River were also affected by the upheaval. Not only did many refuse to attend church services, but Archdeacon James Hunter was attacked for his investigations into the Corbett case.²⁷ John Tait, a carpenter and miller from St. Andrew's parish, circulated a number of vicious rumours against Hunter to prove that any untruth could find support in Red River. Consequently, he reasoned, Corbett was probably just as easily innocent as guilty.²⁸ Bishop Anderson urged Hunter to sue but a court case was avoided when Tait signed an apology that was read from St. Andrew's pulpit, and paid Hunter £100. Hunter announced that he would distribute the sum amongst Tait's daughters and when he failed to do so, Tait sued but lost. As a result of the gossip and ill-feeling generated by the Corbett and related affairs, both Anderson and Hunter, his presumed successor, resigned their positions. Hunter commented to the Secretaries of the Church Missionary Society that

the storm is pitiless, *a systematic blackening of the characters of all*. No one can live in this land with this adversary, and my prophecy is that in two years there will not be four clergymen on the two rivers.²⁹

His prediction possessed a degree of truth and by 1867 all of the most prominent clergymen had left Red River: Anderson in 1864, Hunter in 1865, and Chapman and Taylor in 1867. Their numbers were further reduced by Cockran's death in 1865.

Robert Machray, the new Bishop, would complete the dismantling of the old Red River Church of England. The move proved to be an astute one and Machray's career profited from the reorganization. Machray realized that Red River was on the verge of a massive new immigration and sought to prepare the Church. Red River was to become a self-supporting Christian diocese, while the work in the interior would remain with the missionary church. To this end, within one year of his arrival he introduced the vestry, the synod, and the offertory, none of which had existed previously. More importantly, Machray eradicated the Presbyterian tendencies of Episcopalian Red

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Archdeacon James Hunter, 1870.

River. Anderson, in spite of his bitter experiences with the Presbyterians, had allowed and encouraged joint prayer meetings with the Kildonan settlers, which by 1864 had assumed near revival proportions. Presbyterian-like services were also permitted in his churches. Upon his appointment Machray immediately reversed Anderson's decisions. He ordered an end to lengthy extempore services at funerals, to baptism and marriage in private homes, and to the ecumenical prayer meetings.³⁰ Furthermore, communion would be offered weekly rather than four or five times a year — the latter having been a most unfortunate concession to the Presbyterian traditions by even the most fervent Red River Episcopalians.³¹ The people of Red River, fond as they were of their own religious traditions, were loath to accept these changes.³²

Initially, even the Church Missionary Society questioned Machray's complete reversal of former policies. The Society, anxious to secure a self-sufficient diocese, however, finally endorsed the changes. Anderson on the other hand would never offer his approval. He felt the reversals were a slight against his administration, and on his return to England he campaigned stridently against the new Bishop.³³ Within the colony, Machray's policies were denounced by some of the congregations and at least one of the clergy who, in following Cockran's evangelical tradition, could sympathize with the Halfbreed reluctance to abandon their low church traditions. Joseph Phelps Gardiner, Hunter's successor at St. Andrew's, the most important Halfbreed parish, was adamant in his refusal to change.³⁴ He continued the prayer meetings, and refused to change to a more ritualistic prayer book, or to abandon the black Geneva gown. He felt that he had to stand behind his 'old Evangelical principles' and could not in conscience bend to what he thought were the Bishop's high church tendencies. The Bishop for his part demanded Gardiner's resignation and chastised the supportive congregation as ungrateful and disobedient. Gardiner refused to resign and trouble with the parish escalated when the vestry refused to allow the Bishop control over the offertory. St. Andrew's, in fact, considered itself above the Bishop and before 1870 the parish refused to establish close relations with St. John's Cathedral.

The departure of Bishop Anderson and his clergy, and the death of Archdeacon William Cockran in 1865, had signalled the demise of the old Church of England in Red River, a missionary church supported wholly by the missionary societies which allowed both Presbyterian and evangelical Episcopalian practices. The day when the missionary set the moral and political standards and assisted the Halfbreeds to seed and to harvest had passed. Nor was the Church of England any longer one of the three dominant institutions in Red River, the others being the Hudson's Bay Company and the Church of Rome. Under Machray it intentionally turned its back on old Red River, and its face towards a new West dominated by immigrants from Ontario that loomed so clearly in the later sixties.

The sequence of events begs explanation. The following argument is part supposition because detailed evidence cannot now or likely ever be found. At the same time that the Church of England was declining as a focal point in the lives of the Halfbreeds, they became increasingly aware of their Protestant and their Imperial heritage, the latter a product of Corbett's political agitation for Crown Colony status. Their action suggest that the increase in Protestant sentiment, however, was not a positive reaction; rather it was built on negative comparisons with the Catholic religion and its adherents. So great had this distance between Catholic and Protestant become that the Halfbreeds rejected their Indian heritage as a valid unifying force for Red River. Rev. G.O. Corbett was responsible for the crystallization of much of this animosity, although he had a full reservoir of religious hatred created by earlier missionaries on which to draw. Corbett despised the Catholics and considered them barbarians. Furthermore, he used the newspaper to propagandize the settlement. In a community torn by dissent, in which the status of the Halfbreed was questioned, Corbett's anti-Catholicism was absorbed as eagerly as his anti-Company rhetoric. Here was assurance that as Protestants, the Halfbreeds were superior to at least the Catholic Métis at Red River. So hostile did feelings become between the two communities — feelings which were amicable as recently as 1849 — that open civil war was feared.

Corbett cultivated this hatred. He felt that the British liberties of Red River, a Protestant colony of a Protestant Queen, were succumbing to the tyranny of the Church of Rome. Corbett, who imagined too many

examples of the growing power of the Papal anti-Christ, felt it his duty to warn of the dangerous consequences. His greatest concern was William Mactavish, the Governor of Assiniboia. Mactavish had married a Catholic daughter of Andrew McDermot in Saint-Boniface Cathedral, and in the following years baptized his children into the Catholic faith. All of Protestant Red River had considered the marriage an insult to Bishop Anderson, who had apparently expected to conduct the ceremony.³⁵ Corbett was convinced that, with the Governor a virtual Catholic, and with seven Catholics against seven Protestants on the Council of Assiniboia, 'the balance of power (was) with the Pope of Rome.'³⁶

When an official report of the legislative proceedings of the Council of Assiniboia referred to the Catholic Bishop as 'Lord Bishop', Corbett had what he considered proof. Legally only Bishop Anderson, who wanted no part in the controversy and who unsuccessfully cautioned Corbett to moderate his stand, was entitled to the title. Only Anderson had been appointed by 'Her Most Gracious Sovereign the Queen'. Corbett considered use of the title for Bishop Taché both 'insidious' and 'unconstitutional'. When the Council of Assiniboia continued its folly by passing a law forbidding all government activity on Catholic holidays, there was no longer any doubt in Corbett's mind — Red River had fallen to the Pope.³⁷

These religious tensions that had split the society asunder tended to centre on the settlement along the Assiniboine River, but their impact was felt throughout the whole of Red River. The *Nor'-Wester* was particularly effective in ensuring that the controversies of the 1860s would continue to exacerbate social, religious and racial divisions. Every imagined slight was well publicized and exaggerated out of all proportion. In 1860, for example, a heated battle was waged between Henry Cook, a Halfbreed Anglican schoolmaster and François Bruneau, one of the principal Métis, over the quality of Protestant and Catholic education.³⁸ So virulent did Protestant sentiment become that James Ross, rather moderate in his anti-Catholicism and at times a restraining influence on Corbett, feared a loss of Protestant business, and refused on first request to publish an obituary and eulogy for Sister Valade, one of the first and most venerated Sisters at Saint-Boniface.³⁹ When in August 1861 Ross dared to publish an article suggesting that

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James Ross, editor of the 'Nor'-Wester'.

the English Halfbreeds were superior to the Métis, the elder Riel visited Ross and 'il lui a chanté une chanson, la chanson du juge Thom'. In other words Riel threatened Ross's life,⁴⁰ just as he had done years earlier to Adam Thom, the first Recorder of Rupert's Land, who had voiced similar bigotries.

The degree to which the two communities had separated is apparent in the furor created by the Stewart jailbreak. After Corbett had been released and Stewart incarcerated, Governor Dallas, suspecting a plot to free Stewart, called upon twenty-five Métis and twenty-five Halfbreeds to defend the prison. Only five of the Halfbreeds would serve; the Métis, who had no use for 'Corps Bête' as they called Corbett, appeared in full force.⁴¹ At ten o'clock on the morning of April 22, twenty-seven protesters (the precise identities cannot be now determined) headed by William Hallett and James Ross, demanded an interview with Dallas. When Dallas refused to meet the insurgents, Ross sent a petition demanding the liberation of Stewart, the cessation of all discussion over the Corbett affair, and the removal of Sheriff McKenny, a supporter of the Company, who had replaced Ross. Dallas again refused, and Ross rode into the prison compound and liberated Stewart. It is evident that had Dallas not forbidden a violent confrontation, the Métis would have used force to stop Ross, which in turn would have triggered 'une guerre civile' between Protestant and Catholic Red River. Fortunately, most of the twenty-five Métis were from Saint-Boniface and under the control of the moderate François Bruneau. Had *les hivernants*, the Métis boatmen and tripmen living at Cheval Blanc and Saint-Norbert, been involved, as had been initially intended, blood would most certainly have been shed. The 'winterers' were hardly as charitable as their brethren at Saint-Boniface and after a long season of confinement would have been ready to flex their muscles in the Red River spring in order to teach the insolent Protestants a lesson.⁴²

By 1865, then, the Halfbreeds had achieved a degree of confidence about their own identity, largely through Corbett's influence. They were to liberate Red River from the two tyrannies of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Roman Church. With Red River a Crown Colony, they would then follow Corbett, a thoroughly Protestant Englishman, who would have the balance of power. In the first

decades of the history of the settlement, identity had been based on race, membership in the Church, and rank in the Company. With Corbett's agitation acting as a catalyst, racial ties were weakened. Now the Halfbreed would identify even less with his part-Indian and Catholic brothers.

Equally, the organized Church fell into disrepute, although it is easy to exaggerate the change. To the lower-status Halfbreed the virtues of Protestantism and allegiance to the British Empire were not associated with Canadian immigration or even increased material well-being, but rather a status higher than that of the Métis. They also were taken to mean that the Halfbreeds could now exert regulatory control over the Company and its commissioned officers rather than be subject to its traditional hierarchical authority. They wanted the best of the good life that had always been associated with the golden age of the fur trade.

Because the buffalo hunt was still successful and because there was no open racial division within their society, the Métis were better able than the Halfbreeds to cope with the population and economic pressures of the late 1850s and early 1860s. The continuing Sioux threat, especially ominous since 1862, occupied their energies and forced upon them a unity of purpose. Equally important, the religion of the Métis, unlike that of the Halfbreeds, did not force the questioning of their half-European and half-Indian life. Instead they regarded it with pride. The chief source of irritation was the knowledge that the Protestant élite regarded them with disdain.

Under attack from the Protestants and during the growing difficulties of the 1860s, the Métis first turned to their traditional leaders, the secular clergy, specifically Rev. Belcourt at Pembina. This time they met with little success. Their efforts at communications with Belcourt met with silence since he had been forced to leave Pembina in 1859 after a serious scandal. All that is known of the affair is contained in a letter from Father Jean-Marie Le Floc'h,⁴³ a clergyman at Saint-Boniface, to a friend at Lac la Biche.

Ses soeurs sont à la débandade, toutes ont jeté le froc. Deux viennent de partir pour le Canada. La Mère abbessse va se

marier avec le frère Timothée si elle peut obtenir dispense de son vœux perpétuel de chastité.⁴⁴

Rev. Belcourt's actual role in the episode remains a mystery but it must have been serious, for the Bishop considered revoking Belcourt's right to say mass. Instead he was exiled to a remote parish in Prince Edward Island.

Belcourt, who thought himself falsely implicated, wrote to the Métis at Pembina in 1862 declaring his innocence, and asking the people to request his recall. The impact was such that Father Jean-Marie Lestanc had to come from Saint-Boniface to reprimand the Métis for requesting the return of a clergyman censured by a Bishop. While it is not known if the rising anti-Catholicism at Red River prompted the Métis there to support Belcourt's recall, certainly as one of the few outspoken and popular Catholic clergymen with connections in Red River his advice would have been sought. But Belcourt remained in Eastern Canada, and while Rev. Jean Thibault, the only secular priest and even more widely loved and popular than Belcourt, might have provided the necessary guidance, he was seriously ill and suffering from bouts of recurring paralysis. This lack of involvement by the secular clergy could explain the failure of the Métis at Saint-François-Xavier to show a major interest in the proceedings at the Forks.

The Oblate clergy — every priest in Red River save Rev. Thibault — were unwilling and unable to fill the gap left by Belcourt and Thibault. They were on exceedingly poor terms with the secular clergy and were preoccupied with internal problems. Father Charles Mestre, for example, was ill and unable to partake in any vigorous activity except a continuing feud with Father Le Floc'h over a breach of confidence.⁴⁵ Father William Henry Oram and Brother John Duffy, the successive English teachers at Saint-Boniface College, spoke French poorly and considered themselves as outcasts from the intimate Breton clique headed by Lestanc and Le Floc'h, fellow graduates of the seminary at Quimper, France. Virulently anti-Protestant, Duffy and Oram found themselves fighting with the Breton members of the Order over the propriety of replying to Protestant insults, as well as over domestic and academic matters. The questions of who was to play the

harmonium or who was to blame for the **school boys who smoked** behind the school house became the all-absorbing and bitter issues that divided the Order. These were the questions that made their way to Rome. Father Lestanc, in charge during the many absences of Bishop Taché, was hardly the figure to inspire confidence or to mediate between the feuding parties. He could not make firm decisions, he refused whenever possible to become involved, and he was himself overly sensitive to criticism.⁴⁶

The traditional antagonisms between the secular clergy and the Oblates continued throughout the 1860s. The conflict was specifically over whether the Bishop's palace could function as both an Oblate Provincial House and the head-quarters of the Diocese without compromising the rights and privileges of the secular clergy. The issue was not resolved until after 1870 when a Provincial House was constructed. At the same time the *Canadien*, Taché, was accused of favouring the Canadian secular **clergy by some** of the Oblate Fathers. Naturally, there were counter accusations by the Canadian secular clergy that he actually favoured the Breton Oblates.⁴⁷ These antagonisms must have been translated into a distinct and mutual coolness between the Oblates and Métis. The latter were, after all, extremely fond of their secular clergy. But all that can be determined with certainty is that these internal schisms took up a considerable amount of time, and that they detracted from the daily relationship of the Oblates with their parishioners. They already were only infrequent participants in the hunt and not anxious to learn Cree, a more common tongue than French outside the parish of Saint-Boniface. The Oblates appear content to have isolated themselves from the larger community.

The Oblates and the absentee Bishop, Taché, were a conservative force. They openly supported the Hudson's Bay Company, and refused to countenance insurrection. Taché was firmly convinced that

in no country on the Globe is justice administered with more impartiality, or security of life and property better afforded, so that all persons of good sense smile piteously on seeing the assertion that affirms without scruple that we are deprived of these advantages.⁴⁸

The Métis were cautioned again and again against participation in the Halfbreed struggles. So fearful were the Bishop and his clergy of Protestant domination and the breakdown of civil order that they opposed an elected Council of Assiniboia and supported the request for Imperial troops.⁴⁹ In William Mactavish as Governor they had one friend.

So poor were the relations with the Métis and so internally divided was the Order that a visitor from the Mother House observed 'La Congrégation n'est rien à la Rivière Rouge'.⁵⁰ Obviously the Métis would not have supported Taché's conservatism, given their previous hostility towards the Company. If the Métis came to support the Company in their struggle to maintain law and order in the Corbett crisis, it was only because of an intense dislike of Corbett and his fierce anti-Catholic and anti-Métis sentiments. In fact, regard for the Oblates was so low that in 1856 Father Joseph-François-Xavier Bermond, known to be 'indifferent about his popularity with his congregations', was refused admission by the Métis to a public meeting at which Kennedy's annexation question was being discussed. Furthermore, it was not the clergy who stopped the bloodshed at the Stewart jailbreak, but François Bruneau. The Métis were deeply Catholic and religious, but not amenable to persuasion by their clergy unless it suited their purposes. They would, as they had in the past, turn on the Company at the slightest provocation.

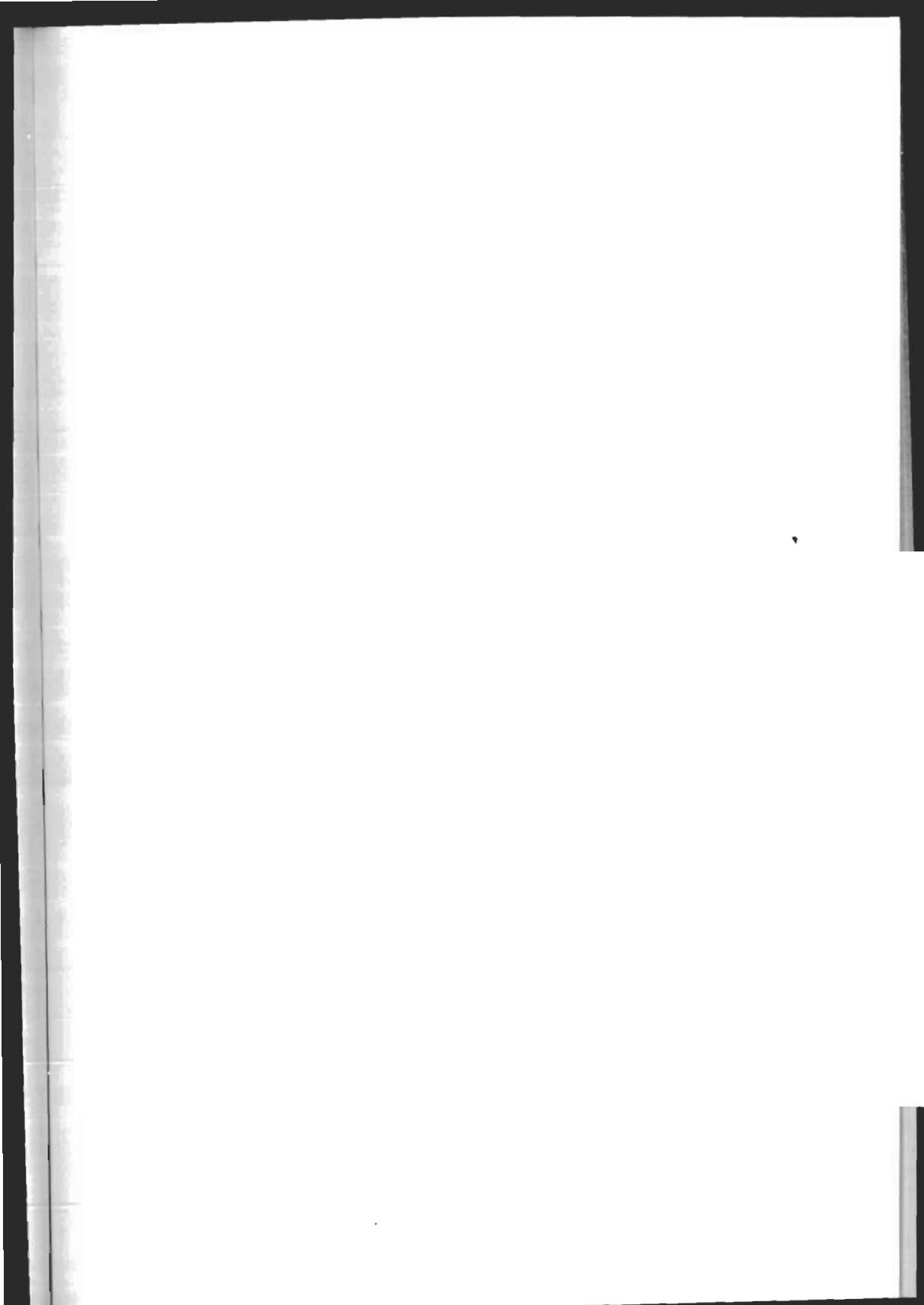
Until 1865, then, no single dominant figure emerged to lead those Métis who feuded with the Halfbreeds. The Catholic clergy, especially Bishop Taché, only supported change and immigration as long as it was French, Catholic, and ordered. The Oblates, now dominant in all of Red River except the parish of Saint-François-Xavier, were hardly concerned with the temporal problems of their charges. Serious antagonisms, within the Order itself and between the Order and other priests, absorbed most of their time and energy. Belcourt at Pembina and Thibault at Saint-François-Xavier had been unable to offer any guidance: in the first instance because of a scandal, and in the second instance because of illness. Combined with a lack of effective and radical lay leadership, the Métis were largely unable to articulate their frustrations. Had a popular Catholic leader of Corbett's stripe emerged, there would have been serious civil disorder, probably resulting in the

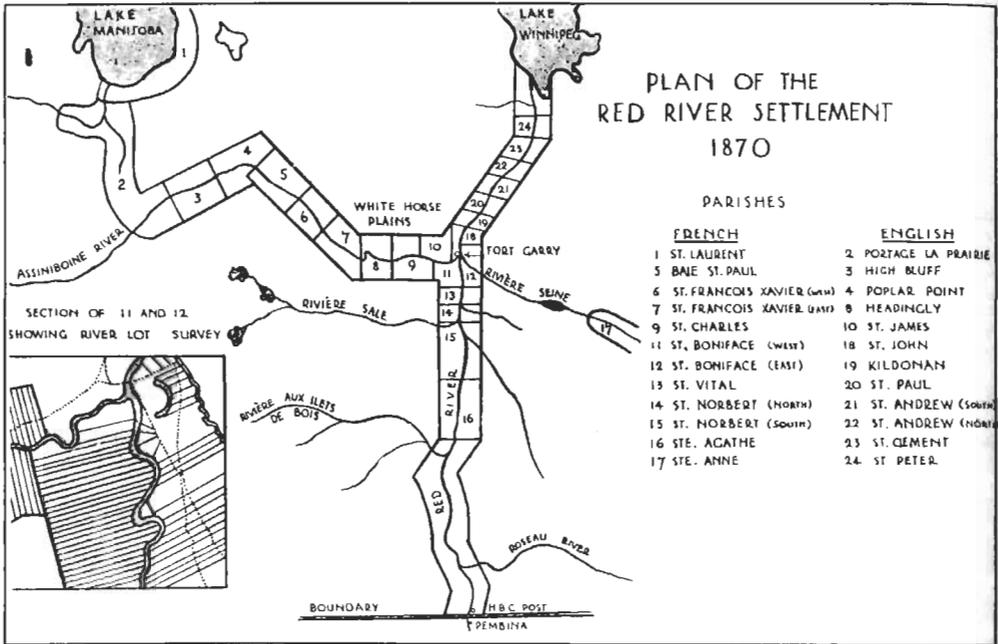


Bishop A. A. Taché from a portrait dated 1880.

intervention of the Imperial government and, in the end, Crown Colony status in the 1860s.

The most important development of the 1860s, however, was the gradual shifting of the Halfbreeds' identity. A decade previously their lives had experienced subtle undercurrents of confusion. Increasingly the question was, while not in the forefront of every action but nevertheless present in many of the critical events, whether their primary focus was on their mixed-blood and Hudson's Bay Company heritage or on their Protestant and British one.⁵¹ The events of the sixties resolved the dilemma. They were convinced that they were not petty settlers in a squalid little Company settlement in the isolated and frigid heart of British North America. They were not poverty-stricken coloured parishioners of the white, missionary-dominated Church of England. They were Protestant subjects of Her Most Britannic Majesty's Empire, an Empire upon which the sun never set.





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The Halfbreeds and the Riel Protest

The years following the Corbett scandal were not kind to Red River. The laws of Assiniboia, which had been successfully breached during the Corbett case, continued to be flouted and broken with impunity, especially as it became apparent that the Company's sway was at an end. Economic difficulties, severe droughts, locust plagues, and consequent want made the political circumstances even more anxious in the last years of the 1850s. Concurrently, vocal Protestant Canadians were beginning to arrive in increasing numbers to farm. Then in 1868, their numbers were dramatically augmented, due to preparations to survey and begin construction of the Dawson Road that was to connect Red River with Lake of the Woods. The following year Canadian survey parties under Colonel J. S. Dennis began to run base lines for the survey of Red River itself. The abrasive conduct of the Canadians, the division on the square as opposed to the river lot survey, and the beginnings of a Canadian land rush, led a great number of the Métis squatters to think that they would not be liberally treated by the new Dominion and its citizens.

On 11 October 1869 a group of Métis under the young Louis Riel, a native of Red River just returned from several years in Quebec schools, undertook to prevent the survey from proceeding through the Red River parishes. Riel's success against the chainmen led to further resistance two days later when a number of Métis, encouraged by their clergy, acted to safeguard their corporate rights by preventing William McDougall, the Canadian-appointed Governor, from entering the territory to assume his office. They insisted upon negotiations prior to joining Confederation. On November 2, to strengthen their position, the Métis under Riel seized Upper Fort Garry. Four days later Riel issued a notice to the English parishes, inviting them to select representatives to meet in ten days with his supporters, the 'French Council'

The first series of meetings ended with Riel's unilateral decision to proclaim a provisional government. The English-speaking delegates considered the step seditious, hostile and tantamount to rebellion. On December 1, perhaps encouraged by Riel's failure to entice the English into his government, William McDougall returned across the Dakota Border and declared himself Governor, unaware that the Canadian Government had refused to accept the transfer of the territory until peace had been restored. McDougall compounded his error by sending Colonel J.S. Dennis into the settlement as Conservator of the Peace with wide powers to put down the insurgents. Dennis managed to raise a considerable force in the parishes of St. Andrew's, St. Paul's and St. John's but Riel had imprisoned the Canadians guarding the Canadian Government supplies in the small village of Winnipeg and the Canadian and Halfbreed show of strength collapsed. A day after the attempted counter-insurrection Riel declared the establishment of his provisional government and on December 10, hoisted his fleur-de-lis and shamrock flag. He further consolidated his authority by suppressing the *Nor'-Wester* and seizing the Company's cash box.

Upon learning of the Red River difficulties, the Canadian government dispatched Rev. J. B. Thibault, the beloved priest just recently returned from Saint-François-Xavier, and Colonel Charles de Salaberry, a virtual nonentity, to reassure the trouble makers. Donald A. Smith of the Hudson's Bay Company, married to a mixed-blood, Chief Trader Richard Hardisty's daughter, was also sent in the hopes of reasoning with the insurgents. On January 9, at a meeting held with the Canadian delegates at Fort Garry, over a thousand inhabitants elected forty of their number to sit at a convention which would decide terms for union. In the following two months a list of rights was drawn up, and three delegates were chosen to deal with the Canadian Government; and despite serious reservations on the part of the English-speaking Halfbreeds of the settlement a provisional government was proclaimed.

In early February the English-speaking settlers at Portage la Prairie, largely unaware of many of the developments since the December uprising, attempted a concerted attack to release the prisoners at Fort Garry and overthrow Riel. The movement collapsed, in spite of the force of nearly six hundred that had been gathered in Kildonan

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Louis Riel c.1875

from Portage and the Lower parishes. The accidental killing of a young boy of seventeen offered a tragic indication that the two parties were in deadly earnest. After Riel had seized a number of the insurgents as they returned to Portage la Prairie, and had executed Thomas Scott, an outspoken Canadian Orangeman, there were few who were willing to move against Riel. All efforts were now turned to the negotiations with Canada and the attempt to secure amnesty which, although promised, was never given. Riel remained as President of the functioning provisional government until 24 August 1870 when the arrival of Imperial and Canadian troops forced him to flee.

Hitherto unused clerical sources provide evidence for a new interpretation of the role of the English-speaking mixed-bloods in the insurrection. Both A. S. Morton in his *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (Toronto, 1973) pp. 875-8 and G. F. G. Stanley in his *The Birth of Western Canada* (London, 1936) pp. 76-83 argue that the English-speaking mixed-bloods were generally sympathetic to the cause of the Métis. A. S. Morton, however, provides no notes for his conclusions and it is difficult to determine where he obtained his material except where specifically identified in his text. In October of 1869 Joseph Howe, one of the Fathers of Confederation, a former Premier of Nova Scotia and now Secretary of State for the provinces, visited Red River. While in the settlement he met with Governor Mactavish, Bishop Machray and pro-Canadians like Captain Kennedy. He did, however, avoid the more rabid elements like John C. Schultz. Morton concludes from Howe's visit that the 'English population was dissatisfied because they had not been consulted' by the Canadian government as to the terms of union.¹ That was undoubtedly so, but this dissatisfaction should not be construed to be of such intensity that annexation to Canada was going to be resisted by arms. Morton intimates that it was. When Howe left the settlement October 16, he had no doubt that with care the change of government could be achieved without violence. On October 21, a meeting was held in St. Andrew's to draft an address of welcome for the new Governor, William McDougall. Donald Gunn, who had considerable credence amongst the mixed-bloods, drafted the address, but Captain Kennedy, one of the leaders of the earlier pro-Canada movement, objected. He doubted McDougall's intentions, and apparently wanted assurances as

to the organization of the new government. Morton argues that the October 21 meeting

shows that the English element was as conscious of their rights as the half-breeds. They differed in that the one was willing to 'wait and see,' while the other (the Métis) perceived more clearly that the way to secure those rights was to keep the Governor-to-be out of the country till they were secured by agreement. The French half-breeds put their faith in direct action, the English in the **problematical** reasonableness of that 'paternal despot,' William McDougall. Their disagreement as to the strategy called for **kept** them apart for the time. Their agreement on the principles ultimately brought them together.²

This and the next chapter will show that new sources, particularly those of the Church of England, which detail the activities at the parish or community level, indicate that while Morton is right in assuming that the English-speaking mixed-bloods were interested in assuring their rights in the new Canadian context, they were prepared for annexation to Canada. Indeed they desired it. They strongly opposed armed resistance to the Crown and were prepared to stop the Métis in their attempts by force if necessary. Morton's assumption of a unity of interests between the two communities that could withstand considerable strain will be proven false.

G. F. G. Stanley argues as well that the English-speaking mixed-bloods were initially suspicious of the Canadians and that they supported Riel's Bill of Rights and the first convention which ended in the Provisional Government. He argues that during the first months of the resistance the **English-speaking** mixed-bloods were 'either indifferent or mildly sympathetic'.³ A careful examination of parish church records that recorded events in detail not previously available, will illustrate that Stanley's generalizations are just that. The English-speaking mixed-bloods were prepared to use force to stop Riel, but they had neither the resources nor the leadership. Their approach was careful neutrality but only after armed resistance proved unfeasible.

In examining this new documentation more carefully it becomes increasingly apparent that the resistance was as much a civil and sectarian struggle with roots deep in Red River's past, as an effort by

the Métis to preserve their identity in the face of the flood of Ontarians. The Protestant, English-speaking Halfbreeds in Red River abandoned much of their mixed-blood heritage to return to their Imperial and Protestant roots even before the migrations from Canada had begun. The Protestant Churches had a diminished role in this new identity, although the deeply religious Halfbreeds still conceded them some influence. Had the clergy decided to provide some leadership for the Halfbreeds during an armed resistance against Riel, they might have regained some of their lost prestige. Because of the clergy's reluctance to become involved, however, and because of the lack of unity of the Protestant élite (a result of the racial and religious schisms of the 1850s) the Halfbreeds turned to the Canadians for leadership. The new Canadian immigrants at Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg were, however, not yet sufficiently established to provide viable alternatives to the clergy and individual Halfbreed leaders. The resistance occurred, then, in a period of social transition. There was no effective Protestant counter to Riel.

The Anglican Church, which should have provided the back-bone of Halfbreed resistance, saw itself in serious difficulty on the eve of the resistance. Bishop Robert Machray realized that

the time has come when the Church must fare badly unless friends without lend sufficient aid. The new government will be set up here. Communication will be opened up with Lake Superior. A large emigration into the fertile lands of these regions must speedily follow. The early tide of Emigration has never been found favourable for the Church. There are ordinarily [few] Churchmen among them and there is a wild feeling that rebels against the decorum and order of the church....All our opposition and difficulties will come from Canada. It will be hard if our Church there gives no aid.⁴

No reliance was to be placed on the Halfbreed. They were considered too poor, too ignorant, and too weak to serve as the foundation upon which to build a new West. Machray so detested the petty, poverty-stricken community and so longed for a prosperous peopled West that his principal concern became the preparation of the institutional Church for the union with the Canadian Confederation.

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Bishop Robert Machray

Investments were changed from British to Canadian government bonds, and an attempt made to persuade the Hudson's Bay Company to commute its annual grant to Canadian funds and to build the stone house it had promised Bishop Anderson. To this he devoted his energies.⁵

It was inconceivable to Machray that the British Imperial Government would allow a group of renegade Métis to terrorize the settlement.⁶ When resistance to Confederation by the Métis appeared inevitable, he was firmly convinced, at least up to December 1869, that they must be stopped by force. The Bishop probably heard as early as mid-September that the Métis were going to stop Governor McDougall at the border, but thought the rumour so absurd that he did nothing.⁷ When Riel refused to allow McDougall entrance to the settlement, the Bishop was the only one of the Council of Assiniboia to suggest that a group of English-speaking and French-speaking mixed-bloods escort the Governor to his residence at **St. James**. The more timorous Councillors decided instead that two influential loyalist Métis, Messrs. Dease and Goulet, should attempt to persuade Riel's supporters to disperse. The plan failed.⁸

After Fort Garry was seized, the Bishop refused to advocate armed resistance publicly although he most emphatically did so privately. From November through to 7 December 1869 he surreptitiously pushed for a show of arms by the Halfbreeds. On 21 November 1869, during the first convention called by Riel to decide on the terms of negotiation, a number of clergymen met with John Schultz, the leader of the **Canadians**, and James Ross, a sometime leader of the Halfbreeds. What transpired or exactly who attended is not known, but four days later James Ross was preaching insurrection against Riel at the St. Andrew's school house, probably under the encouragement of the clergy.⁹ On the December 4, three days later, J. S. Dennis had published the threat against Protestantism at a meeting at St. John's and again urged armed resistance.¹⁰ But publicly Machray was unerringly non-committal, even after so strident a charge, because to Riel he wanted to appear scrupulously neutral. Of course, if such a quietly sponsored resistance failed he could then blame and admonish his clergy. On December 6, for example, Machray showed reluctance to urge Schultz to disperse his men surrounding the

Canadian government's winter supplies in Winnipeg.¹¹ He believed that if the supplies fell into the hands of the Métis the resistance would be prolonged. So fearful was Machray of upsetting Riel that he asked for the latter's advice on the matter and was told that he was too good a man to speak to Schultz. Only on the evening of December 7, after the lower parish Halfbreed resistance had collapsed and all hope of successful counter-insurrection was dashed, did Machray finally recommend to the men under siege in the Schultz house that they put down their weapons.¹² From this point on Machray refused both publicly and privately to countenance any action that might involve violence — a stand he could maintain with some confidence since it had become apparent that Imperial troops would ultimately be sent to the settlement.

Only three times after December 7 did Machray become involved in the Riel troubles: during the proceedings of the January-February convention, during the February 14 counter-insurrection, and during the execution of Thomas Scott, the Orangeman.¹³ On all three occasions he urged moderation, while showing apparent support for the provisional government. He also refused to accept election either to the conventions or as one of the delegates sent to Canada, for fear of incurring the displeasure of the Catholic clergy.¹⁴ He continually urged the English-speaking population of Red River to remain quiet, and was untiring in his efforts to stop the attempted counter-insurrection: 'there is but one sensible course in the peculiar circumstances of this country, which is to give in if at all practical.'¹⁵ Machray had clearly charted a pragmatic course for himself and those who served under him during the trying days of the insurrection. But his continued anti-Riel sentiments were definite. As late as April 1870, when matters in Red River had become more settled, he was still of the opinion that

things remain in a very sad condition. I doubt whether England ever in her history has allowed things to go as they have done here for the past 6 months. — If she does not act in some way to ensure protection and order for her Loyal subjects what is the meaning of the claim of Empire.¹⁶

Machray's clergy were, with the exception of J. P. Gardiner, as virulently anti-Riel and anti-Catholic as he, but unlike their Bishop they

were not astute enough to hide their feelings. After Colonel Dennis's initial intervention on December 1, Archdeacon Abraham Cowley of St. Peter's, the Christian Indian parish, and Rev. J. Carrie of Headingley, Corbett's former Halfbreed parish, promptly called meetings and urged the Christian Indians to oppose Riel and his insurgents. Even after December 7, Carrie and Rev. Cyprian Pinkham of William Henry Taylor's former parish of St. James continued to foment discontent. Perhaps because of the anti-clerical tendencies and the absence of popular leadership in both parishes, their efforts met with little success.¹⁷ At Portage la Prairie Rev. Henry George, William Cockran's son-in-law, voiced his neutrality but openly consorted with the Canadian party, while Archdeacon John McLean of St. John's parish followed precisely in Machray's footsteps — visible neutrality towards, but private damnation of Riel.¹⁸

John Phelps Gardiner was the Anglican cleric who failed to conform to the pattern. The incumbent of the most prosperous and populated Halfbreed parish of St. Andrew's and the only clergyman arriving after 1865 who appears to have developed close ties with the Halfbreeds, Gardiner was in the best position to influence the course of events — yet he failed to live up to this promise and abdicated his position during the early stages of the turmoil. He had been instrumental in drawing up an October 21st address of loyalty to the Crown and of welcome to McDougall, and appeared ready to resist Riel in the fullest measure. But in early November he made it clear that he would not interfere.¹⁹ No doubt aware of his potential influence and his particularly virulent anti-Catholicism, the Métis had made a threat on Gardiner's life on November 5. Informed of the threat by Archdeacon McLean, Gardiner was so fearful of being 'shot or taken prisoner and put to death by an R C mob' that he even refused to attend Riel's electoral meeting for the first November convention.²⁰

Gardiner's retreat was crucial in light of subsequent events: Riel's seizure of the newspaper and the Company's cashbox, his attack on the government supplies in Schultz's store, and his threat on Gardiner's life. As a result, by November 25 James Ross, the chief Halfbreed spokesman, had little difficulty in convincing a number of St. Andrew's Halfbreeds to arm for a march on Upper Fort Garry to put down the arbitrary dictatorship of Riel. It was at this point Gardiner

overcame his reticence and stepped forward to counsel much needed prudence. Feeling that the people were not sufficiently organized and that a conflict with the Métis would be disastrous, he urged that a Committee of Safety be formed and the stock of arms be assessed. Two days later, on November 27, the Committee reported that while there were 302 men capable of bearing arms, there were only 203 guns, many of which were old and useless.²¹

Despite the absence of arms, the Bishop privately chided Gardiner for his reluctance and pressed him to urge the St. Andrew's people onward to victory. This Gardiner refused to do, but on December 1 Dennis's proclamation served to reinforce Ross's appeal to arms and he placed the St. Peter's Indians in control of the Lower Fort and its substantial supply of gunpowder. By December 4, with the approval of the local Protestant clergy, there were eight forces training: 71 at the Stone Fort, 50 at St. Andrew's, 36 at Portage la Prairie, 35 at St. Paul's, 74 at Kildonan, 50 at St. Peter's, 40 at Winnipeg, 31 at Poplar Point, and 31 at High Bluff.²² At least 400 were ready to march on Riel and many more were prepared to join if the movement showed any signs of success.

By December 7, all of this enthusiasm had evaporated. No single reason has emerged to explain the abrupt reversal, but Gardiner may have finally convinced the Bishop that the 500 fully armed Métis at the Upper Fort were more than a match for the poorly armed Halfbreeds. More important, however, the Bishop who had been responsible for inciting the Halfbreed resistance experienced a change of heart and declared that 'a civil war is altogether too dear a price to pay for anything wanted on both sides.'²³ The circulation of Riel's November petition of rights, outlining his aims, may also have served to convince many that his real intention was an ultimate union with Canada on honourable but negotiated terms.

John Young Bown, a member of the Canadian parliament and the brother of the former editor of the *Nor'-Wester*, offered the most compelling reason for the failure of the counter-insurgents.

A man of energy could he reach the settlement and organize the English and Protestant halfbreeds would in a very short

time restore authority. The chief danger arises from want of a head and the do nothing policy of the Red River Council.²⁴

Red River had no such man of energy. English Red River, however, was not totally without its leaders. First, there were local leaders at the parish level. Most were mixed-blood descendants of the principal settlers, and few seemed to transcend their immediate community or to have the ability or inclination to provide direction for the entire English half of Red River. Those who were popular at the parish level were individuals like Donald Gunn, Thomas Bunn, and Dr Bird who sat on the Council of Assiniboia, and who were also elected by their parishes to the first meeting with Riel. The Recorder John Black, James Ross and William Hallett did have wider followings but seemed unwilling or unable to provide the leadership and vision required in the hour of crisis.

John Black could have assumed a major role but according to Lionel Dorge's biography of Black in volume X of *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* he was a weak reed indeed. Black was connected by family and inclination to old Red River. Conservative by nature, he preferred a more moderate course of events than that advocated by the Métis. He refused to advocate violence by the English part of the settlement, and very reluctantly assumed, on 23 October 1869, the role of Acting Governor that the illness of William Mactavish forced upon him. Again he only accepted the provisional government's appointment to negotiate with Ottawa at the urging of Bishop Taché. To him Red River was an exhausted settlement that needed the new energy that Canada would bring, a belief that was shared by many of his English-speaking friends in the settlement. He never returned from Ottawa to Red River, refusing the Lieutenant Governorship of the new Manitoba for retirement in Scotland.

At the same time, the Halfbreeds had not yet developed leaders of their own to fill the vacuum created by the reluctant élite. The most logical leader of a counter-insurrection was James Ross, educated at the University of Toronto and son of Alexander Ross, Sheriff and Red River historian. He was, however, not dynamic and too vacillating, one moment appearing to support Riel, the next the Canadians. Furthermore, he was a lapsed Anglican converted to Presbyterianism. In

this sense he could never be anything but an intruder to the Halfbreeds of St. Andrew's. Still, he was the closest thing Protestant Red River had to a spokesman and he was commissioned to represent them at the conventions.

William Hallett, of whom unfortunately little is known, might have been another candidate for the leadership of the Halfbreed cause. He had been in charge of the Halfbreed buffalo hunt and commanded the leader's prestige, but despite his position he lacked the talent and the powerful personality necessary to co-ordinate any movement which included all the Halfbreeds. Furthermore, as a guide for the Dennis survey party he had fallen under the influence of the Canadian party, and instead of taking his own initiatives he looked to them for direction. The inconsistencies in his life appear to have arisen from a personal instability. After the collapse of the Portage-inspired February uprising he committed suicide. No doubt Hallett's self-esteem had been greatly damaged by the attitude of some of the Kildonans and wealthier Halfbreeds who considered him as nothing better than a common criminal because of his role as a conspirator in the Corbett jailbreaks.²⁵ With Hallett's death James Ross grew more attractive to English-speaking Red River and the Halfbreeds. Like the Canadians, the Halfbreeds had no love for Catholicism and wanted either Crown Colony status or annexation to Canada. Believing in the beneficence of the Crown and the integrity of the Canadian government, the Halfbreeds did not fear the Canadian surveyors or the Canadian land speculators, as did the Métis. There was no deep-rooted hatred of John Christian Schultz and the Canadian party, although the caustic Charles Mair was generally despised.

The English-speaking mixed-blood 'establishment' may have feared that the Canadians would come to occupy a more prominent place than they in the social structure of the 'New West'. This fear and resentment probably also extended to the clergy. Most of the Canadians, while Protestant, attended either George Young's Methodist services or the Presbyterian services of Revs. John Black and James Nisbet.²⁶ The Church, it would appear, had both abandoned and been abandoned by old Red River, and it was apparent that in a restructured West it would never regain its old prominence. Even so, a certain amount of socializing did take place, particularly within the mysterious

meetings of the Northern Light Masonic Lodge that had been founded in 1864. There the Red River élite could fraternize with Schultz, the Worshipful Master, and with some of the Protestant and Anglican clergy.²⁷

After Machray's ostensible decision in December to espouse neutrality, the Canadians were ready to seize the first opportunity to assume the leadership of the willing Halfbreeds. It came in February, 1870. Both Mair and John C. Schultz had been jailed in December by Riel when he had seized the government supplies in Schultz's custody. On January 9, Mair escaped to Portage la Prairie where he took shelter with John Garrioch, a prominent Halfbreed. Schultz broke jail on January 23, and fled to the lower Halfbreed parishes of St. Paul's and St. Andrew's. Throughout January Mair held and encouraged secret meetings at the homes of Canadian and Halfbreed settlers in Portage and the neighbouring community of High Bluff. They hoped to raise a force large enough to release the remaining and supposedly greatly suffering prisoners at Fort Garry. Captain C.A. Boulton of the Canadian survey party, reluctant to approve action, partly because Colonel Dennis had commanded him to keep Portage quiet, was in the end persuaded by Mair to assume command. On February 10, sixty men left Portage for Headingley where, because of a blizzard, they were confined to the church and the willing hospitality of Rev. J. Carrie. Four days later, swollen by recruits from the English-speaking parishes along the Assiniboine, the Portage force met Schultz at St. Paul's and from there marched to Kildonan. Succeeding where Ross had failed, Schultz had spent the weeks since his escape encouraging and organizing the resistance of the lower parishes, especially St. Peter's and St. Andrew's. On the morning of February 14, some 500 men, mostly semi-armed Halfbreeds, prepared to march for Saint-Boniface Cathedral. From this strategic position they intended to break the walls of Fort Garry with the single cannon Schultz had brought from the Lower Fort.²⁸ But the force was destined never to leave Kildonan. Riel himself took advantage of yet further Canadian indecision by securing the position at Saint-Boniface. Riel also took the wise course and released the remaining prisoners.

The collapse of the February insurrection was final proof that the Canadians had failed to produce a single dominant leader. Boulton,



John Christian Schultz

continually cautioning peace, doubted the legality of the counter-insurrection and favoured the advice of the clergy to wait for Imperial troops. He maintained that, since Riel had released the prisoners, the principal objective of the expedition had been met. The Canadian Methodist and Presbyterian clergy, as much as they despised Riel, only had a limited following and did not command the respect of the Halfbreeds, even though recently some had again begun to attend their services.²⁹ Schultz, a physically impressive figure, appears to have assumed the leadership of the Halfbreed and the St. Peter's Indians. For some reason, however, he was reluctant to assume the direction of the entire February movement once it arrived at Kildonan. With Boulton and Schultz hesitating and the clergy chattering for peace, the Halfbreeds dispersed in frustration. There is no doubt that had Schultz chosen to lead the Protestant parishes, he could have appealed to their sectarian and Imperial predilections with considerable success, since many were convinced that the rebellions were 'a flame the Jesuits have kindled to exterminate Protestantism.'³⁰

The clergy, on the other hand, made the best of a bad situation. John Black, presumably with the backing of Bishop Machray and Archdeacons McLean and Cowley, sent a letter to Riel withdrawing the Protestant delegates from the Conventions. The move may have been an effort to appease the Halfbreeds, who had already censured their delegates for supporting Riel, and to prevent armed conflict. Another equally probable argument is that the move was conceived by the clergy to pull success out of a faltering military movement and to put a peaceful end to Riel's tyranny. After Riel had seized Saint-Boniface, even Schultz must have realized that attack without preliminary bombardment was futile; but with the withdrawal of the delegates, Riel could no longer pretend to control Red River or to speak for its inhabitants. In the clergy's scheme, Canada could immediately send troops to restore order. It was a clever move and totally in character with the pro-Union sentiments of the clergy and the Halfbreeds, but it, too, failed. A number of the insurgent Canadians were captured by Riel on their way back to Portage la Prairie. Using the threat of executing Boulton, and abetted by the outward compliance of Machray, McLean and Black, Riel forced the Halfbreeds to re-elect delegates to the provisional government.

The dismal failures of the December and February uprisings indicate the transitional state of Red River society. The Halfbreeds had acquired a new identity through the 1860s. Having been parochial settlers whose concern was principally with the internal politics of Red River, they now devoted their energies to Protestantism and support of the Empire. In the process, the Church had been alienated and the Halfbreed élite fragmented. The December insurrection exposed the inability of the Church and the retired fur trade élite to assume the leadership of Protestant Red River. The Canadians then attempted to take the initiative, but their internal problems prevented concerted action and the February uprising collapsed as well.

Le Roc. Pierre De Lorme. Thomas Bunn. Xavier Page. Andre Beauchemin. Baptiste Tereaux.



Pierre Poitras. John Bruce. Bob O'Lone. Louis Riel. W. B. O'Donoghue. Paul Prue. Francois Dauphinais. Thomas Spence.

RIEL AND HIS COUNCIL (1869-70).

(Reproduced from a photograph in the possession of Mr. Bell.)

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The Métis and the Riel Protest

If the English-speaking Halfbreeds applauded the demise of old Red River with its peasant ways and dominant patriarchs, the Catholic French-speaking Métis feared its passing. It was increasingly obvious through the 1860s as drought followed locust plague that the hunt, the fisheries, the freight boat and the cart would provide only the most meagre subsistence. The Métis merchants also feared that union with Canada, with its inevitable railroads and high tariffs, would spell the end of the profitable cart trains to St. Paul and the Saskatchewan country. Equally important, union with Canada would mean a Protestant supremacy; the attacks on the Catholic faith by Red River Protestants in the 1860s had taught the Métis that Protestantism was the Devil Incarnate. The bigots within that faith sought to discredit their Church, their morals, and their lifestyles. The Canadians who invaded the settlement in the later 1860s only tended to confirm the Métis fears.

To the Métis hunters who wintered on the Saskatchewan plains, the debates that raged in Red River from the late fifties onward over the future of the North-West were irrelevant. It was their perception that the Company's despised and indifferent rule was finally at an end. Not all hated the Company with equal passion, but most recognized that the Company of 1869 was not the Company of legend. The great Chief Factors and greater Governors who had established the Company's reputation in the first instance had been replaced by a less inspired and more callous lot, and the decade of the 1860s witnessed a succession of mutinies among the Métis manning the freight boats. The northern brigades were brought to virtual collapse and the Métis boatmen probably viewed the insurrection of 1869 as the most successful mutiny of them all.

Robert Gosman, in a report undertaken for Parks Canada Prairie Region in their project to restore the home of Riel's mother in St. Vital

(‘The Riel and Lagimodière Families in Métis Society 1840-1860’), outlines in detail the differences between the merchant ‘princes’ of Saint-Boniface and the hunting Métis in education, in lineage and in material culture. He argues that Métis society had become more polarized since the 1840s, with more and more goods accruing to the wealthy merchant farmers of Saint-Boniface, Saint-Vital, and Saint-Norbert — a wealth based on the local grain market and on the lucrative St. Paul freight contracts with the Company and other private merchants. Gosman points out that many of these teamster princes had accommodated themselves to the Company and sat on its Councils, all the while retaining pride in their heritage and culture. He emphasizes, however, that the majority of the Métis squatted along the Red and Assiniboine rivers and that while the women tended the poor barley and potato patches, the men pursued the last of the buffalo, traded independently, plied the Company’s freight boats, or participated in the fall fisheries to supplement their shrinking wages.

While this delineation of the two-class community was suggested by Giraud, Gosman was the first to expand the observation to explain in detail the increasing polarization of wealth and power in the Métis half of Red River.¹

The Métis were in competition for the declining resources of the plains and the river lot. An increasing proportion of Red River’s agricultural and livestock wealth accrued to those who had seized the opportunity offered by free trade in furs in the overland carting brigades. An examination of livestock holdings illustrates this growing concentration. For example, the average number of oxen per family increased from 1.3 in 1849 to 1.5 per family in 1868, while the average number of calves rose from .8 to 1.8 and horses from 1.8 to 2.0. But a disproportionate share of this new wealth fell to the merchants and farmers. In 1849 they had rarely had more than the average number of horses; by 1868 they had at least twice the number. The same is true for oxen and calves.²

Wealth was particularly concentrated in the parishes of Saint-Vital, Saint-Boniface, and Saint-Norbert. These parishes produced more than half of Métis Red River’s grain and potatoes and contained most of the livestock. As late as 1867 one-half of the Métis grew no grain. The majority of these were concentrated in the new parishes on

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Union St. Jean Baptiste, Woonsochet, Rhode Island



Louis Riel Sr, and his wife Julie, née Lagimodière. Louis Riel Jr drew much of his support from his mother's family who were prominent merchants and farmera.

the Red and Assiniboine where the plains hunters, the boatmen and some of the freighters had settled.³ Yet it is to be emphasized that Métis economy relied on a careful balance of river lot agriculture and the hunt.

The fragility of the Métis economy was particularly evident in 1868. In 1867 the Métis had harvested some 15,000 bushels of grain; in 1868 the locusts reduced the crop to 1,200 bushels. The potato crop was equally devastated, dropping from 12,000 to 5,000 bushels. Those of means managed to buy from the stored surpluses of English-speaking Red River where the growing disparity between rich and poor was not as evident. The hardest hit — the landless, the squatters, and the labourers — were only saved from starvation by the charity of the Executive Relief Committee of the Council of Assiniboia.⁴

Neither the farmers nor the freighters would rejoice at the Canadian union. Such a connection would spell an end of the commercial and agricultural hegemony of the Saint-Boniface merchant-farmer élite. P.G. Laurie, a Canadian reporter, viewed their predicament with concern, acknowledging the Métis fear that the more energetic Canadians would destroy the freighters by introducing the railroads and tariffs.⁵ Many of the Métis were also afraid that their small, internal grain markets would quickly fall into the hands of the more efficient and 'better connected' Canadian farmer. These economic concerns would probably have predisposed many to accept both Riel's arguments and actions, although no exact documentation exists.

Some of the first Métis to become involved in the resistance were affiliated with the merchant group. John Bruce, the first President of the Métis provisional government, was in the employ of two of the more prosperous Red River merchants. Riel, for his part, drew much of his support from amongst the Lagimodière side of his family who were prominent merchants and farmers. This is not to say that all supported Riel with equal vigour; only that there were reasons for those who did. Pierre Delorme was well aware that the coming of the Canadians would end Métis prosperity. He demanded that titles be granted to the lands the Métis occupied, that 200 additional acres be given for each of their children, and that Indian status be extended to their wives, thus allowing the Métis to benefit from any Indian land settlement. Most importantly, he wanted the tract of land lying south

of the Assiniboine River to be set aside as a self-governing colony free from all taxations. There the Métis merchants would be protected by a free trade zone.⁶ The establishment of this *zollverein* was never given serious consideration, but the Métis merchant group argued vehemently during the Red River conventions for exemption from customs duties. The best they were able to negotiate was a three-year period of grace before the Canadian duties would be applied.

If the merchant farmers provided the vocal support for Riel during the resistance, the Métis boatmen provided the muscle. Marcel Giraud convincingly argues that the spirit of opposition that was prevalent in Red River percolated to the boat brigades of the interior.⁷ The brigades that supplied the interior and brought furs out through York Factory were manned in part from Red River. The boats left in the spring to pick up the supplies stored at Norway House and then headed for Portage La Loche where they arrived usually in July. They picked up the furs delivered from the Mackenzie District there, and delivered them to York Factory usually in early September. At York Factory they loaded up goods for Red River, and returned there by late September. As the Métis from Lower Canada to Red River became attached to the free trade sentiment in the settlement, they became increasingly loath to man the boats on the difficult journeys to York Factory and Portage La Loche. Philip Goldring in his 'Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1900' Vol. II, records in some detail the unrest along the Portage La Loche route in the 1850s.⁸ In one case the Métis refused to wait at York Factory for the arrival of the Company's ships, and returned to the colony without the annual supplies.

There is some evidence to indicate that it was the boatmen wintering in the settlement, as was usual, who manned the Upper Fort and quashed the English counter-insurrections. The tradition of mutiny was an old one and in 1859 the Company had tried to redress the 'unpopularity' of the Company's service by increasing wages and bettering conditions.⁹ Despite these efforts, the situation became so uncontrollable that, in the late 1860s, the Company decided to by-pass the brigade whenever conditions made steamboat or cart traffic viable.¹⁰ William Mactavish had hoped to start by replacing the Saskatchewan brigades and offered this ominous assessment:

It would in the end enable us to do without the Portage boats, the crews of which have now become a perfect nuisance from their mutinous conduct and unwillingness to carry out any engagement.¹¹

The causes of the mutinies were many. While the trip wages of the boatmen increased from £14 to £20 in the early 1860s, they were still well below those offered for general labour either in Canada or the United States, something of which the men were well aware.

Even in Red River itself more money was to be made in haying for the more prosperous farmers than freighting for the Hudson's Bay Company. Secondly, the conditions on the trip were generally intolerable. The boats were poorly repaired, often overloaded, and they frequently broke apart. As if this were not enough, by the early 1860s the free traders had ensconced themselves in the Norway House area and quite enjoyed subverting the Company's brigades. In 1863 at Norway House they plied the Oxford House boatmen with liquor and persuaded them not only to desert the Company, but to trade off the Company's furs.¹²

A more fundamental malaise among the Métis boatmen was the breakdown of the hierarchical, almost military society that had been the backbone of the Company. It was a society in which the men and officers knew their place, and in which each recognized rights and responsibilities of the other. The Company's officers were responsible for the welfare and well-being of their servants. Generally, the men provided the Company with labour. The best of this hierarchical society was seen at the Company's posts in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; but disenchantment was prevalent in the upper ranks as early as the 1820s because of the Company's reluctance to employ the officers' mixed-blood children at anything but menial tasks. The tradition of mutiny had, of course, always been there. The Orkneymen in the Hudson's Bay Company had challenged the 'Compact' with the Company more than once, as had the engagés with the North West Company; but the situation in the 1860s was more serious and final. The change in the Company's management in the 1860s and the retirement of the old officers in the late 1850s resulted in the breakdown of the compact between the servants and officers.¹³

During the winter of 1869-70 the boatmen, as was their habit, returned to Red River for the fall fisheries and a comfortable winter, but when Riel needed men to seize the Upper Fort in order to consolidate his hold on the settlement, the boatmen were ready to sacrifice their comfort in order to harass the Company. After the seizure of Upper Fort Garry, the Company clerk indignantly recorded the approximately one hundred and fifty individual Métis who received cash and sundries that Riel had confiscated. Most of these remained at the Upper Fort from its seizure in the winter of 1869 to the spring of 1870, and in comparing these names with the 1868 Executive Relief Committee census, none, it would appear, were men of property or settlers of even modest affluence. They must have been freighters or labourers.¹⁴ Nor is it likely that there were plains winterers among them, since they were not known to be in the settlement during the resistance of 1869-70. True, the winterers had threatened to become involved, but they seem to have confined their activities to the interior.

If the men at Upper Fort Garry were the boatmen, this would account for the difficulties in the northern brigades in the summer following the insurrection.¹⁵ Of the twelve boat crews initially engaged in Red River for York Factory, only four arrived at Norway House, the others having refused to embark. Similarly, of the nine boat crews scheduled for Portage La Loche, only three would go beyond Norway House and even then there was no guarantee that they would proceed further than the Grand Rapids.¹⁶ The boatmen were so unmanageable that the Company resolved to abandon the boat brigades for overland transport forever. Of course the boat brigades on the Saskatchewan continued into the 70s until the successful introduction of steam.

While the boatmen were enacting their most effective mutiny within the walls of Fort Garry, the uprising of the winterers was confined to the plains. The buffalo were disappearing quickly in the 1860s, and sightings were limited to the South Saskatchewan and Cypress Hills country. Consequently, the shrunken hunting territories increased the potential for conflict between the Blackfeet and Cree, the Cree and the Métis, and the Métis and the Whites.¹⁷ William Mac-tavish was most fearful that they would converge in battle for the last buffalo in the Cypress Hills. The Métis particularly resented the

Company's continuing demands for plains supplies. While they realized that the Company was their livelihood, they also sensed that the continuing demand could spell the end of their way of life. The whole of the plains was ripe for a particularly black and vicious storm.

Initially the winterers from the Saskatchewan River District as far south as Minnesota had every intention of joining the fray at Red River. To them it was not so much a struggle to preserve a Métis lifestyle, as a protest against Company tyranny. In 1869 Mactavish feared that unless the Riel business was settled quickly 'the Country [would] be overrun by a lawless horde of sympathizers from Minnesota and Dakotah [sic] who under the pretext of aiding would assume the direction of the movement.'¹⁸ Mactavish's fears materialized to the extent that the winterers did attempt to seize control of the Saskatchewan and Qu'Appelle districts. In the *New Nation* of 4 March 1870, it was rumoured that in the Shoal and Swan River districts the freemen had leaped to arms, and captured some of Fort Pelly's outposts. While this proved more fiction than fact, the outpost of White Horse Plains was captured and its cattle confiscated and slaughtered. Oak Point and Lake Manitoba posts were also attacked. At Oak Point, Mr Macdonald, the clerk in charge barely escaped being taken prisoner. He was pursued by a number of Métis but managed to reach Manitobah Post safely. There he and eight Scottish servants barricaded themselves in a successful defense against forty Métis. The situation was so threatening that the Chief Factor at Qu'Appelle bundled the furs and slipped them across the border in the dark of the night.¹⁹

The unrest and uncertainty in Red River, on the plains, and on the boat brigades would remain diffused unless it could find a focus. Traditionally radical leadership was provided by the secular nomadic clergy like Father Belcourt and occasionally by laymen like Louis Riel Sr. The Church and Métis establishment at Red River had always been reluctant to become involved in political unrest, and supported the Company. On the plains, Company men like Pascal Breland, Cuthbert Grant's son-in-law, prevented widespread insurrection in the Saskatchewan country.²⁰ In Red River itself, the radical tradition of Father Belcourt and Louis Riel Sr. was resurrected by Riel's son, Louis, and those like Father Ritchot, a natural successor to Belcourt and Thibault. What marked the leadership of the resistance in 1869-70

as unique was not Riel's role but that of the clergy. In the past the bishops had discouraged any involvement on the part of the clergy in Red River politics. So adamant had Provencher been in this that he forced Father Belcourt's exile from Red River. But in 1869 Taché, as much opposed to clerical involvement in secular matters as his predecessor, was absent from the settlement. Furthermore, for the first time in a period of crisis there was a considerable number of secular clergy (Reverends Ritchot, Giroux, Dugast and Allard) in the settlement. Taché's subordinate, Father Lestanc, O.M.I., was so ineffective that the secular clergy, always close to the Métis, could exercise their influence without restraint.²¹ In agreement with Riel for the most part, they supported his actions and government, but this collaboration of religious and secular leadership was not allowed to continue. Upon his return from Rome, Taché circumspectly set about to separate the two. He did so in such a manner as to avoid forcing Métis to choose between the Church and Riel. As a result, after Riel had been forced to flee the settlement, clerical dominance was reasserted. Bereft of secular leadership and having fallen under the baneful controls of Canada, the Métis could only turn to the Church for solace.

The Catholic Church had exerted a substantial influence during the first month of the resistance. Without its support the Métis resistance would have sputtered out. Once the movement gained momentum, however, the clergy opted to counsel and assist Riel rather than to lead the Métis directly. As in previous crises it was the secular rather than Oblate clergy who were the principals supporting Riel. This becomes apparent in the writings of Fathers Jean-Marie Lestanc, O.M.I., and Noel Ritchot, the two clerics who were the most intimately involved in the resistance.

Father Jean-Marie Lestanc, an Oblate, has been traditionally assigned a substantial proportion of the responsibility for directing and encouraging the clergy to support the Métis in their resistance. The fact is, however, that the Oblate Superior, as Taché's administrator, was neither deeply involved, conceded substantial respect, nor kept informed of events during the resistance. Indeed, in August 1869 Lestanc warned the clergy to remain aloof from any activity that might indicate support for Riel.²² That same month he and Father Georges Dugast sent a letter urgently requesting Taché to outline an acceptable

policy for the difficult months ahead.²³ Lestanc must have hoped that Taché's influence might be used to curb the more activist secular clergy. By October, however, Lestanc seems to have altered course. When requested by Colonel Dennis to dissuade the Métis from blocking the Pembina trail, he refused on the basis that the Métis believed the Company and the Canadians to be in collusion and that if the Church intervened it might lose whatever influence it had.²⁴ This may have been the case since Ritchot, who was not on good terms with Lestanc, would have proceeded to encourage the blockade anyway.

By avowing neutrality Lestanc could perhaps hope to exercise moderation. But while moderation may have been his intention, as an Oblate from France he had no love for Canada or the British connection. Indeed there are indications that he had solidly republican sentiments throughout the resistance. He did not, however, attempt to force his position on the provisional government, though it might be imagined that if Riel thought republican thoughts, Lestanc would have offered no objection. But in the end Lestanc proved to be a pragmatist and when it became apparent that Riel was intent upon negotiating with the Dominion, he supported the provisional government by showing it the utmost respect and support.²⁵

The secular clergy were the most intimately involved in the resistance. The causes for this close link between secular clergy and Métis are not clear. Perhaps, as suggested earlier, it was because of their North American roots or because it was the secular clergy, Rev. Noël Ritchot, and Rev. Louis Raymond Giroux and Rev. Joachim Allard, the two chaplains to the Métis provisional government, who became the most closely associated with the Métis cause.²⁶ Ritchot was, however, the principal cleric sustaining the Métis resistance of 1869-70. Born at l'Assomption, Quebec on December 25, 1825 of modest *habitant* parents, he attended the local college and was ordained in 1855. Before coming West in 1862 as curé at Saint-Norbert, he was consecutively a French instructor, vicar at Bertier, an agricultural instructor, and curé at Sainte-Agathe des Monts. In 1868 Ritchot was sent to Quebec at Taché's insistence to seek financial assistance and additional clergy for the troubled settlement. He returned with Rev. L.R. Giroux who had been close to Riel during the latter's student days in Montreal seminary.²⁷

Ever distrustful of the cathedral priests, Ritchot was firmly convinced of the righteousness of the Métis cause and espoused it openly and vigorously. Yet he never instigated any measures or attempted to provide any leadership. He simply used the influence of his office to ensure that Riel maintained union amongst the various Métis of the settlement. On 25 October 1869 the Council of Assiniboia sent William Dease, a loyal Métis of Irish-Canadian ancestry who happened to speak French, to Riel's encampment to urge that planned hostilities be called off. Ritchot not only effectively persuaded Riel's men to remain firm but convinced twenty of Dease's men to swing to Riel. Three days later in a warm three-hour session, Governor Mactavish attempted to reason with Ritchot by urging moderation. Ritchot later misconstrued the tenor of the meeting and claimed that the ailing Governor had supported the Métis cause.²⁸ Circumstantially, then, it would appear that the earlier blockade on the Pembina trail was performed with Ritchot's knowledge, approval, and perhaps even at his urgings.

After the capture of Upper Fort Garry on November 2, Ritchot's influence became distinctly subordinate to that of Riel. It is impossible, however, to determine the precise extent of his influence, or the degree of his subservience. While it can be ascertained that the clergy, especially Ritchot and Giroux, prevented internal schism from breaking out amongst the Métis, the precise nature of their involvement with Riel is not known, nor is the role they played in advising him on the negotiations with Canada. Nevertheless, whatever their influence, Red River believed that the secular clergy were in full support of Riel and in the end this was what mattered.

If in most instances Riel had the sympathy and encouragement of the secular clergy, he did not have that of the Canadian Oblate Bishop, A.A. Taché. Taché was eager for Canada's annexation of the West. He realized just prior to his departure, however, that

*l'avenir...me paraît bien sombre et je le redout. Déjà nous voilà assiégé d'une foule d'étrangers dont les figures sinistre ne semblent pas présager grand chose de bon.*²⁹

He expected only political change to occur during the following autumn and thought he would be back to guide Catholic Red River

during the crucial period of transition. He refused to believe that the Métis were sufficiently educated, energetic, or malicious enough 'pour soutenir la lutte avec les nouveaux venus qui probablement seront a peu près tous des fanatiques du Haut Canada.'³⁰ At best he urged the Métis to secure their land titles before the migrations started. He hoped that perhaps enough educated French-Canadians could be persuaded to come to Red River to balance the influence of the Protestants from Ontario.³¹

In spite of Taché's known refusal to become involved in armed resistance, apparently Catholic Red River believed that the Bishop supported Riel.³² When J.S. Dennis sent an agent in late October to sound out opinion in Saint-François-Xavier, he reported that the priest and nuns there believed that a letter existed indicating Taché's approval of the measures to resist McDougall.³³ It would not have been in Taché's character to write such a letter. Riel, Ritchot, or W. B. O'Donoghue, a former teacher at Saint-Boniface College, may have allowed the rumour to spread in order to ensure the allegiance of the faltering; and it may have been this rumour that prompted Reverends Giroux and Allard to become chaplains to the provisional government.³⁴

Whatever the clergy or the Métis believed, upon Taché's return on March 11 he immediately censured his clergy for their actions. Maisonneuve bitterly informed Father Vegreville that,

il ne paraît pas très satisfait de notre manière de voir les choses, il eut été mieux peut-être d'avoir obligé les métis a laisser la canaille maîtresse du pays.³⁵

Taché had been intent upon assuring immediate, peaceful union with Canada and upon reasserting the Church's position in society. He must have seen that in the Protestant-dominated union with Canada any former connection of the Church of Rome with the provisional government might be exceedingly prejudicial to its interests. Taché rightly feared that the Protestants would wreak vengeance for their sufferings of the past months, both real and imagined, and push Métis Red River, perhaps even the Roman Catholic Church, even further to the periphery of the new west.

Taché let all the clergy know of his displeasure. He withdrew Reverends Giroux and Allard as chaplains to the provisional government. Father Lestanc must have come under particular censure, since he would be held ultimately responsible despite his inability to control the others. After the withdrawal of active support, Taché persuaded Riel to moderate his position. In the first week after his return half the prisoners were liberated, an expedition to spread the resistance into the interior was stopped, and the editor of the *New Nation* was suspended for his American annexational tendencies. In the following weeks all the prisoners were released, a delegation was sent to treat with Canada, the fur posts were restored to the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Union Jack was hoisted on the flag poles of the settlement. Taché gave himself much of the credit for these measures and there is no reason to doubt his word.³⁶

Riel must have realized that he could not counter the Bishop's influence if he were not to alienate further the already hostile Halfbreeds and the small group of Métis under Charles Nolin, a prominent Métis who was more moderate than Riel in his attitude to the transfer. But if Riel was forced to do the Bishop's bidding, the Bishop, for his part, was aware that:

the insurgent party have become habituated to success, they have learned that boldness forms an element in the political affairs, and if at any subsequent time they feel themselves aggrieved, fresh attempts may very possibly be made, as it is possible that the new-comers, or the parties humiliated, may attempt to assume an attitude of superiority, and thus, by wounding susceptibility, produce the most deplorable results.³⁷

It was Taché's use of his position as Bishop, his ability (since he was both French Canadian and Oblate) to reconcile the two factions within the clergy, and his assurances that the intentions of the Canadian government were honourable that brought peace to Red River. Riel could not have continued his resistance after Taché's promises of amnesty without alienating the Church, any of the Métis, and most of the Halfbreeds.

Taché fervently believed that the granting of a general amnesty and the arrival of political government before the military forces which

were not expected to treat the Métis kindly, were the keys to the peaceful resolution of the resistance. He felt that the amnesty had been promised when he passed through Ottawa on his way to Red River in February of 1870, and Ritchot, a delegate appointed by the provisional government to negotiate terms for union, maintained that it had been promised again in May by the Governor General and a representative of the Imperial government. But in spite of continued pressure from Taché, the controversial amnesty was not forthcoming and the troops arrived before the Governor.³⁸

Taché's reaction to the unkept promises was to be expected. While he had been prepared to moderate Riel's influence, he was not willing to go so far in support of the Canadian government as to jeopardize his own connections with the Métis. With the promises of amnesty broken and Riel in exile, the poor Bishop was accused of betraying the cause of his own people, as well as having been betrayed by Canada. He felt that he would no longer function as both the leader of and spiritual advisor to the Métis nation.

It is bad enough to be reviled by one's enemies; I cannot suffer that my people should suspect me of having betrayed them. If we must be unhappy we shall be unhappy together. I can suffer with those who are confided to me, provided I enjoy their confidence; under their contempt I cannot live, because I can no longer serve them.³⁹

Taché chose to stand with his charges, and worked to regain their confidence in the following months. In the end, all the Catholic clergy could do was to remain with their people and attempt to make bearable their ultimate isolation in the Ontario-dominated West.

Even had the amnesty been granted, the situation would have been little different. Taché could do nothing to assuage the hatred caused by Scott's death, or the feelings of injustice on the part of the Halfbreeds who considered the Manitoba Act nothing more than a Catholic and Métis-devised document.⁴⁰ They especially resented the provision for denominational schools that was added after the bill of rights had been approved by the representatives of the Red River community.⁴¹

The lawless vengeance in the months following the arrival of the Governor and troops was indeed unfortunate but expected. Marcel Giraud, a historical anthropologist and one of the Métis' most eloquent historians, described the sad consequences.

Lorsque le Manitoba s'ouvrit à la colonisation moderne, le groupe métis se trouva exposé à la haine passionnée des immigrants de l'Ontario, qui ajoutaient à leurs préjugés traditionnels de race et de religion le désir de venger l'exécution de Scott, ainsi qu'au ressentiment de tous les 'annexionistes' dont l'amour-propre avait souffert d'être contraintes de s'incliner devant le gouvernement provisoire, de subir ses décisions et jusqu'aux sentences d'exil qu'il avait édictées contre les plus turbulents de leurs représentants. Les agressions, les violences de toute sorte qui furent alors dirigées contre les métis, l'hostilité dont ils se sentirent enveloppés dans la société nouvelle, l'isolement où ils furent relégués pendant plusieurs années, aggravèrent les faiblesses inhérentes à leur naturel, à leur formation et à leurs antécédents, et précipitèrent la désagrégation de leur groupe.⁴²

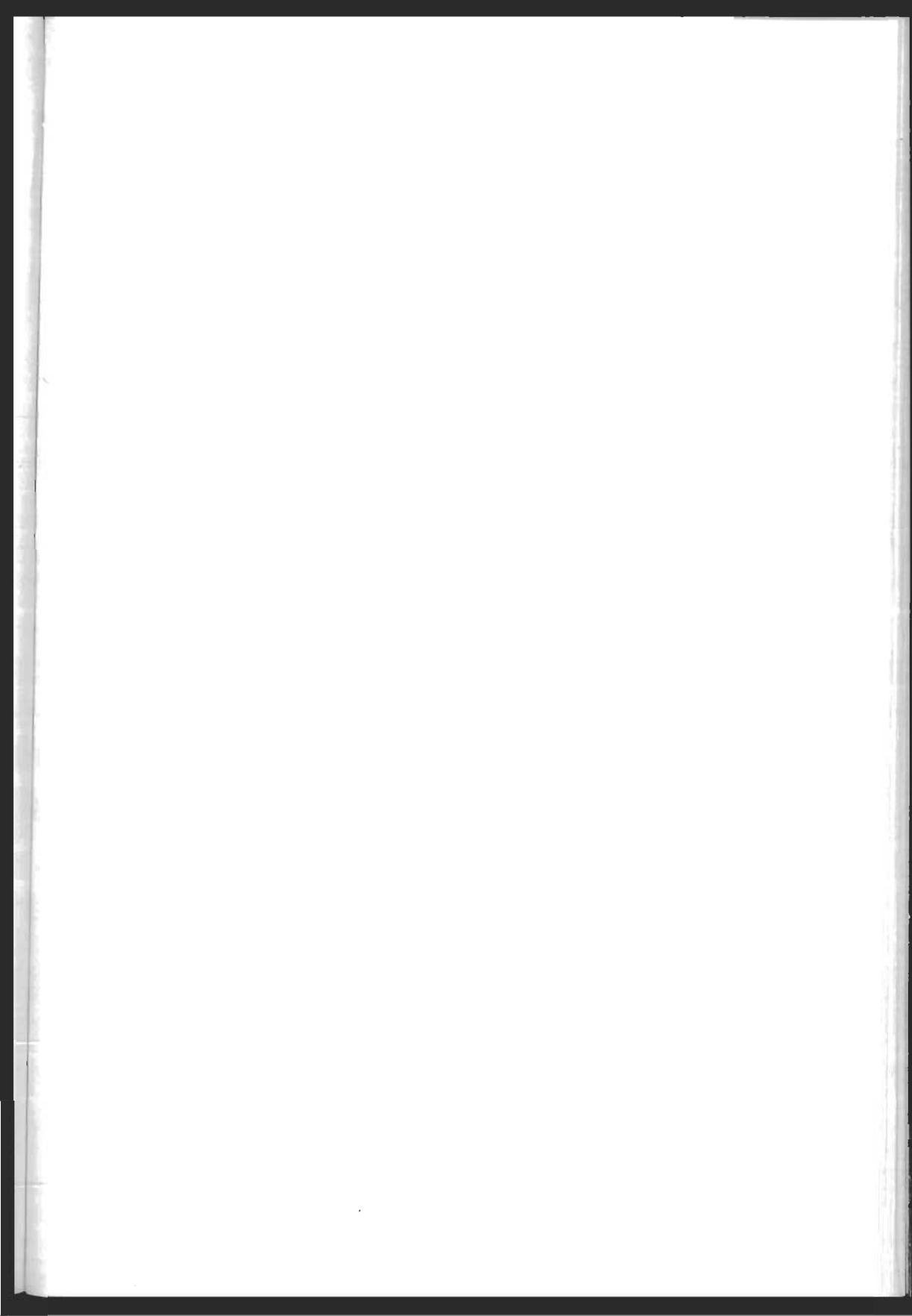
If Red River was irrevocably split between English-Protestant Halfbreed and French-Catholic Métis by the mid-1860s, then Riel's sincere efforts to reunite Red River must be explained. Surely Riel must have realized that united action was impossible. Even after the two counter-insurrections he could incredibly maintain that:

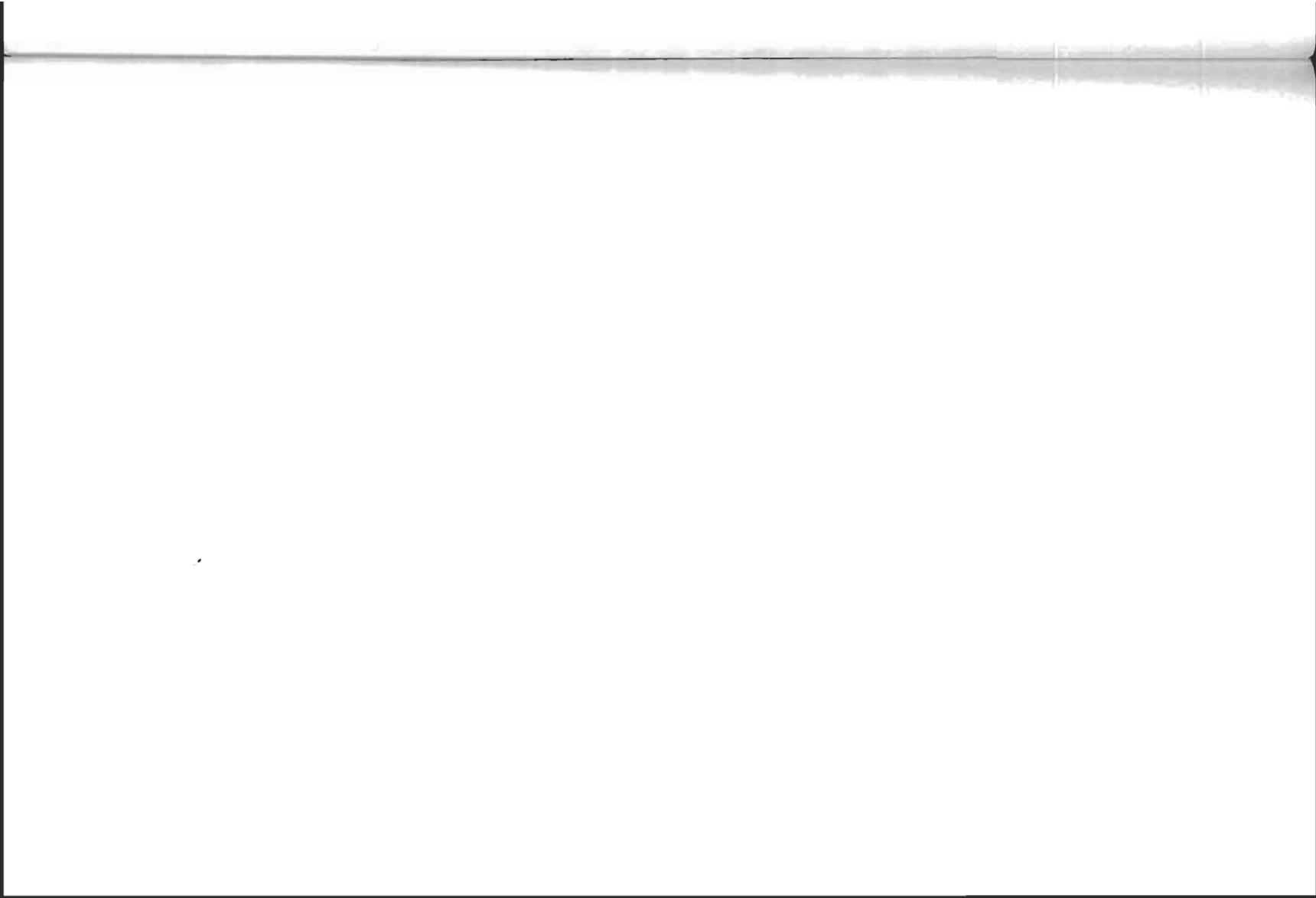
We must seek to preserve the existence of our own people. We must not by our own act allow ourselves to be swamped. If the day comes when that is done, it must be by no act of ours. I do not wish that anything I may do will hurt the stranger; but we must, primarily do what is right and proper for our interest. In this connection, all outsiders are to be looked upon as strangers — not merely Americans, but Canadians, English, Irish and Scotch. All are strangers in the sense that they are outsiders, that they do not appreciate the circumstances in which we live, and are not likely to enter fully into our views and feelings. Though in a sense British subjects, we must look

on all coming in from abroad as foreigners, we must at the same time respect ourselves.....We are peculiar people in exceptional circumstance.⁴³

The remarks were addressed to a Halfbreed and Métis audience, who, Riel was convinced, must stand and were standing together. The unity displayed at the conventions and in the provisional government after February was, however, superficial. The Halfbreeds had been clearly coerced by Riel into acting with the Métis. Their 'support' was nominal and fleeting.

Although one could argue that Riel demanded the allegiance of the Halfbreed to effect a more advantageous union with Canada, it can also be suggested that Riel had failed to understand Red River and the changes it had undergone between his departure in 1858 and his return in 1868. He did not realize the cause of the fragmentation of Red River society, **blaming the increased anti-Catholicism (which was in Red River a criticism of the Métis) on the Canadians** rather than on circumstance within Red River. He failed to understand that half of Red River, including **the English-speaking Protestants and Halfbreeds**, had transferred its sentiments to the British Empire and to a new transcontinental nation, and that they tended to consider themselves first, subjects of the **Imperial Queen** and **second**, mixed-blood brothers of Riel. Riel was **unable to see** that by associating himself closely with the Catholic clergy and vigorously attacking the Canadians he was encouraging the infectious bigotry in all of Protestant Red River, not just amongst the newly arrived Ontarians. He had further divided the settlement; not united it. Appeals to race had less validity than in the past and attempts to unite Red River on this basis would meet with little success. The Red River that Riel had known existed no longer.





10

Conclusion

The forced retirements and the layoffs of the 1820s that resulted from the union of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies, compelled a number of the commissioned gentlemen (especially of the Hudson's Bay Company) and even more of the servants to adapt to the harsh and unsure life of Red River. There the 'society of dependence', with the fur trade's commissioned gentlemen at the top and the tripmen and servants at the bottom was recreated; but the retired officers had neither the social position, the financial resources, nor the inclination to assume the Companies' role at Red River. Furthermore, many of the retired gentlemen did not enjoy the respect and authority that they had been accorded as gentlemen of either Company; they could not as readily command a following in the settlement. Instead, it became the missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, who articulated the pattern of dependence first established by the fur trade companies. Accustomed to look to others for direction, the mixed-bloods found it only natural that the clergy, often at social odds with the élite and therefore seemingly independent of the Company, should increasingly take the place of the gentlemen. This is not to say the process was instantaneous or even perceptible to the community; only that over the decades a strong tendency was present.

The Protestant clergy was singularly imbued with a clear purpose; to Christianize and to civilize. The two were, in their minds, inextricably connected, one inconceivable without the other. The poverty-stricken Halfbreed, the majority often more Indian than European in culture, sought the best of the good life of the fur trade as lived by the commissioned gentlemen and the missionaries. They looked to the clergy both as the link to the spiritual world and to an increasingly sedentary and agricultural existence. This is not to say they wanted to abandon their semi-nomadic lifestyle; only that they

were aware that a viable agricultural component could offer greater stability. The combination of a difficult climate with techniques of husbandry peculiar to European conditions dictated continued failure or at best only modest success. The continuous need for renewed assistance at the beginning of the growing seasons tended to encourage the Halfbreed to rely on the missionary.

The missionaries, however, failed to provide the leadership and cohesion that the Company and the Halfbreeds had envisioned they could bring to Red River. Instead they accentuated the struggle for status within the *élite*, and intensified racial and religious differences. Indeed it has been argued that the Protestant clergy, taken as a group, acted as the principal disintegrative force in the settlement. On the other hand, their counterparts among the Catholic establishment, having been excluded from the *élite*, played only a peripheral role in the process of fragmentation.

The Protestant missionaries were generally from lower class backgrounds with few pretensions in the Old Country. Upon arrival in Red River, however, they found their status considerably enhanced. In Britain, they had been clerics with marginal livings, often from the lower rungs of society. In Red River they consorted with the wealthy fur trade aristocrats and set the social pace for an entire settlement.

Among the *élite*, many of whom had country marriages with mixed-blood wives, the clergy encouraged a slavish recreation of a little white Britain in the wilderness. This in itself created intolerable tensions within the colony, since the Protestants were convinced that the Indian and Halfbreed were inferior to the European, and that, regardless of even the most noble effort to civilize them, they could never be his equal. For a white man to marry a Halfbreed or Indian was to ensure the debasement of Christianity and the Britannic race. Under considerable pressure to eradicate the dark, unmitigable stain of heathen blood, some of the Protestant *élite* abandoned their Indian and Halfbreed wives for white wives soon after the coming of the missionary. Such actions accomplished little, however, since the clergy also found many of the new white women unacceptable because of their class origins. Conversely, both the white and Halfbreed wives of the commissioned officers felt that the clerical families were grasping for positions they did not merit. The result was a vicious social war in

which everyone struggled to maintain his status and in which gossip was the chief weapon in the arsenals of both camps. The Whites wished to remain above the Halfbreeds, the Halfbreeds wanted equality with the Whites, the commissioned officers and their families struggled to maintain their position above the clerical establishment, and the clerical establishment strove for equality with the commissioned gentlemen and their families.

The skirmishes in the war of gossip escalated through the 1840s and erupted into a battle of attrition in 1856. All the tensions that had been held in check by the safety valve of malicious gossip became the open sores of the 1850s. The energy that had once been devoted to the creation of a 'little Britain in the wilderness' was suddenly channelled into the open exclusion of 'undesirable elements' from 'high society'. The Ballenden scandal of 1851 opened deep schisms between the clergy and the Halfbreeds, and the Presbyterians and the Anglicans. Excluded by the élite of Red River, the clergy and their followers turned inward upon a society of their own creation, distinct and isolated, but still powerful enough to dominate society for a few years after the scandal. Although detailed social evidence is lacking for later years, there is much to suggest that there was never a complete healing of the schism.

The fragmentation caused by the clerical effort to create a 'little Britain' was evident in the 1840s. In their attack on the rights and privileges of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Halfbreeds were encouraged to seek the leadership of the clergy, whose social battles with the commissioned gentlemen had created the notion that they were in sympathetic opposition to the Company. In reality, they supported the Company as the bulwark of law, order and status. Denied reliable leadership, the Halfbreeds compounded their isolation by refusing to join the Métis because of a clerically fostered reluctance to associate with the followers of the 'Papal Anti-Christ'. In the 1840s such religious animosity was sufficient to prevent a unified attack against the Company monopoly; in the next decades it grew to such intensity as to cause open sectarian struggles. The Halfbreed, without a unique national past like the Métis, began to realize that he belonged neither to Métis nor to European Red River.

By the early 1860s the internal tensions in Red River, aggravated by the demographic, political, and religious crises of the 1850s, had so intensified that the Halfbreeds were prepared for a dynamic leader who would guide them out of the morass of poverty and alcoholism that began to engulf Red River. A persistent Anglican schemer, the Rev. G.O. Corbett, felt that political change would solve Red River's economic and social problems. He aroused the Halfbreeds against the Company, the Catholic Church, and eventually their own clergy in his endeavours to secure Crown Colony status. Red River split into irreconcilable anti-Corbett and pro-Corbett factions. The first included most of the clergy, the Bishop, and the Métis, who disliked Corbett's anti-Catholicism; and the second, the poorer Halfbreeds. When Corbett found himself involved in an unsavoury abortion scandal, he claimed it was a Company plot to discredit him. Animosity grew so intense that all of the older Red River clergy were forced to leave the settlement. The Halfbreeds emerged from the crisis despising the Catholic Métis and abandoned by their clergy, but convinced that their destiny lay with the Protestant Britannic Empire. They were equally convinced that the Company, the Métis, and even their own clergy were not willing to accommodate that destiny.

The Corbett crisis prepared the Halfbreeds for a shift in political allegiance, and they remained in wait for the six years it took to formalize the procedure. Abandoned by, and having abandoned their clerical leaders, and indifferent or hostile towards the Métis, the Halfbreeds were ready, perhaps even eager, for the transfer to Canada. But having thrown off the clergy, they were not ready to strike out on their own. After Corbett they looked to dynamic Canadians like John Christian Schultz for leadership. The ineradicable habit of dependence taught by the fur trade and the missionary lingered.

For the Halfbreeds then, the Riel resistance was an obstacle to the political fulfilment of a new potential that was revealed by Corbett in 1863. Having faith in Canada and longing to be fully acceptable Canadian members of the Britannic Empire, they did not have the same desire to protect their religion and language that, for the Métis, was a strong unifying force. Twice they attempted to overthrow Riel, failing in the first instance because of a misplaced hope for clerical support that could not be, and in the second instance because the disorganized

Canadians were still in the process of assuming their tenuous leadership of Red River. Had the Canadians been more unified and more forceful, it is almost certain that armed conflict on a sizeable scale would have erupted between the Halfbreeds and the Métis.

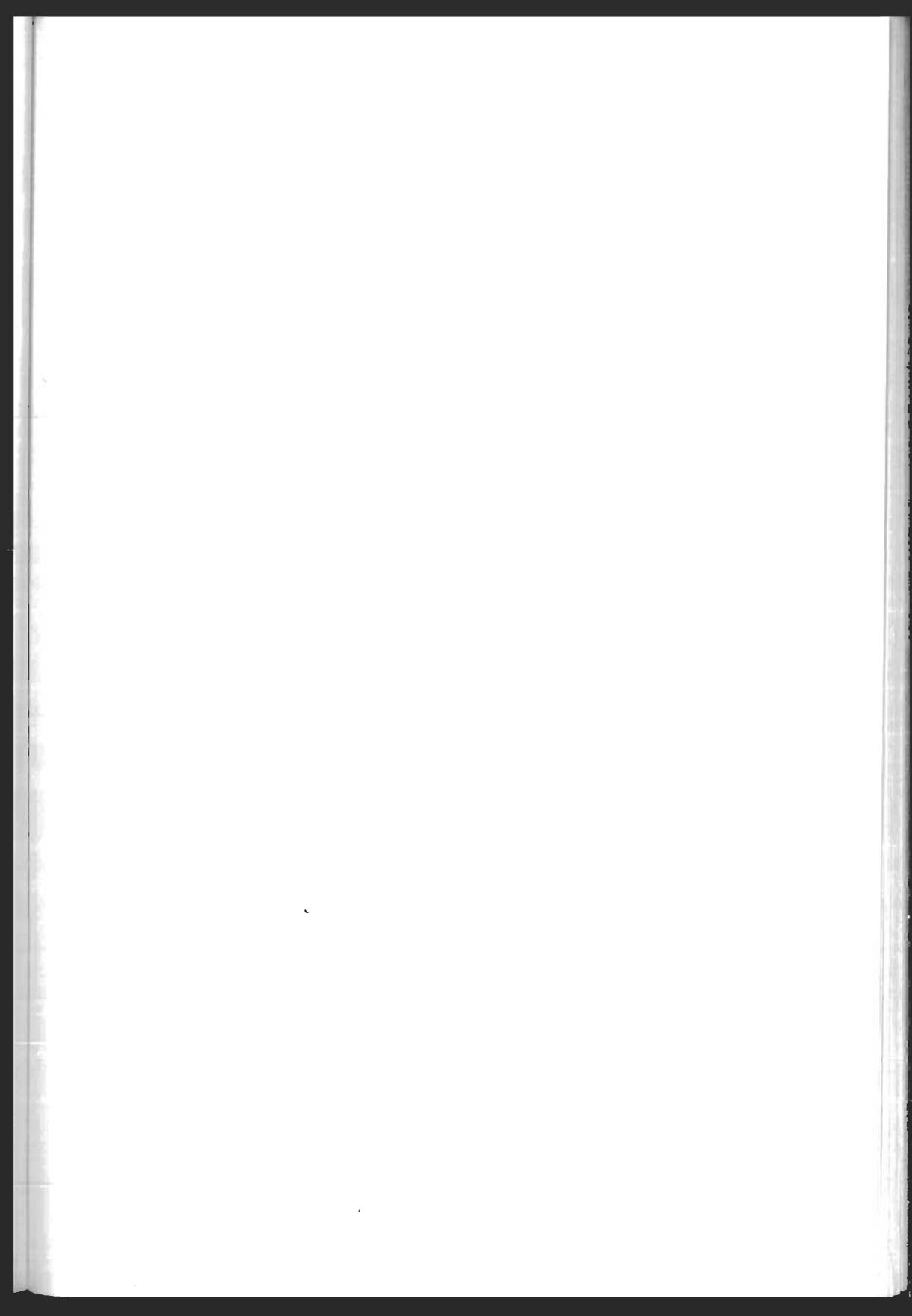
The history of the Métis and the Catholic clergy was quite distinct from that of the Halfbreeds. Their unique identity had been formed during the early years of the settlement, when the Catholic Church emerged as a newly intrinsic part of Red River. Yet neither the Métis nor their priests were ever fully integrated into Red River's social structure. Because the Métis and the clergy were kept on the periphery of the élite that dominated Red River's affairs, and because the Catholic clergy had no wish to create a new France or a new Quebec in the wilderness, they were little affected by the socially dictated remarriages of the 1830s, or the scandals of the 1850s and 1860s. Generally they reacted to, rather than initiated the events that changed Red River's social structure.

Ignored by the élite, the Catholic clergy concentrated on matters spiritual and temporal among their Métis flock. But not all the Catholic clergy were on intimate terms with the Métis in their care. It was the nomadic and secular clergy, recruited from French Canada, accustomed to the life of the backwoods and willing to participate in the hunt, who established the closest relationship. The sedentary clergy were confined, for the most part, to teaching duties at Saint-Boniface and rarely followed the Métis to the plains.

Because the secular clergy were in such close contact with the Métis, they openly sympathized with the opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly and the resentment directed toward the arrogant injustices of its Recorder, Adam Thom. Still the Bishop and the Oblate clergy were reluctant to attack the Company, convinced as they were of their duty to preserve the state, and of their belief that the Company was the only shield against the approaching Protestant bigotry of Ontario. Thus, whenever the Company was under attack, as it was in 1849, the Bishop attempted to curb the enthusiasm of his secular priests with the authority of his office, even to the extent of transferring troublesome clergy to other dioceses. In effect, the Métis looked to the Church for leadership, received it from an understanding secular clergy, then found any attempt at action neutralized by the

Bishop, to whom all owed obedience. Nevertheless, confidence in the secular clergy remained sufficient to prevent the creation of an independent lay leadership. During the Red River resistance the secular clergy especially Father Ritchot, actively led the Métis against the Company and Protestant Red River as a result of Bishop Taché's absence. The moment he returned to the settlement their leadership subsided.

By 1869 Red River was a society whose Catholic and Protestant parts were pitted one against the other. It was a society in which White looked down on mixed-blood, Catholic suspected Protestant, Halfbreed distrusted Métis, and clergyman opposed commissioned gentlemen. The tensions emerged first between the clergy and the commissioned gentlemen, and were easily discernable by 1830. Passions remained submerged, however, until 1851, when a peculiarly nasty scandal involving the Protestant clergy split the colony's élite into its Halfbreed white, and clerical fragments. By the late 1850s, the Halfbreeds, the Catholic clergy and their charges, the Métis, had been infected by the dissension and by 1865 the whole settlement was on the verge of sectarian and racial war. The end result was the 'civil war' of 1869. If there was in the end little conflict, it was because the Catholic Métis were rendered inactive by the ineffectual leadership of their own clergy, more concerned as they were with their own internal feuds. By 1869 Red River society had so ruptured that it lacked any cohesion. Consequently it offered only a weak resistance to the new immigrant society from Ontario.





Alexander Ross, historian, trader and early settler at Red River. Udated.

PAM

PAM



Mary Ross, wife of Rev. George Flett (right), and one of Alexander Ross's large mixed-blood family. c. 1890

PAM



HISTORIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

A great deal has been written on the Selkirk years of Red River and even more on its annexation to 'the Empire of the St. Lawrence' in 1869. The years between the concern of this book have received less attention. These were not only critical years of intermittent crises, but also years of relative stability, prosperity and consolidation which attempted to nurture a community with a unique identity and sense of purpose. Since Alexander Ross published *The Red River Settlement* in 1856, historians have tried to come to grips with the character of this exotic mixture of Scottish peasants, Halfbreeds and fur traders. Ironically only Alexander Ross succeeded. Other historians have imposed interpretations contrived from central Canadian, British or American environments; while they have unearthed quantities of detailed information, they have been able to assess it only from the perspective of London, Montreal or St. Paul, not Red River itself. They perceived that the dynamics that shaped Red River were externally rather than internally generated and lost their most important analytical tool in the process.

Alexander Ross, the most prolific writer and holder of offices in the pre-1870 West, was Clerk to the Pacific Fur Company, the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company, Sheriff of Assiniboia and member of its Committee of Public Works and Finance, Commander of the Volunteer Corps, Magistrate of the Middle District, Governor of Gaol, Collector of Customs, ex-officio President of the Court in the Upper District and Elder of the Presbyterian Church at Frog Plain. He wrote three books at Colony Gardens, his home, in Red River. His first two books were based on careful and detailed journals written during his years in the Pacific North-West; his third book, *The Red River Settlement*, appeared shortly before his death. The best single piece of writing on Red River, the history clearly illustrates Ross's belief that the motley, quixotic settlement at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine had a predestined purpose. To Ross, Red River was a nucleus of Christian civilization. Through Selkirk the settlement had been ordained to bring this civilization to the heathen. But in this, Red River had failed. Its sons did not comprehend their divine purpose and their colony was smothering under the weight of its own ignorance.¹

Despite his pessimism, Ross was tireless in his devotion to his community, his church and especially his mixed-blood children. He attempted to ease them through the brutal shock of civilization when he could, but he suspected that neither they nor the other mixed-bloods had the skills to survive. In Ross's opinion, the feuding and incompetence of the missionaries, rather than the Hudson's Bay Company or the environment, were to blame for this sorrow. Convinced that the Company's monopoly was necessary, Ross felt that complete free trade would be ruinous to Rupert's Land. He further argued that the Métis' ill-considered cry for free trade could have been contained, had it not been for the oppressive racism of Adam Thom, the first Recorder of Rupert's Land.

Other historians who share Ross's methodology and his general observation that Red River was moribund also saw Red River from the inside. Joseph James Hargrave (1841-1894) was a Red River fur trader early in his career and son of James and Letitia Hargrave; Alexander Begg (1839-1897) was a journalist, merchant, civil servant and immigration agent; and Donald Gunn (1797-1878) was a Smithsonian Institute Corresponding secretary, fur trader and leading citizen. Their histories, Hargrave's *Red River*, Begg's *The North West* and Gunn's *Manitoba*, all fail, however, to acknowledge the mission that Ross assigned to the settlement.² In the later nineteenth century when Hargrave, Begg and Gunn were writing, Red River had already been seduced by the prosperity that union with Canada offered. Immigration, railroads and wheat soon supplanted the missions and the fur trade as the focus of Red River society.

Gunn was particularly happy to see the end of the Red River Settlement and the dominance of the Hudson's Bay Company. A staunch defender of the Selkirk colonists, he believed that the Company's every move was a conspiracy to destroy the vitality of the settlement. Hargrave's views, if indeed he can be said to have any, were those of a Company employee and a member of the Red River élite. He supported the Company, and despised the malignant Canadians and their newspaper, the *Nor'Wester*. Nevertheless, he too was a pragmatist and he looked longingly toward union and prosperity.

The twentieth century marked a re-orientation of Red River historiography and witnesses the first efforts at academic analysis.

R.G. MacBeth (1854-1934), was a native of Kildonan, a lawyer and a clergyman; George Bryce (1844-1931), was corresponding secretary to the Manitoba Historical, Literary and Scientific Society, a Presbyterian clergyman and the founder of Manitoba College. To both writers, Red River became an arcadian Utopia:

The primitive history of all the colonies that faced the Atlantic — when the new-found continent first felt the abiding foot of the stranger — from Oglethorpe to Acadia, reveals, alas! no Utopia, a transplant of elder habitudes, where the rancour of race, caste and rule was found to be too ingrained to yield to even the softening influence of such a sylvan paradise as Virginia. It remained for a later time, — the earlier half of the present century, amid every severity of climate, and under conditions without precedent, and incapable of repetition — to evolve a community in the heart of the continent, shut away from intercourse with civilized mankind — that slowly crystallized into a form beyond the ideal of the dreamers — a community, in the past, known faintly to the outer world as the Red River Settlement which is but the by-gone name for the one Utopia of Britain.³

Above all the Selkirk colonists were glorified for their struggles to preserve the West for Confederation, for it was 'the opening of the West (that made) Canada complete'.⁴ The function of the Selkirk settlers as seen by Ross was augmented by MacBeth. They were now not only God's instrument of civilization, but also his instrument for preserving the West for Canada. In MacBeth's mind the two were not mutually exclusive.

Father A. G. Morice (1859-1938), British Columbian missionary and founder of *Le Patriote de L'Ouest*, and A. de Trémaudan, a French-Canadian teacher, real estate agent, lawyer and newspaper editor, can also be grouped with Bryce and MacBeth, despite their vicious feud over a number of specific issues in Métis history. Where MacBeth and Bryce emphasized the Selkirk influence, Morice and Trémaudan dwelt on Métis nobility and the Métis emerged as unblemished as the Selkirk settlers.

Il avait d'excellentes qualités. Gai et expansif avec les siens, strictement honnête et sans souci de l'avenir, hospitalier pour les étrangers et généreux jusqu'à l'imprudance, il passait sa vie advenruese soit à la pêche, comme guide de caravanes, ou bien à la chasse du bison. Par ailleurs il était naturellement religieux et respectueux de l'autorité.⁵

Morice and Trémaudan argued that Riel thwarted American annexation and brought self-government first to Manitoba and then to the Northwest. MacBeth and Bryce had established the place of Selkirk's contribution. Morice and Trémaudan hoped that the Métis contribution would gain a similar recognition through the establishment of a dual Northwest both Catholic French-speaking, mixed-blood, and white English-speaking Protestant.

The reasons for this glorification of the Red River's past by these historians cannot conclusively be established without a great deal more research, but Carl Berger's *The Sense of Power* (Toronto, 1970) is helpful. Berger argues that the Canadian nationalism of the 1880s emphasized historical antecedents, stimulated an interest in history, and most important,

depended for its credibility upon the assumption that the past contained principles to which the present must adhere if the continuity of national life was to be preserved.⁶

In the nineteenth-century Canadian terms it was the Loyalists who embodied all the past virtues of the new nation. The Selkirk settlers and the Métis were the Loyalists' western counterparts. The myth that they were the distilled essence of what the West had become was fostered by early Red River Canadian settlers like Frank Larned Hunt, and Kildonan descendants like MacBeth. Morice and Trémaudan also would have been susceptible to the nostalgic myth because of the disasters that had befallen the Métis in the decades after Confederation. A didactic perception of the western past that extolled idyllic agrarian life, Canadian and Imperial connections, and (in Morice's and Trémaudan's case) ethnic duality, was imperative if the new west of the twentieth century was to achieve an acceptable identity within the Canadian historical tradition.

When Harold Innis, in Toronto; A. S. Morton, a Saskatchewan history professor and archivist; and E. E. Rich, the editor of the Hudson's Bay Record Society and Professor of History at Cambridge University, trained their attention on western Canada, the history of the Red River was subordinated to their more pressing interest in the fur trade. To Innis, Red River was merely a convenience that absorbed the fur trade's cast-offs while serving as the transportation and provisioning hub for the Saskatchewan and Athabasca hinterlands. Because of the St. Paul influence he also saw Red River as the weakest link in the east-west economic and geographic chain that bound the Canadian nation, a nation that had emerged 'not in spite of geography, but because of it'.⁷

On the other hand, the westerner, A. S. Morton in his *The History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (Toronto, 1939) saw the fur trade as a sub-regional, rather than national or even western unifying force. It was not Canada, but the four sub-regions of the Northwest — the tundra, the shield, the prairies and the Pacific mountains — that were united by the fur trade. The west was fractured because of its disparate geography and only unified by the administrative structure of the Hudson's Bay Company. While Morton cannot be labelled as an adherent of any one school of history, his great concern with geography does place him very loosely with those who would see the environment as history's principal motive force. Yet in spite of these differences Morton's interpretation of Red River between 1830 and 1868 differed little from Innis's analysis. His examinations of political and social detail were only embellishments on Innis's rather disjointed and thoroughly unsatisfactory study of the pre-1870 West. The impression given by Morton's manuscript footnotes to *The History of the Canadian West to 1870-71*, in the University of Saskatchewan Archives, is that he was exhausted by the last chapters and much of his writing on Red River was done with less than his usual care.

Morton divided the history of Red River into three chronological periods: 1817-1840; 1840-1859 and 1860-1869. The first period was one of stability, and the last, one of growing political polarization. This was a departure from the commonly accepted Red River chronology. Previously, 1827, the year after the great flood which drove many of the undesirable elements from the settlement and consequently set the

ethnic mix for Red River; 1849, the year of the Sayer trial which saw the 'breaking' of the Company's abhorrent monopoly, and 1869, the year of the great Riel uprising which finally 'freed' Red River from the Company's tyranny, were the common dividing dates.⁸

In the final analysis Morton's major contribution to Red River historiography was not his moderate and credible environmentalist interpretation, nor his slight alteration of the traditional periodization of Red River history, but his minute consideration of the formidable Hudson's Bay Company Archives. Unfortunately, he had failed to consult the supplementary material in the missionary archives and many of his statements regarding the Red River clergy, the settlement's most important element of social control, were overgeneralized and misleading. The critical importance of William Cockran who almost single handedly founded and ruled St. Andrew's, the most important English-speaking, mixed-blood settlement, is altogether ignored. Having neglected the Church of England Halfbreeds of the Upper Red River parishes in favour of the more flamboyant Métis, Morton was prompted to make the false generalization that Red River was a 'little Quebec'.⁹ Red River was rather a community equally influenced by Indian, Scot, Métis, Halfbreed, Canadien and Canadian.

From the work of A.S. Morton a logical historiographical step was the production of a series of detailed scholarly studies on various aspects of pre-1870 western Canadian history, with at least one on Red River 1830-1869. E. E. Rich's three-volume *Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto, 1960) dealt with corporate history of the single most important business entity in the pre-1870 West.¹⁰ Only four of thirty-one chapters, however, dealt with the settlement. The major social conflicts (the Presbyterian-Anglican burying-yard controversy and the Ballenden scandal), so important to explaining the distinctive forces at work in Red River, are only superficially inserted into the narrative. Rich understandably fails to see that the conflict over the Presbyterian right to bury in Anglican consecrated ground or the alleged sexual improprieties of Mrs Ballenden, a mixed-blood, fractured the community once and for all amongst its white and mixed-blood, its Métis and Halfbreed, its Catholic and Protestant and its Anglican and Presbyterian parts. Basically Rich contended that Red River was the source of an agricultural and free trade threat to the Company's rights

as granted by the Charter. But these threats were met and in 1849, while the Company abandoned its 'legal defences', it certainly did not lose economic control. The Company now would not use the courts to enforce its hegemony; rather, it would ruthlessly exercise its considerable economic power to eliminate the free traders. Prices were cut in areas of competition and furs trapped to extermination. That economic control of the Plains was lost by 1857 is well illustrated by Alvin C. Gluek in his *Minnesota and Manifest Destiny of the Canadian North West* (Toronto, 1965).

This concentration by Innis, Morton and Rich on Red River in the context of the fur trade was not as great a departure from the themes in the works of Hargrave, Begg, Bryce, MacBeth, Morice and Trémaudan as might be thought. They sought to justify union with Confederation by events in the romantic Red River past, whereas Innis, Morton, and to a lesser extent Rich attempted to justify Confederation by geography. Red River, the focus of the fur-trade hinterland, provisioned the staple trade that welded the Saskatchewan, Columbia, Nelson and Mackenzie river systems to that of the St Lawrence. Whatever the nuance in argument, or however scholarly the research, Confederation was seen as the millennium for the pre-1870 Canadian West.

With the appearance of John Perry Pritchett,¹¹ Alvin Gluek¹² and J.S. Galbraith,¹³ Red River became the concern of the frontier historian. Pritchett saw Red River at the heart of the North American continent. It lay at the junction of three drainage basins, the St. Lawrence, the Nelson and the Mississippi, controlled respectively by Canada, the Hudson's Bay Company and the United States, but the Nelson basin capitulated to the indigenous Red River Métis in 1849. They retained virtual independence until annexation by the 'Empire of the St Lawrence' in 1869. To Pritchett this fate was not final.

What the next or the most permanent outcome of this triple tug will be, no one knows. Will the West become independent, as Riel seemed to wish, and trade by way of the Nelson drainage basin? Will it form with the Mississippi drainage basin an economic union? — a political union? Or will it resist the pressure from both the Nelson and the Mississippi systems

and remain indefinitely, both politically and economically, a vassal of the St. Lawrence?¹⁴

The struggle of the river basins masked an equally important internal struggle. Pritchett imposed a frontier-tainted, Whig interpretation on the Red River past. One of the 'nurseries of democracy', Red River fought the traditional battle against 'vested autocratic interests', in this case the Hudson's Bay Company. Effective 'self-government' was seen by Pritchett as an achievement of the Sayer 'insurrection' of 1849, but no conclusion could have been more absurd!¹⁵ The Company did not capitulate in 1849 and the Council of Assiniboia remained under the Company's influence after this date. Furthermore, Red River society could not be construed as democratic. The clergy and fur-trade aristocracy, for the most part adherents to the Company's society, lost their dominance only during the social disruptions of the 1860s.

Gluek, in his *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian North West* (Toronto, 1965), provided a well documented and researched addition to Pritchett's river-basin thesis. The Red River Valley, Gluek asserted, was a geographic extension of Minnesota. The natural tendency to political absorption by Minnesota failed because of Minnesota's economic collapse in 1857, the Sioux and the Civil Wars of 1861-66, the Hudson's Bay Company, the activities of Canada, and the preference of the people of the Red River. Gluek was not as hostile to the Company as was Pritchett. Instead he sympathetically documented the Company's continuing battle for that most important fur-bearing northern district.¹⁶ To him the struggle for Red River was a commercial one, not a territorial struggle of conflicting political powers.

Gluek, unlike Pritchett, revealed little of the inner workings of Red River society. He accepted A. S. Morton's view that 1840 was the year Red River acquired its permanent character, though he studiously avoided footnoting Morton.¹⁷ Perhaps more disconcerting is the impression that Gluek was uninfluenced by M. Giraud's *Le Métis Canadien* and that his conclusions regarding the English parishes of Red River were based on a few documents appended to W.L. Morton's edition of Begg's *Red River Journal*.¹⁸ Most important, he over-

emphasized the American impact on Red River while the English, though not the Canadian, impact was ignored.

While Gluek concentrated on the American connection, Galbraith in his *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor 1821-1869* (Toronto, 1957) was concerned with the Hudson's Bay Company and the Imperial Government policies toward the monopoly, free trade and the settlement frontier. While the volume is invaluable as a comment on British policy, the sections dealing with Red River had been, for the most part, superseded by Gluek's and Rich's more extensive though by no means definitive works.¹⁹

The major contribution of the frontier school of Red River historiography has not been its insight into the Red River past, but rather its questioning of Innis's argument that Canada was a nation because of its geography. Red River's major overland connections were southward and only political and military factors ensured that Red River would be Canadian.

It was through the imaginative labours of Marcel Giraud, the French ethnologist, that Red River history broke from the historiography of competing river basins, commercial powers and imperial designs. His monumental work, one of the milestones in Canadian history, still provides the most exciting interpretation of the Red River settlement and serves as the impetus for much recent study. His most famous western Canadian exponent has been W. L. Morton. The change Giraud produced in Morton's work on Red River is startling. Morton's first essay, 'The Red River Parish' written in 1936, reflected the grip of the fur-trade school: 'The Settlement was an adjunct, not of civilization but of the fur trade'.²⁰ It was a suggestive article and posed a still unanswered question about the allegiance of the Red River inhabitant to his parish, ethnic group or the settlement at large. But, based as it was on a fur-trade thesis, the article was antithetical to the Giraud paradigm which Morton first clearly accepted in his 'Agriculture in the Red River Colony', *Canadian Historical Review* (1949) and in his appreciative review of Giraud's *Le Métis Canadien* (Paris, 1945) in *The Beaver* (1950).²¹

Giraud traced the history of the Métis in thirteen hundred well researched, impeccably footnoted pages. Three hundred concerned Red River. The Red River past was divided into two periods 'les

années d'incertitude' (1818-1827) and 'les années de stabilisation' (1828-1869). These latter forty years were for the Métis, 'les années les plus heureuses'. Yet it was a life of precarious equilibrium, balanced between the hunt, the trip, the river lot and the fisheries, a life symbolic of Red River itself:

In the Red River colony civilization and barbarism met and mingled. On the one hand was the sedentary agricultural economy of the colony, on the other the nomadic hunting economy of the plains.... The result was a society quaint and unique, in which were reconciled the savagery of the Indian and the culture of Europe.

Giraud and Morton observed that civilization failed to bridle the Métis; that their nomadism was self-perpetuating and inescapable. Indeed, they argue, how could it be otherwise, given the attitude of the clergy, the needs of the Hudson's Bay Company, the economic stagnation of Red River and the Company's continued opposition to an always faltering agriculture? They see that the constant intercourse with the Indians and the never-ceasing influx of Métis from the plains further reinforced the tendency to 'barbarism'. To them the clergy and 'la bourgeoisie', the only elements of stability, could hardly be other than ineffective counterpoints. It was a way of life, 'as swiftly transient as a prairie cloud', and it could exist only,

dans un pays dont l'économie prédominante respecte la nature primitive et dont le gouvernement est animé d'une mentalité statique, réfractaire aux innovations profondes.²²

To Morton the Métis tendency to free trade weakened the very government that protected their existence. In 1869,

civilization (would triumph) over barbarism, the sedentary over the nomadic way of life, the Métis who were intermediaries between the two — the personification of the equipoise of the Stone Age and the Industrial Revolution which was the fur trade — (would be) shattered.²³

Yet the Giraud/Morton hypothesis only accounts for the Métis experience. The English-speaking Halfbreed, the Kildonan settler, and

the agents of the Church Missionary Society were nowhere satisfactorily examined. The religiously and ethnically distinct parishes may not have been as interconnected as Giraud and Morton believe.

Unfortunately, while interest in Selkirk and Riel continues unabated, interest in Red River remains minimal. Only the frontier school, within its constant attempt to justify Confederation, continues to dote on Red River. There are always the graduate students, but they have tended, with some exceptions, to offer marginally researched narrative histories devoid of complex interpretation. The Red River past must be attacked with sophisticated weapons. Demographic studies of each parish and the internal dynamics of the community must be undertaken. Sylvia Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties* (Winnipeg, 1980) is very provocative, determining as it does the role of white women in the disintegration of Red River society.²⁴

Van Kirk proves without a doubt that the white women who came to Red River in the 1830s as the wives of the missionaries and of a select few chief officers of the Hudson's Bay Company precipitated serious racial conflicts within the settlement. Where before the mixed-blood wives of the officers had ruled supreme, they now were challenged by intruders who had no doubt as to the inferiority of those with Indian blood. Because Van Kirk is more concerned with the fur trade than with Red River she does not investigate the impact these schisms may have had on Red River more specifically. In fact, there is sufficient evidence, and it is presented in the preceding chapters, to suggest that the racial conflict precipitated by the coming of these white women may have aggravated the landmark crisis of Red River — the Riel uprising. The deep schisms within English-speaking Red River that prevented any effective opposition to Riel can in fact be traced to the racism of the 1830s. If racism is indeed the central theme in Red River's history, rather than geography or economics, then perhaps the old historic time markers like the Riel Rebellion may, upon closer investigation, not be as relevant as tradition dictates. Perhaps the racial flashpoints like the Ballenden scandal, which divided the community along racial lines, or the Corbett scandal of 1863, which divided the settlement between Métis and Halfbreed, and Halfbreed and European, are more important.

Jennifer Brown's *Strangers in Blood* (Vancouver 1980) provides similar unique insights which require further clarification with regard to Red River. She suggests that the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company had two separate and unique social and family structures. This, of course, could lead to the conclusion that the divisions between the Métis and Halfbreeds within Red River were the result of cultural antecedents unique to Rupert's Land rather than a conflict imported from Ontario. It is curious then that Brown does not extend her exciting and highly important conclusions to the 1869 Riel Resistance. Brown concludes on page 219 of her study that: 'Lacking upward mobility, these mixed-blood descendants of the fur trade joined a common cause that emphasized their maternal descent.'²⁵

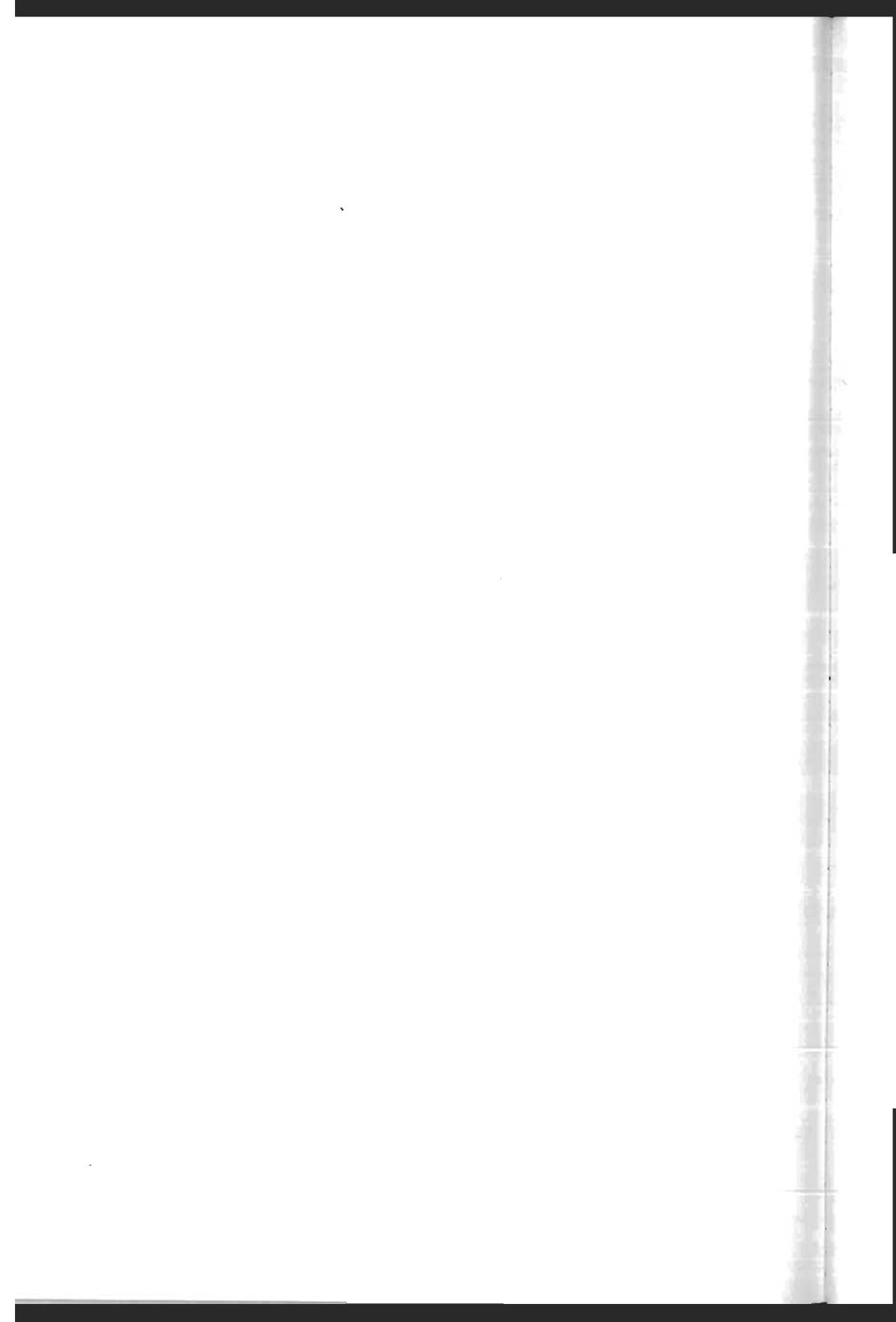
What the preceding chapters have attempted to prove is that the traditions of Empire, religion and fathers were equally important and that the Hudson's Bay Company-descended Halfbreed did not side with the Métis. There were two traditions in the West, one Métis and the other Halfbreed. The one went with Riel, the other with Corbett and the Canadas.

The most promising quantitative enquiries on which final conclusions will rest to date have been undertaken by the Métis Federation of Manitoba in their efforts to analyze their community quantitatively. The results are still preliminary and conclusions indefinite, but their findings are tending to reinforce the directions hinted by Van Kirk and Brown that Red River was an increasingly highly stratified and divided community. In fact, Red River provides a unique laboratory from which to explore the dynamics of closed, isolated, single-industry communities.

Another major recent contribution which uses Red River as such a laboratory is 'Kinship, Ethnicity, Class and the Red River Metis: The Parishes of St. François Xavier and St. Andrew's' a 1989 University of Alberta doctoral dissertation by Gerhard Ens. It undertakes a rigorous quantitative comparison of the two parishes to argue that class and economic divisions were no more important than religious or cultural ones. This argument will undoubtedly precipitate significant debate

What more recent historians all have in common is their emphasis on the internal dynamics of the community.²⁶ Their basic question is not 'How Was the West Won for Confederation?' but rather, 'Why Did

the Red River Community Change?' Why could this peculiar community not survive the immigrations from the Canadas? This inward reflection is an indication that western scholars are no longer looking to Eastern Canada or London as the metropolitan centres which direct historical change. Rather they are saying that it is time Western Canada looked at itself, its people and its geography for historical causation.²⁷



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END NOTES

Preface

- 1 William J. Scheick, *The Half Blood A Cultural Symbol in 19th Century American Fiction* (Lexington, 1979), 82.
- 2 Thomas Flanagan, 'Louis Riel and the Dispersion of the American Métis,' *Minnesota History* (Spring, 1985), 179-190.
- 3 See for example the popular if not authoritative Joseph Kinsey Howard, *The Strange Empire of Louis Riel* (Toronto, 1970).
- 4 Flanagan, *op. cit.*, 181.
- 5 See Jacqueline Peterson, 'Many Roads to Red River: Métis genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815,' in *The New Peoples Being and Becoming Metis in North America* edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg, 1985), 37-71.
- 6 Flanagan, *op. cit.*, 186-187.
- 7 V. Harvard, M.D., 'The French Half-Breeds of the Northwest' in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution... for the Year 1879* (Washington, 1880), 309-27.
- 8 *Ibid.*,
- 9 Gilles Martel, ed., *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, Vol IV (Edmonton, 1895), 223.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 224.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 222.
- 12 Flanagan, *op. cit.*
- 13 Martel, *op. cit.*, 274.
- 14 Cited in Flanagan, *op. cit.*, 185.
- 15 Verne L. Dusenberry, 'The Métis in Montana' in *The Red Man's West True Stories of the Frontier Indians from Montana: The Magazine of Western History*. Selected and Edited by Michael S. Kennedy (New York, 1965), 89-105.

Introduction

- 1 G.F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto, 1936), vii.
- 2 Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History* (Toronto, 1976), 175, 221, 247.
- 3 W.L. Morton, ed., *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-70* (Toronto, 1956), 2.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 5 Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood* (Vancouver, 1980), 219.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Irene Spry, 'The Métis and Mixed Bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870' in J. Peterson and J. Brown eds. *The New People* (Winnipeg, 1985), 95-118.
- 8 Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies, A History* (Toronto, 1984). Chapters 5 and 6, for example, use no church archival sources.

- 9 Philip Goldring, 'Religion, Missions and Native Culture' *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, Vol. 26, 1984, 43-49.
- 10 Spry, 'The Mixed Bloods', 97.
- 11 John E. Foster, 'The Country-born in the Red River Settlement' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta 1973). There is considerable debate as to the most appropriate designation for the English-speaking mixed-bloods of Scottish and English descent. Country-born was advocated by Prof. Foster but the term was not used widely in Rupert's Land and has met with considerable academic opposition. These people in fact called themselves Halfbreeds, so in spite of the present day pejorative connotations, it is the term used here. For further discussion on terminology see J. Peterson and Jennifer S. Brown, 'Introduction' in *The New Peoples* (Winnipeg, 1985), 5-6.
- 12 W.L. Morton, 'The Canadian Metis' *The Beaver* (Outfit 281, September, 1950), 3.
- 13 Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*. 2 vols. Introduction by George Woodcock. (Edmonton, 1986), Vol. 1, ix-xvi.
- 14 Emma LaRocque, *Defeathering the Indian* (Agincourt, 1975), 50.

Chapter 1: The Red River Setting

- 1 See Canada, Parliament, Sessional Papers (House of Commons), 1871 *Census Returns*, Vol. V, No. 20, and Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter cited as PAM), Red River Census, 1835-1849.
- 2 The best studies of Red River demography are Barry Kaye, 'Some Aspects of the Historical Geography of the Red River Settlement.' (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1967) and D.N. Sprague, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* (Winnipeg, 1983).
- 3 The number of children and the age of each child was calculated by using a combination of sources. In 1815, Cook wrote that he had ten children (Hudson's Bay Company Archives hereafter HBCA, E.8/5, fos. 126-29). In 1820 when he was first listed as an 'annuitant' at Red River in the HBCA Account Book (HBCA, B.235/d/1/fo. 34) only eight children remained in his household. Nancy Cook, his eldest daughter, remained at Swan River with her husband, William Garrioch, whom she formally married in 1821. (PAM, St. John's Marriages, 1820-35, fo. 22). Probably the tenth child died between 1815 and 1829 since no record on one exists at Red River. The ages of the male children of W.H. Cook were calculated from data in the 1849 census, while the ages of the female children were calculated in relation to the ages of their husbands. Other families were similarly examined.
- 4 HBCA, A.36/lb, fo. 46-47, Probated Will of James Bird.
- 5 Information on land holdings comes from HBCA, 'Land Register B'. Information on wealth comes from the various Red River census in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and the Wills in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. PAM, St. John's Marriages, 1820-1835 and St. John's Baptisms, 1813-1828, are also useful.

- 6 Cockran's description of such a house can be found in Church Missionary Society Archives (CMSA), Rev. Cockran to the Secretaries, 23 July 1834.
- 7 John Foster, 'The Origins of Mixed Bloods in the Canadian West' in *Essays in Western History* (Edmonton, 1976), 76-78
- 8 There has been a great deal written about the structure of the Red River family, primarily by John Foster, Sylvia Van Kirk, and Jennifer Brown. The methodologies for the study of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century family are voluminous and no one book is specifically focussed on Western Canada. Both Foster and Brown have used Peter Laslett's *The World We Have Lost* (London, 1968) which describes the pre-industrial English family to some advantage. Laslett has determined that pre-industrial family structures were once hierarchical and patriarchal. That is, the extended family with senior male artisan, children, wife, apprentices and servants acting as a single economic unit was the norm. The head of the household was 'father to some of its members and in place of father to the rest'. As Brown points out there was a fuzzy line between economic and domestic functions. Brown (p. 21) in direct reference to Laslett observed that:
- Three of four major Bay posts, holding at times forty or fifty servants, were comparable in size and standing to British noble households; their leading officers were the aristocracy of the trade. Other posts, inland houses with their masters and a few servants, were on a scale with ordinary English households that usually numbered a dozen or so.
- Laslett also points out, although neither Foster nor Brown mentions the point, that the Christian Church was the critical social influence outside the home. It is true to say that the ordinary person, especially the female, never went to a gathering larger than could assemble in an ordinary house except when going to church.
- Laslett's observations on the importance of the patriarchal unit in an analysis of social structure are used heavily in this and other chapters.
- 9 Details on these families are scattered throughout the archives in Manitoba and Ottawa. The best reconstructions are to be made from the genealogical work already undertaken in the PAM and by Mr. Kipling whose papers are deposited in the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa. These papers must, however, be used with the greatest care since they contain several serious errors. Prof. Irene Spry of the University of Ottawa, Prof. Jennifer Brown of University of Winnipeg, Prof. Sylvia Van Kirk of the University of Toronto, and Prof. John Foster of the University of Alberta, have also spent considerable time reconstructing Red River families. D.N. Sprague has gone the furthest in attempting family reconstructions.
- 10 The statistics were calculated from the 1832, 1838, 1847 census located in the Manitoba Archives using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). While the censuses are for the most part reliable, they do have shortcomings. For example, many of the ages of the younger heads of households are missing. Originally this meant a significant prejudice towards an older mean age since it was apparent when first doing the material that the first settlers, and the older

members of the family tended to record their ages while the younger members did not. Fortunately, it was possible to fill many of the gaps from the Red River baptismal and marriage registers.

Geographic designation also changed from census to census. It was assumed, however, that the 'Lower Settlement' was the same area as the 'English Settlement', and 'Saint Boniface' the same as the 'Catholic Settlement'. In each census the Swampy Village, the Saulteaux Village, and Grantown were identified separately.

Another designation, the place of birth of the head of the household, also changed. In 1843, for example, the designation 'Orkney' was dropped. Apparently the place of birth was to many an ethnic and racial affiliation. Halfbreeds with social pretensions actually indicated Scotland rather than Rupert's Land as their place of birth, while some Métis who claimed to have been born in Canada in 1832, indicated Rupert's Land to the census taker in 1843.

In the general SPSS analysis, an endeavour was made to separate the English from the French-speaking Halfbreeds. This was done by designating all Protestants living in the Lower Settlement and born in Rupert's Land, as English-speaking Halfbreeds and all those of Catholic faith, living in Saint Boniface or Grantown and born in Rupert's Land, as Métis. It is important to emphasize that no statistically supportable difference was found in the demography of the two groups. Family size and composition were for the most part the same. On the other hand, substantial economic differences did exist. The Métis were definitely found to be a hunting people while the English-speaking Halfbreeds were emphatically agricultural.

It has probably struck the reader that although the censuses included both Halfbreeds and Métis, the specific examples are entirely from the Protestant parishes. This is because many French parish registers were either unavailable or illegible. Consequently only the Protestant Archives of Manitoba could be used to reconstruct 22 otherwise random Red River families. They included the Gaddy, Cook, Flett, Bird, Bannerman, Sutherland, Garrioch, Hallett, Inkster, Corrigal, Favel, Tait, Cockran, and Ross families. The servants' lists and wills in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives were also found to be an excellent source. It should be emphasized that the SPSS analysis and the family reconstructions produced mutually reinforcing results.

11 PAM, Peter Garrioch Diary, 11.

12 CMSA, Rev. Cockran to the Secretaries, 11 August 1828.

13 There is a great deal of excellent published material on native cultural traditions. An excellent recent review of the literature is Shepard Krech III, *Native Canadian Anthropology and History: A Selected Bibliography* (Winnipeg, 1986). A discussion of native anthropological literature is beyond the scope of this book. On some detailed discussion on native family structures in the period before 1870 see Jack Ives, 'On the Relationships Linking Social Structure, Local Group Size, and Economic Strategies', unpublished paper delivered to the 19th Annual Chacmool Conference, November 7-9, 1986.

- 14 PMA, Red River Census, SPSS Analysis. See footnote 9.
- 15 That Red River was the best of all worlds see W.J. Healy's *Women of Red River* (Winnipeg, 1923). See particularly 15-52, the chapter entitled 'Comfort and Happiness'.
- 16 Sylvia Van Kirk 'The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family' in J. Peterson and J. S. H. Brown, *The New Peoples* (Winnipeg, 1985), 207-217.
- 17 CMSA, Peguis in conversation with Cockran, 23 August 1833.
- 18 The information for the migrations can be deduced from the HBCA, 'Land Register B' in conjunction with the PAM, Red River Census, 1832-1849.
- 19 Glenbow Archives (GA), Sutherland Correspondence, James to John Sutherland, 10 August 1840.
- 20 PAM, Archibald Collection, 18.
- 21 PAM, Peter Garrioch Diary, 1.
- 22 PAM, Red River Collection, James Bird to Alexander Christie, 31 March 1846.
- 23 Gerhard Ens, 'Métis Mobility in the Transition from Peasant Society to Industrial Capitalism: Migration and Persistence of the Red River Métis 1835 to 1890' (Edmonton: Unpublished paper presented to the University of Alberta Department of History, January 1987).
- 24 See E.H. Oliver, *The Canadian North-West* Vol. I (Ottawa, 1914), passim.
- 25 Philip Goldring, 'Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company 1821-1900' *Manuscript Report Number 362* (Ottawa, 1979), Vol. I, 37.
- 26 Alexander Ross, *Red River*, 295.

Chapter 2: A Question of Leadership

- 1 For generally accepted theory on leadership see James MacGregor Burns's *Leadership* (New York, 1978) and Dankwurt A. Rustow, ed., *Philosophers and Kings Studies in Leadership* (New York, 1970).
- 2 For one theory on informal leadership in Red River see John Foster, 'Some questions and perspectives on the problem of Métis Roots' in J. Peterson and J.S.H. Brown eds., *The New Peoples* (Winnipeg, 1985), 73-91.
- 3 The most authoritative study on the Hudson's Bay Company employment structure is Philip Goldring, 'Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company' 2 vols. nos. 362 and 412 in *The Manuscript Report Series* (Ottawa, 1979, 1980).
- 4 Oliver, *The Canadian North-West* I, 46. See also G. Williams, ed., *Hudson's Bay Miscellany* (Winnipeg, 1975), 180.
- 5 Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, (Winnipeg, 1980) 141.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 218.
- 7 G. Williams, ed., *Hudson's Bay Miscellany* (Winnipeg, 1975) 181.
- 8 G. Williams, ed., *London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson 1841-42* (London, 1973) xxvi.
- 9 E.E. Rich, ed., *London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colville 1849-1852* intro. W.L. Morton (London, 1956), lxxvi-lxxviii.
- 10 A. Gluek, *Minnesota and Manifest Destiny* (Toronto, 1965), 247.

- 11 W.J. Healy, *Women of Red River* (Winnipeg, 1923), 130.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 132.
- 13 The best account of Sinclair and indeed Red River social history is D. Geneva Lent *West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company* (Seattle, 1963).
- 14 The best account of Cuthbert Grant is Margaret MacLeod and W.L. Morton, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown* (Toronto, 1963). The last chapters discuss Grant's successors.
- 15 See D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, compilers, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* (Winnipeg, 1983) passim.
- 16 Oliver, *North West*, I, 69.
- 17 Morton, *Cuthbert Grant*, 152-6.
- 18 Gosman, Robert, 'The Riel and Lagimodière Family in Métis Society'. Unpublished *Parks Canada Manuscript Report* (Winnipeg, 1977), contains a lengthy discussion of the role of Riel Sr. in the settlement.
- 19 Oliver, *North-West*, I, 70.
- 20 Frank Peake 'Ordination Controversy'. Paper before Winnipeg Conference on the Anglican Church, Jan. 1987, 2.
- 21 Foster, 'Some questions' in *New Peoples*, 83, 87.
- 22 Goldring, 'Hudson's Bay', 213.

Chapter 3: The First Years

- 1 For a general discussion see F. Pannekoek, 'Protestant Agricultural Zions of the Western Indian' *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, XIV, 3 (1972), 55-66.
 - 2 John West, *The Substance of a Journal During a Resistance at the Red River Colony* (London, 1824), 52.
 - 3 This argument is made time and time again in the CMSA by all missionaries. The letters of Reverends William Cochran and Abraham Cowley are particularly consistent in this view.
 - 4 The Catholic approach is well explained in P. Dr. Joh. Thaurén, *Die Akkommodation im Katholischen Hedenapostolat* (Munster, 1927). See also G. Gordon Brown 'Missions and Cultural Diffusion' *The American Journal of Sociology*. L. (1944-45), 214-219 and Norman A. Horner, *Cross and Crucifix in Mission* (New York, 1965).
 - 5 Jacqueline Peterson, 'Many Roads to Red River', in J. Peterson and J. Brown, eds, *The New People* (Winnipeg, 1985).
 - 6 CMSA, D. Jones, Journal 6 Nov. 1823, 7 Nov. 1823, and 14 Jan. 1824.
 - 7 West, *Substance*, 52.
 - 8 Public Archives of Canada (PAC) Selkirk Papers (SP) 4303, S. Gale to W.B. Coltman, 1 Jan. 1818.
- For the impact that Indians had on Colonial Europeans on the eastern seaboard see James Axtell, *The European and the Indian Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York, 1981) chapter 10. Undoubtedly the mixed-

- bloods had an impact upon European culture within Western Canada. The missionaries were resolute in their belief structure, refused to change and were adamant that they would direct change. The Métis were hardly so arrogant in their cultural assumptions, and directed no attempt to muster converts.
- 9 Church Missionary Society, *Register of Missionaries and Native Clergy*, 1804-1904 (London, n.d.), no. 102.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, no. 85.
 - 11 *Ibid.*, no. 83.
 - 12 PAC, SP, 7625-7626, George Simpson to Andrew Colvile, 20 May 1822.
 - 13 The best secondary sources on fur trade marriage practices are Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties* and Brown, *Strangers in Blood*.
 - 14 The best primary source on fur trade marriage is Court of Appeals, 'Connolly vs. Woodrich', *La Revue Légale*. I (Sept. 1869). It is critical to note that although the majority of fur traders mentioned here lived in Red River, John Clarke did not. Fur trade society was, however, so closed, and communications through letter and verbal exchange so effective that the various posts were in fact all part of a single community. What Simpson did in Red River could have impact in Fort Edmonton and *vice versa*.
 - 15 E.H. Oliver, *The Canadian North West, Its Early Development and Legislative Records* (Ottawa, 1914), I, 40-73 contains short biographies of the major office holders. Philip Goldring, 'Governor Simpson's Officers' *Prairie Forum*, Fall 1986 offers a valuable attempt to quantify the élite structure but concentrates on a later period.
 - 16 PAC, SP, 8035, George Simpson to Andrew Colvile, 8 Sept. 1823.
 - 17 CMSA, J. Pratt to D.T. Jones, 10 March 1824.
 - 18 Oliver, *Northwest*, 59. CMSA, D.T. Jones, Journal, 1 January 1824; G. Harbidge to Secretaries, 20 October 1824; J. Pratt to J. West, 23 May 1822; D. Coates to D. Jones, 11 March 1825; D. Jones to D. Coates, 16 July 1825; D. Jones to Secretary, 24 August 1826. See also PAC, Hargrave Papers (HP), Letter book 4, James Hargrave to Duncan Finlayson, 30 November, 1828.
 - 19 CMSA, W. Cockran to Secretary, 7 August 1828.
 - 20 PAC, HP, Letter book, J. Hargrave to J.G. McTavish, 4 December 1826; J. Hargrave to C. Grant, 15 December 1826; Letter book 3, J. Hargrave to father, 2 November 1827; PAC, SP, 7951, D. McKenzie to G. Simpson, July 1829.
 - 21 *The Missionary Register*, 1827, 630.
 - 22 CMSA, D. Jones to Secretary, July 1827.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, D. Jones to J. Pratt, 4 June 1824.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, W. Cockran to Secretary, 5 August 1829.
 - 25 The six commandments of the Church: 1. going to mass on holy days 2. no meat on appointed days 3. fasting on appropriate occasions if over 21 4. confession and communion at Easter and Christmas 5. supporting Church and pastor 6. not marrying outside laws of church.
 - 26 Archives de l'archévêché, Quebec (AAQ), RR I, 20-21, J.N. Provencher to Bishop of Salades, 24 November 1819; RR I, 58-59, J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 16 July 1823; Archives de l'archévêché, Montreal (AAM), Dossier

- Provencher, J.N. Provencher to Mgr. Lartigue, 15 June 1825; and J.N. Provencher to Mgr. Lartigue, 24 August 1826.
- 27 For short biographies of the first priests see G. Dugas, *Monseigneur Provencher et Les Missions de la Rivière Rouge* (Montreal, 1889), 314-319.
- 28 AAQ, RR III, 26, Request of the inhabitants of Red River, 1817.
- 29 PAC, Bulger Papers, II, 317, 381, 383, A. Bulger to Destroismaisons, 10 Sept. 1822; 23 June 1823; 24 June 1823.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 277, J. Halkett to A. Bulger, 27 August 1822; 281, 31 August 1822.
- 31 AAQ, RR I. 48, J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 Sept. 1822.
- 32 M. Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien* (Paris, 1945), 713-717. See also M. MacLeod and W.L.Morton, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown* (Toronto, 1963), and E.E. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. III, (Toronto, 1960), 515 on Grant's annual salary.
- 33 CMSA, D. Jones to Secretary, 26 Dec. 1824.
- 34 *Ibid.*, W. Cockran to Secretary, 29 Aug. 1826.
- 35 HBCA, B. 235/a/5, page 63, Fort Garry Journal, 8 May 1823; fo.16d, 1 Nov. 1823.

Chapter 4: A Little Britain in The Wilderness

- 1 These were the most frequent descriptions employed by the missionaries, especially Cockran. For detailed citations see F. Pannekoek, 'The Churches and the Social Structure in the Pre-1870 West' (Queen's, 1974), 21-23, 55.
- 2 Excellent studies of the problem of the 'turning-off' process in the 1830s are Sylvia Van Kirk, 'Women in the Fur Trade', *The Beaver* Outfit 303, (Winter, 1972), 4-21 and *Many Tender Ties*, 50, 51, 88-89, 120-180.
- 3 The examples used by both Van Kirk *Many Tender Ties* and Brown *Strangers in Blood* tend to focus on the fur trade 'gentry'. It is difficult, as they both admit, to determine how frequently the practice was exercised by the vast majority, the illiterate. Given the nature of primary sources it is not possible to come up with quantifiable, definitive answers.
- 4 Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. by M.A. Macleod, No. 28 (Toronto, 1947) 217-218, L. Hargrave to Mrs. D. Mactavish, 25 Feb. 1846; James Hargrave, *The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-1843*, ed. by G.P. de T. Glazebrook, No. 24 (Toronto 1947) 189, D. Ross to J. Hargrave, 13 March 1835.
- 5 Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 61, Alexander Ross to James Hargrave, 18 December 1830.
- 6 GA, Sutherland Papers, James Sutherland to John Sutherland, 7 August 1838. For similar comments see PAC, HP, 1177, Donald Ross to James Hargrave, 20 Feb. 1836.
- 7 L. Hargrave, *Letters* 73, L. Hargrave to Mary Mactavish, 1 Sept. 1840.
- 8 HBCA, B.135/c/2, fo. 54, G. Simpson to J.G. McTavish, 3 Jan. 1831; fo. 64d, G. Simpson to J.G. McTavish, 10 April 1831.
- 9 CMSA, D. Jones Journal, 24 May 1833.

- 10 L. Hargrave, *Letters*, 217-218, L. Hargrave to Mrs. Dugald Mactavish, 25 Feb. 1846.
- 11 CMSA, W. Cockran to the Secretaries, 3 Aug. 1831.
- 12 Elaine Allen Mitchell, 'A Red River Gossip.', *The Beaver*, Outfit 291 (Spring, 1961), 8.
- 13 An excellent study of status structure in small isolated resource communities is Rex A. Lucas, *Minetown Milltown Raitown* (Toronto, 1971). The sections on the function of gossip and rumour are particularly relevant. This invective, while most apparent in Letitia Hargrave's correspondence, is present in all of the informal missionary and Red River correspondence for the period. The Alexander Ross Papers in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and the Donald Ross Papers in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia exhibit marked tendencies to increased gossip. Of course, it is true as well that white women with leisure to write **were introduced** into fur trade society.
- 14 PAC, HP, 1002, Donald Ross to James Hargrave, 13 March 1835.
- 15 J. Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 18, Francis Heron to J. Hargrave, 1 Aug. 1826.
- 16 PAC, HP, 1717, Duncan Finlayson to J. Hargrave 12 Aug. 1839.
- 17 *Ibid.*, Letter book 8, 475, G. Simpson to J. Hargrave, 20 Dec. 1833 and J. Hargrave to G. Simpson, 20 Feb. 1833.
- 18 HBCA, D.5/4, fos. 370-371, D. Jones to G. Simpson, 8 May 1832; CMSA, D. Jones, Journal, 14 July 1832.
- 19 L. Hargrave, *Letters*, 177-78, L. Hargrave to Mrs. D. Mactavish, 14-17 Sept. 1843.
- 20 CMSA, W. Cockran to D. Coates, 28 July 1834.
- 21 HBCA, A.6/24, fo. 137d, Committee to the Northern Department, 7 March 1838. See also E.16/2, fo. 3, 12 Feb. 1835, Proceedings of a Council of Assiniboia.
- 22 CMSA, W. Cockran to the Secretaries, 20 July 1831.
- 23 *Ibid.*, D. Jones to Secretary, July 1833, 29 July 1837, 5 Jan. 1839.
- 24 Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 190-193, W.L. Morton and M. A. Macleod, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown* (Toronto, 1974), 117-119.
- 25 Foster, *Countryborn*, 236, Ross, *Red River*, 225-239.
- 26 CMSA, Secretary to Cockran, 20 March 1839.
- 27 CMSA, D. Jones, Journal, 28 Sept. 1832.
- 28 Robert Gosman, 'The Riel and Lagimodière Families in Métis Society, 1840-1860' (Manuscript Report Series 171, National Historic Sites, 1977), has an excellent account of social structure.
- 29 Read for example, 'Lettres de Monseigneur Provencher, Joseph Norbert Provencher, Premier Evêque de Saint-Boniface', *Bulletin de la Société Historique de Saint-Boniface*, Vol. III (1913), Provencher's attitudes become apparent in these published letters.
- 30 Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Rome, America, Incoming correspondence, Vol. III, 406, Provencher, 'Sur l'établissement de la mission de la Rivière Rouge et ses progrès depuis 1818.' 28 March, 1836. See also the Archives de la Propagation de la Foi, Paris, F.

- 193a, Provencher to the Secretary, 10 July 1833, and 1 February 1836. These letters contain an excellent account of the growth of the mission in the 1830s.
- 31 See for example, AAQ, RR I, 259, I. Bourget to Mgr. Turgeon, 12 Jan., 1839; RR IV, J.N. Provencher to M. Cazeau 29 Aug. 1832; RR II, 14, 15, G. Belcourt to J. Signay, 11 July 1834.
- 32 Alexander Simpson, *The Life and Travels of Thomas Simpson* (London, 1845), 100-102 discusses both incidents. See also G.A. Belcourt 'Autobiography of Father Belcourt', *Minnesota Historical Society Collection*, Vol. I (1850-1856), 194f.

Chapter 5: Free Trade and Social Fragmentation

- 1 For background to the 1849 difficulties see Giraud, *Métis*, 898-944; E.E. Rich, *The Hudson's Bay Company*, III, 531-562; and J.S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor* (Toronto, 1957), 311-332. For James Sinclair's role see D. Geneva Lent, *West of the Mountains* (Seattle, 1963).
- 2 The material relating to the various students is in CMSA, General Minutes, 1830-1860, under Islington College. For a general biography of any one missionary see CMS, *Register of Missionaries and Native Clergy*, 1804-1904 (Printed for private circulation. I have only seen this volume in the CMSA London Office.) A reading of the College Minutes makes it very clear that India was reserved for the very best, and Rupert's Land, the more marginal.
- 3 HBCA, D. 5/5, fos. 243d, 244, Dr Alder to G. Simpson, 4 Feb. 1840. For the full documentation on the Evans affair see F. Pannekoek, 'The Rev. James Evans and the Social Antagonisms of Fur Trade Society, 1840-1846', in Richard Allen, ed., *Religion and Society in the Prairie West* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1974).
- 4 CMSA, A. Thom to D. Finlayson, 26 March 1842; A. Thom to Hudson's Bay Company Committee, 21 April 1842; J. Smithurst to Gov. of Assiniboia, 2 April 1842; J. Smithurst to A. Thom, 5 June 1843; HBCA, A. 6/26, fos. 52-53d, Committee to A. Thom, 29 March 1843; PAC, R. MacFarlane Papers, A. Thom to D. Finlayson, 19, 22, Aug. 1842.
- 5 PAC, HP, 3025; D. Finlayson to James Hargrave, 2 July 1844.
- 6 HBCA, D.5/12, fo. 189, A. Thom to G. Simpson, 31 July 1844.
- 7 CMSA, J. Smithurst to the Secretaries, 1 Aug. 1845.
- 8 *Ibid.*, John Roberts to the Secretaries, 9 Aug. 1842; W. Cockran to the Secretaries, 4 Aug. 1841.
- 9 For a general discussion of the Society and its thinking see W. Knight, *The Missionary Secretariat of Henry Venn, P.D.* (London, 1899).
- 10 CMSA, Joseph Cook to the Secretaries, 29 July 1846.
- 11 See Brown, *Strangers in Blood*. Brown argues that these two unique societies were founded, one in the Hudson's Bay Company tradition and the other in Northwest tradition and that there was an awareness of the differences. Again her evidence concentrates on the élite and requires further support if it is to be extended to the lower orders.

- 12 Quoted in E.E. Rich, *The Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870*, Vol. III (Toronto, 1960), 544.
- 13 CMSA, David Anderson to Henry Venn, 22 Nov. 1849.
- 14 CMSA, J. Smithurst, Journal, 26 Feb., 28 Feb., 3 March, 10 March, 11 March, 6 April, 7 April, 16 May 1849.
- 15 *Ibid.*, J. Smithurst, Journal, 8 July 1847. For evidence on the tumultuous events of 1849 see *Ibid.*, R. James to the Secretaries, 6 Aug. 1849; and D. Anderson to Venn, 22 Nov. 1849.
- 16 L. Hargrave, *Letters*, 188.
- 17 CMSA, J. Smithurst to the Secretaries, 6 Aug. 1849.
- 18 For an example of this tendency see PAM, Peter Garrioch, Journal, 1845-1847, V, 252, 254. Cochran could not persuade Garrioch to pay the duty on imported goods as required by law. Garrioch was nevertheless very religious, refusing communion when he felt spiritually unprepared.
- 19 The best biographical sketches will be found in G. Carrière, *Dictionnaire Biographique des Oblats du Canada* (Ottawa, 1967).
- 20 Archives Générales des Oblats de Marie Immaculée, (hereafter cited as AGOMI). The archives are arranged by author. The certificate of obligation and education, by no means available for all of the Fathers, suggest that their backgrounds were poor. See also E. Sevrin, *Les Missions Religieuses en France sous La Restauration* (Paris, 1959), II, 157-214.
- 21 Soeur Elizabeth de Moissac, s.g.m., 'Les Femmes de l'Ouest; Leur Rôle dans l'Histoire', (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1945), is an excellent account of the Grey Nuns in the West.
- 22 Archives des Soeurs Grises (ASG), Winnipeg, J.N. Provencher to the Mother Superior, 19 Oct. 1843.
- 23 *Ibid.*, J.N. Provencher to Mother McMullen, 16 July 1846.
- 24 The six Métis Sisters who entered the convent were Connolly (1845), Gladu (1846), McDougall (1862), Goulet (1862), Riel (1861) and Delorme (1870).
- 25 *Ibid.*, Sr. Lagrave to Mother McMullen, 22 June 1844; Sr. Lagrave to Sr. Beaubien, 25 June 1844.
- 26 *Ibid.*, Annales de Soeurs de la Charité de l'Hôpital Général de Saint-Boniface, I, 295, 311; II, 246, 247; Sr. Valade to Mother McMullen, 25 June 1844. See also 'Le Régistre des Pensionnaires, 1844-1869.'
- 27 PAC, R. MacFarlane Papers, 71-74, G. Belcourt to A. Christie, 16 Jan. 1846; A. Christie to G. Belcourt, 21 Jan. 1846.
- 28 The best secondary account of the events of 1846 is Morton, *Colville*, lxx-lxx. The best documentary account is that by Belcourt in AAQ, RR IV, 134, G. Belcourt to M. Cazeau, 5 June 1846.
- 29 AAQ, RR II, 79, Petition from the Inhabitants of White Horse Plain to the Bishop of Quebec, 15 Nov. 1847, 86 signatures. It is curious that the petition is in English. This should suggest that a Halfbreed might have had a hand in it. Sinclair must, however, be ruled out as he was in England at the time. AAQ, Registre, 22, 230, J. Signay to G. Belcourt, 10 Feb. 1848, makes reference to a

- similar petition containing 242 names, but makes no illusion as to its date or precise origin; that is whether from White Horse Plain, Saint-Boniface or both.
- 30 HBCA, D.4/69, fo 468; G. Simpson to J. Signay, 3 March 1848; D.4/69, fo 487, G. Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 14 March 1848. *Ibid.*, D.4/70, fo 520, G. Simpson to Governor and Committee, 30 June 1849.
- 31 AAM, J.N. Provencher to I. Bourget, 23 June 1849.
- 32 HBCA, D.5/25, fo. 255, A. Christie to G. Simpson, 29 May 1849; D.4/70, fo 516, G. Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 30 June 1849.
- 33 *Ibid.*, A.8/4, fo. 128, 'Petition for the removal of Mr. Recorder Thom', 2 June 1849.
- 34 HBCA, D.4/70, fo 516, G. Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 30 June 1846. In this letter Simpson suggests that the Bishop presented the idea of increasing the size of the Council. No precise date for Simpson's meeting with the Bishop is given. D.5/25, fo. 314, J.N. Provencher to G. Simpson, 27 June 1849, suggests that Simpson simply requested six nominations. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility that Provencher initiated the idea. Oliver, *North West I*, 352, contains the minutes of the May 31st meeting of the council.
- 35 Chapter II of this study outlines the crises of the land. See also F. Pannekoek 'A Probe into the Demographic Structure of Nineteenth Century Red River' in L.H. Thomas ed. *Essays on Western History* (Edmonton, 1976), 83-95.

Chapter 6: A Strife of Blood

- 1 Anon., 'Memorial of the Late Bishop Anderson of Clifton', *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, III (1887), 603-604. See also M.P. Wilkinson, 'The Episcopate of the Right Reverend David Anderson, D.D. First Lord Bishop of Rupert's Land 1849 to 1864' (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1950). See also entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.
- 2 HBCA, D.5/30, fos. 744-745, Adam Thom to G. Simpson, 30 May 1851; See also Archives of British Columbia (ABC) Donald Ross Papers (DRP) [James Hunter] to Donald Ross, 23 June 1851.
- 3 HBC, D.5/30, fos. 728d-729, Eden Colville to G. Simpson, 22 May 1851; D.5/28, fo. 239d, Adam Thom to G. Simpson, 1 June 1850; CMSA, William Cochran to H. Venn, 1 Aug. 1850.
- 4 PAM, Alexander Ross Papers (ARP), William Ross to James Ross, 22 Aug. 1854, Adam McBeath to James Ross, 9 Nov. 1855. By family agreement Cockran's son spelled his name Cockrane.
- 5 CMSA, James Hunter to H. Venn, 16 Dec. 1851; PAM, ARP, William Ross to James Ross, 22 Aug. 1854.
- 6 *Ibid.*, James Hunter to H. Venn, 16 Dec. 1851.
- 7 PAM, General Quartery Court of Assiniboia, 16 July, 181-211, is a complete transcript of the trial.
- 8 ABC, Alexander Ross to Donald Ross, 7 Aug. 1850. A. Ross was a pro-Ballenden. The jury, of course, was, when impanelled, twelve.
- 9 *Ibid.*, Robert Clouston to Donald Ross, 17 Dec. 1850.

- 10 Morton, *Colvile*, cii.
- 11 L. Hargrave, *Letters*, 256, Letitia Hargrave to Mrs. Dugald MacTavish, 27-29 August 1850.
- 12 ABC, DRP, Robert Clouston to Donald Ross, 23 Sept. 1850.
- 13 *Ibid.*, John Ballenden to Donald Ross, 1 Aug. 1850.
- 14 HBCA, A.11/95, fos. 333-340, Adam Thom to G. Simpson, Aug. 1850.
- 15 HBCA, D.5/28, fos. 442-443, Eden Colvile to G. Simpson, 15 Aug. 1850.
- 16 The quotations are from ABC, DRP, John Smithurst to Donald Ross, 19 Jan. 1851. See also HBCA, D.5/30, fos. 204-205, Adam Thom to G. Simpson, 5 Feb. 1851.
- 17 PAC, HP, 4873, John Black to James Hargrave, 25 Nov. 1851.
- 18 HBCA, D.5/28, fo. 616, Adam Thom to G. Simpson, Sept. 1850, and D.5/30, fo., 47, John Black to G. Simpson, 8 Jan. 1851.
- 19 ABC, DRP, John Smithurst to Donald Ross, 19 Jan. 1851.
- 20 ABC, DRP, William Todd to Donald Ross, 27 July 1850; PAC, HP, 4556-4557, Major Caldwell to James Hargrave, 1 Aug. 1850.
- 21 HBCA, D.5/30, fo. 744, Adam Thom to G. Simpson, 30 May 1851.
- 22 ABC, DRP, John Bunn to John Black, 9 Jan. 1851; John Bunn to A.E. Pelly, 9 Jan. 1851.
- 23 Morton, *Colvile*, 236, Eden Colvile to G. Simpson, 10 Aug. 1851.
- 24 For correspondence relating to this matter see *ibid.*, Eden Colvile to David Anderson, 21 Nov. 1851; same to same, 22 Nov. 1851; David Anderson to Eden Colvile, 26 Nov. 1851; See also PAM, Archives of the Ecl. Prov. of Rupert's Land, Eden Colvile to David Anderson, 22 Nov. 1851.
- 25 ABC, DRP, James Hunter to Donald Ross, 17 June 1852.
- 26 HBCA, D.5/33, fo. 309, Adam Thom to G. Simpson, 29 March 1852. For an account of the flood see Bishop of Rupert's Land, *Notes on the Flood at the Red River 1852* (London, 1852). See also PAM, ARP, David Anderson to Alexander Ross, 20 Sept. 1851.
- 27 ABC, DRP, William Todd to Donald Ross, 3 July 1850.
- 28 Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, Chapter 9 deals with the Ballenden question. Van Kirk examines neither the impact on the Métis community, nor the impact on Halfbreed politics.
- 29 HBCA, D.4/42, fo. 27, G. Simpson to Adam Thom, 3 July 1850.
- 30 AAM, Bishop Provencher to Bishop Bourget, 21 Sept. 1850.
- 31 HBCA, D.5/29, fo. 250, E. Colvile to G. Simpson, 27 Nov. 1850.

Chapter 7: An Up-Rising of the People

- 1 George F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto, 1963), 35-53, provides a descriptive account of the Settlement in the early 1860s. See also Hargrave, *Red River*, and Alexander Begg and Walter R. Nursey, *Ten Years in Winnipeg* (Winnipeg, 1879).

- 2 The statistics for this paragraph are from Henry Youle Hind, *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858* (London, 1860), I, 176-178.
- 3 See Chapter III for a detailed discussion. See also Sprague *Genealogy*.
- 4 Hind, *Narrative*, 176-8.
- 5 For a popular discussion of the concept of identity and identity crisis see Erik H. Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York, 1968), especially this prologue. Crisis in this context does not signify an 'impending catastrophe'. As Erikson notes it is 'now being accepted as designating a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshalling resources of growth, recovery and further differentiation. This proves applicable to many situations: a crisis in individual development or in the emergence of a new élite, in the therapy of an individual or in the tensions of rapid historical change.' 16. Other material which reinforces the popularization of this concept in the context of mixed-blood and colonial societies are Louis Hartz *The Founding of New Societies*, (New York, 1964); Verena Martinez-Alier, *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth Century Cuba* (Cambridge, 1974). The idea here is not to suggest a people sitting in psychological puzzlement and agony on their doorstep; rather a framework in which some of the subtle changes noticed by contemporaries can be explained.
- 6 Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Archives (SPGA), D. 26, W.H. Taylor, Report, 13 July 1860.
- 7 PAM, Rev. John Black Papers, John Black to James Black, 3 April 1862.
- 8 *Ibid.*, John Black to James Black, 27 March 1860.
- 9 Colonial and Continental Church Society Archives (CCCSA), General Minutes, 1851-1857.
- 10 Not only has all of Corbett's correspondence in the CCCSA been destroyed during World War II, but no letters appear to exist in such obvious places as the Newcastle Papers in the University of Nottingham Library. For references to his sentiments in the *Nor'-Wester* see the issues of 1 Feb. 1861; 15 Feb. 1861; 15 June 1861; 15 Nov. 1861; 17 Nov. 1862, and 29 Nov. 1862.
- 11 PAM, ARP, William Ross to James Ross, 9 Feb. 1856.
- 12 HBCA, D.4/78, fo. 866, G. Simpson to Governor and Committee, 24 June 1856.
- 13 CMSA, W.W. Kirkby, Journal, 26 Feb. 1857.
- 14 HBCA, D.5/43, fo. 273-276, F.G. Johnson to G. Simpson, 9 April 1857.
- 15 For the events surrounding the election of the delegates see *ibid.*, D.5/43, fo. 480, John Swanson to G. Simpson, 20 May 1857, fo. 490, F.G. Johnston to G. Simpson, 23 May 1857.
- 16 PAM, G.O. Corbett's 'A Few Reasons for a Crown Colony', *Headingley Press*, 1859. For a fuller documentation of Corbett's intense belief, not explicitly articulated, however, that the British Connection would mean prosperity and liberty, see his 'Notes on Rupert's America', (1868).
- 17 HBCA, A.12/10, fo. 47, William Mactavish to G. Simpson, 28 Jan. 1859; A.11/96, fo. 204d, William Mactavish to Committee, 26 Feb. 1859.

- 18 For an account of the two petitions see SPGA, E.11, William Henry Taylor, Report, 12 Nov. 1862, and *The Nor'-Wester*, October-December, 1862.
- 19 *The Nor'-Wester*, 12 May 1863. The entire case is dealt with by Hargrave, *Red River*, at great length.
- 20 Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Vision of Gender in Victorian America* (New York, 1985), 217-244 is the best discussion of the changing attitudes towards abortion in North America.
- 21 CMSA, John Chapman to the Secretaries, 19 Feb. 1863, ff.
- 22 *The Nor'-Wester*, 12 Dec. 1862.
- 23 Queen's University Archives, Charles Mair Papers, Charles Mair to E.H. Macklin, 22 Nov. 1922.
- 24 For the best account of the incidents see *The Nor'-Wester*, 27 April 1863.
- 25 CCCSA, General Minutes, 5 Feb. 1863; 19 March 1863; 4 May 1863; 4 June 1863; 16 July 1863; 30 July 1863. The CCCS assumed an 'I told you so' attitude to the Bishop. They had after all shown great reluctance some years previous to the renewal of Corbett's agreement.
- 26 SPGA, Montreal Letters Received, I. Bishop Machray, to Secretary Bullock, 21 May 1867.
- 27 PAM, Miss Davis' School Correspondence, Bessie Cockran to Miss Davis, 6 April 1864.
- 28 CMSA, John Tait to Major Straith, 6 Feb. 1863.
- 29 CMSA, John Hunter to Henry Venn, 28 Jan. 1865.
- 30 SPGA, Montreal Letters Received I, Bishop Machray to Secretary Bullock, 10 Nov. 1865.
- 31 Robert Machray, *Life of Robert Machray* (Toronto, 1909), 122-144.
- 32 SPGA, Montreal Letters Received I, Bishop Machray to Secretary Bullock, 10 Nov. 1865.
- 33 Lambeth Palace Library, Archbishop Tait Papers, Official, Bishop Machray to Archbishop Tait, 11 Sept. 1867; Archbishop Tait to Bishop Anderson, 9 Jan. 1968.
- 34 On the controversies see CMSA, J.P. Gardiner to Henry Venn, 24 June 1868. See also J.P. Gardiner's correspondence with Bishop Machray dated 1, 3, 7, 9 April 1868.
- 35 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Oblate Collection, B-VII-25, Father Le Floch to Father Vegreville, 8 June 1859.
- 36 *The Nor'-Wester*, 14 April, 28 April 1860.
- 37 For those controversies see *ibid.*, 1 April, 15 April, 1 May, 24 May, 15 June, and 14 Dec. 1861. For Bishop Anderson's attitude see AASB, 939, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 18 July 1861.
- 38 *The Nor'-Wester*, 14 April, 28 April 1860.
- 39 Archives de l'Archevêché de Saint Boniface (AASB), 909, William H. Oram to Messrs. Ross and Caldwell, 26 May 1861. See also ASG, Sr. Curran to Mère Deschamps, 13 June 1861.

- 40 The *Nor'-Wester*, 15 Aug. 1861. For the quotation see ASSB, 1864, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 15 Aug. 1861. See also, 966, Father Le Floch to Bishop Taché, 17 Aug. 1861.
- 41 PMAA, Oblate Collection, B-VII-25, Father Le Floch to Father Vegreville, 8 June 1859. See also AASB, 966, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 21-23 April 1863.
- 42 The best account of the events is provided by AASB 1313, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 21-23 April 1863.
- 43 For a biography of Father Jean-Marie Le Floch see Carrière, *Dictionnaire Biographique*.
- 44 PMAA, Oblate Collection, B-VII-25, Father Le Floch to Father Vegreville, June 18 1859. For a less detailed comment see AGOMI, Bishop Taché to Father Faraud, 7 June 1859.
- 45 AASB, 1059, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 11 Feb. 1862; 997, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 17 Oct. 1861. For biographies of Lestanc, Oram and Mestre see G. Carrière, *Dictionnaire Biographique*.
- 46 AASB, 1054, Father Oram to Bishop Taché, 27 Dec. 1861; 902, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 21 May 1861; 1964, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 15 Aug. 1861; 1245, Father Oram to Father Grandin, 7 Dec. 1861; 1059, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, 11 Feb. 1862; AGOMI, Father Lestanc to the Superior General, 18 July (1861-62); John Duffy to the Superior General, 25 June 1865.
- 47 Dom Benoit, *Vie de Mgr. Taché*, (Montreal, 1904), I, 295. Alexandre Antonin Taché (1823-1894) was born at Rivière du Loup, Lower Canada. He entered the Oblate Order in 1844, went to the Northwest in 1845, was consecrated coadjutor Bishop in 1851 and Bishop of Saint-Boniface in 1854.
- 48 HBCA, A.12/43, fo. 69, Bishop Taché to Governor Dallas, 15 Dec. 1862. See Also AASB, 698, (Bishop Taché), Report, 7 Feb. 1859.
- 49 HBCA, A.12/43, fo. 69, Bishop Taché to Governor Dallas, 15 Dec. 1862.
- 50 AGOMI, Father Lestanc to the Superior General, 18 July (1864-66).
- 51 Brown, *Strangers in Blood* will argue that the English-speaking mixed-bloods always had a residual identity with their Protestant religion and their Britannic past. She would not argue it strongly but rather that it was part of a residual identity rooted in the past upon which the present circumstances might draw.

Chapter 8: The Halfbreeds and the Riel Protest

- 1 A. S. Morton, *The Canadian West to 1870-71* (Toronto, 1973), 876. The best account of the first resistance is Morton's *Introduction to Alexander Begg's Red River Journal*.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 878-79.
- 3 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 86.
- 4 SPGA, Bishop Machray to Major Bullock, 15 May 1869.
- 5 *Ibid.*, Bishop Machray to Major Bullock, 12 May 1868 and 2 Jan. 1869. The May 12 letter reflects Machray's attitude to old Red River.

- 6 Lambeth Palace Library, Tait Papers, Bishop Machray to Archbishop Tait, 3 March 1868; 11 Sept. 1867.
- 7 SPGA, Cyprian Pinkham, Annual Report, 4 Oct. 1869. If Pinkham was aware of a plot to stop McDougall, it is inconceivable that Machray would not have known.
- 8 Oliver, *Northwest*, 618.
- 9 Begg, *Journal*., 176.
- 10 CMSA, J.P. Gardiner, Journal, 27 Nov. 1869. The Bishop was still fighting 4 Dec. 1869.
- 11 Begg, *Journal*., 211.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 220.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 276.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 282.
- 15 CMSA, Bishop Machray to the Secretary, 1 March 1870.
- 16 SPGA, Bishop Machray to the Secretary, 16 April 1870.
- 17 For a general comment on the feelings of Pinkham and the clergy see SPGA, Bishop Machray to Secretary Bullock, 21 June 1870.
- 18 A.C. Garrioch, *First Furrows* (Winnipeg, 1923), Chapters XIII, XIV.
- 19 *The Nor'-Wester*, 26 Oct. 1869.
- 20 CMSA, J.P. Gardiner, Journal, November-December, 1869. Gardiner's journal for the crucial years of 1869 and 1870 was kept for only two months, but illustrates the duplicity of Bishop Machray and his own reluctance to become involved.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 27 Nov. 1869.
- 22 Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Papers* (House of Commons), 1870, Vol. L. CMND. 1009, 'Papers relating to the Red River Settlement, and Correspondence as to recent disturbances', 393. Hereafter cited as Great Britain, *Red River*.
- 23 Great Britain *Red River*, 398.
- 24 PAC, John A. Macdonald Papers, 40814-15, John Young Bown to John A. Macdonald, 18 Nov. 1869.
- 25 Queen's University Archives, Charles Mair Papers, 'Murdoch McLeod', 'J. Dilworth and Self', and especially 'Notes on Early Rebellion', contain some biographical material, but Hallett remains a shadow.
- 26 SPGA, Bishop Machray to Secretary Bullock, 12 May 1868. See also CMSA, T. Thistlewaite Smith to Secretary Venn, 26 Jan. 1865.
- 27 William Douglas, *Free Masonry in Manitoba 1864-1925* (Winnipeg, 1925), 12, 15, 19, 43, 44.
- 28 There are several accounts of the uprising. The best secondary account is by Norman Shrive, Charles Mair, *Literary Nationalist* (Toronto, 1965), 99-107. The best primary account is by Charles A. Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions* (Toronto, 1886).
- 29 SPGA, Bishop Machray to Secretary Bullock, 12 May 1868.
- 30 Begg, *Journal*, 494-497.

Chapter 9: The Métis and the Riel Protest

- 1 Giraud, *The Métis* (English edition), II, passim.
- 2 PAM, MG2, B6-2, Executive Relief Committee Census 1868; MG2, A1-12, Red River Census, 1832-1849. These figures are a product of an SPSS analysis of the Executive Relief Committee and Red River Census Material.
- 3 The 1868 Executive Relief Committee did not conduct a census for English Red River. That portion of the settlement was not as severely hit by the locust plague.
- 4 PAM, MG2, B6-2, Executive Relief Committee Census, 1868.
- 5 Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (hereafter cited as PAS), G. Laurie Diary (National Historic Sites Transcript), 105. All citations are to this transcript of the original.
- 6 *Ibid.*, Laurie described 'John Brousse' as a Halfbreed of very mediocre talent and education.
- 7 Giraud, *The Métis* (English edition), II, 291
- 8 Goldring, 'Labour', II, 158-9.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 4-5.
- 10 HBCA, B.239/c/11, fos 95-97. Governor and Committee to J. Clark, 24 June 1859.
- 11 *Ibid.*, D.9/1, fo. 56, W. Mactavish to J. Christie, 7 Dec. 1865.
- 12 *Ibid.*, B.154/b/9, fos. 249-250, J.A. Grahame to W. Mactavish, 16 Sept. 1863.
- 13 For a good discussion of the hierarchical nature of the fur trade post society see Philip Goldring, 'Governor Simpson's Officers: Elite Recruitment in a British Overseas Enterprise, 1834-1870' *Prairie Forum*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 252-281.
- 14 HBCA, B.235/d/228, fos. 54-64, contains the list of names.
- 15 *Ibid.*, B.154/c/10, fo. 460, Robert Hamilton to General Council, 12 July 1870.
- 16 *Ibid.*, A.11/99, fo. 211, J. Mactavish to W.J. Smith, n.d.
- 17 J.S. Milloy, 'The Plains Cree: A Preliminary Trade and Military Chronology 1670-1870', (M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1972), is the best account I have come across of the deterioration of the plains from 1850 onward.
- 18 HBCA, A.11/128, fo. 134, W. Mactavish and Committee, 13 March 1870.
- 19 For an account of these incidents see *ibid.*, D.11/1, fo. 195, W. Mactavish, to W.G. Smith, 6 April 1870. See also *ibid.*, A.11/53, fo. 2, D.A. Smith to W. Smith, 26 May 1870.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 AGOMI, Bishop Taché to Supérieur General Fabre s.d., Archives Provinciales Montreal, O.M.I., Father Lestanc to Father Vanderbergh, 14 Dec. 1869; 20 March 1870.
- 22 AASB, 2854, Father Dugast to Bishop Taché, Aug. 29 1869.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 2836, Father Dugast to Bishop Taché, 14 Aug. 1869.
- 24 Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers* (House of Commons) 1870, 'Correspondence and Papers connected with Recent Occurrences in the North-West Territories', v(12) 9. Hereafter cited as CSP.

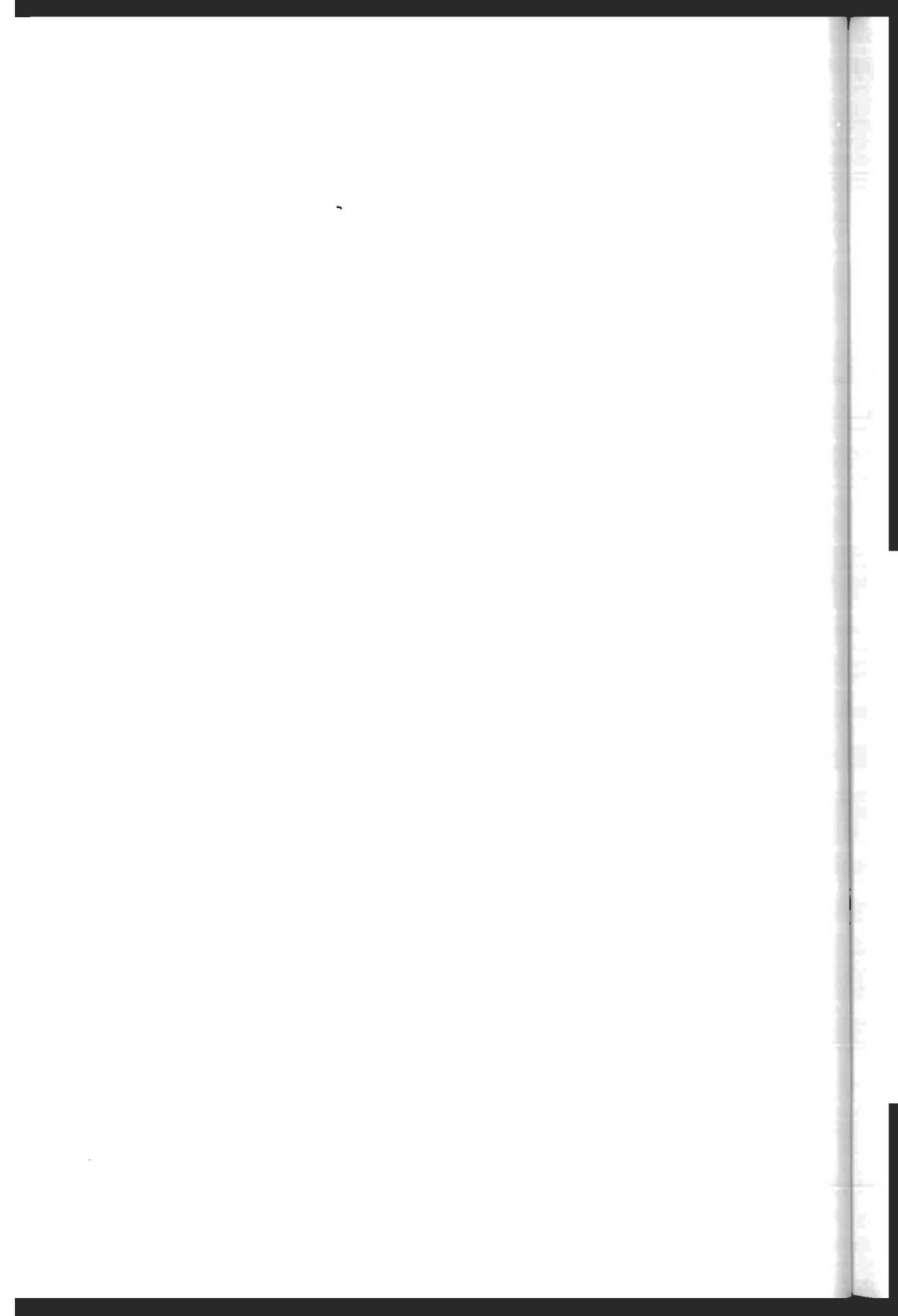
- 25 PAC, Macdonald Papers, 41335-7, Donald A. Smith to Joseph Howe, 12 April, 1870. See also Archives Provincial Montreal, O.M.I., Father Lestanc to Father Vandenberg, 20 March 1870.
- 26 Begg, *Journal*, 49, 66. According to Morton's note in Begg, Allard (1838-1917), was a Canadian. He arrived in Red River in 1866, was curé to Saint-Charles in 1868 and later Vicar General of Saint-Boniface.
- 27 L.A. Prud'homme, *Monseigneur Noel-Joseph Riuchot* (Winnipeg, 1928), 1-8.
- 28 PAC, William McDougall Papers, J.S. Demmis to William McDougall, 23 Oct. 1869.
- 29 AGOMI, Bishop Taché to Bishop Faraud, 8 June 1869.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 For a general commentary on the Bishop and his viewpoint of the resistance see Lionel Dorge, 'Bishop Taché and the Confederation of Manitoba, 1869-70', *Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba*, 3rd Series, No. 26 (1969-70).
- 32 Begg, *Journal*, 480.
- 33 CSP, 1870, 13.
- 34 HBCA, D.11/1, fo. 916, Governor Mactavish to W.G. Smith, 10 Nov. 1869. O'Donoghue arrived in 1867 as a Schoolmaster to the Roman Catholic mission. In 1869 he commenced wearing the soutane as he was preparing himself for the priesthood. At the outbreak of the resistance he left the Saint-Boniface establishment to join Riel. Of Fenian sympathies, he was solidly anti-Canadian and anti-British. It is not clear whether he left the church voluntarily or was forced out by Lestanc because of his involvement with Riel.
- 35 PMAA, Oblate Collection, B-VII-27, Father Maisonneuve to Father Vegreville, 24 March 1870.
- 36 Canada, Parliament, *Journals* (House of Commons), 1874, 'Report of the Select Committee on the Cases of the Difficulties in the North West Territories in 1869-70', Appendix No. 6, 28-30. See also a more confidential letter AGOMI, Bishop Taché to Bishop Faraud, 2 April 1870.
- 37 Canada, *Report of Select Committee*, 1874, 43.
- 38 See the many references in Canada, *Report of the Select Committee*, 1874, 30f.
- 39 Canada, *Report of the Select Committee*, 1874, p. 48.
- 40 Begg, *Journal*, 385.
- 41 Stanley, *Riel*, 125, 126.
- 42 Giraud, *Métis*, 1108.
- 43 *The New Nation*, 11 Feb. 1870.

Historiographical Note

- 1 George Bryce, 'Alexander Ross', *The Canadian Magazine*, XLIV, 1917, 163-68. Other biographies of Ross are listed at the end of the introduction to the 1957 Ross and Hains Inc. edition of Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement* (London, 1856).
- 2 Donald Gunn, *History of Manitoba from the Earliest Settlement to 1835* (Ottawa, 1885), 156. The second half of the volume is written by Charles R. Tuttle

- (b.1848), journalist, author and census commissioner for Manitoba. He arrived in Manitoba in the late 1870s and can be regarded as a member of the Bryce-MacBeth school. The biography of Gunn at the beginning of the volume is by Frank Larned Hunt.
- 3 Bryce has apparently copied entire sections of his volume from Frank Larned Hunt, 'Britain's One Utopia', *The Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba*, No. 61. February 1902, 1-12. See for example George Bryce. *The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists* (Toronto, 1909), p. 240.
- 4 *Ibid*, 318.
- 5 A. G. Morice's most important work is *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada* (Toronto, 1919) His *Histoire Abregée de l'Ouest Canadien* (Saint-Boniface, 1914) is however representative. The quotation is from 45.
- 6 Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* (Toronto, 1970), 89-90.
- 7 H. A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto, 1970), 393. W. J. Eccles' 'A Belated Review of Harold Adams Innis. The Fur Trade in Canada.' *The Canadian Historical Review Volume LX* (December 1979), 419-41 is the single best critique of Innis's work. His conclusions are that 'the work contains a great mass of information, much of it presented in chapters that lack cohesion, and frequently the evidence presented contradicts the book's conclusions. The end result has been the establishment of myths as conventional wisdom.' (p. 411).
- 8 A. S. Morton, *The History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (Toronto, 1939). Morton has offered some basic re-interpretations of La Verendrye, Radisson, Groseilliers and Thompson but offers little startling for Red River 1830-1868.
- 9 *Ibid*, 802. By 1860 the populations was almost equally divided between French and English. It was the mixed-bloods (Métis and Halfbreeds) who were predominant.
- 10 While E. E. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto, 1960) contains no footnotes, footnoted copies have been placed in the National Library of Canada and the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg..
- 11 J. Pritchett, *The Red River Valley 1811-1849* (New Haven, 1942), ix.
- 12 A. C. Gluek, *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian West* (Toronto, 1965), 292.
- 13 J. S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor 1821-1869* (Toronto, 1957), 10.
- 14 Pritchett, *Red River*, 271.
- 15 *Ibid*, 263-66.
- 16 Gluek, *Minnesota*, 76, 77, 118.
- 17 *Ibid*, 25.
- 18 *Ibid*, see footnotes 252-61.
- 19 Compare for example Gluek, *Minnesota*, 46-77 and Galbraith *Company*, 312-32 on the struggle for free trade.
- 20 W. L. Morton, 'The Red River Parish; its Place in the Development of Manitoba', *Manitoba Essays* (Winnipeg, 1937), 90.
- 21 W. L. Morton, 'The Canadian Metis' *The Beaver*, Outfit 281 September 1950, 3.
- 22 Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien* (Paris, 1945), 630.

- 23 Morton, 'The Canadian Metis', 7.
- 24 Sylvia M. Van Kirk, 'The Role of Women in the Fur Trade Society of the Canadian West, 1700-1850'. (University of London, Ph.D. dissertation, 1975) and *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870*, (Winnipeg, 1981).
- 25 Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, (Vancouver, 1980).
- 26 D. N. Sprague and R. P. Frye, 'Fur Trade Company Town: Land and Population in the Red River Settlement, 1820-1870' (The University of Manitoba Unpublished Manuscript, 1981).



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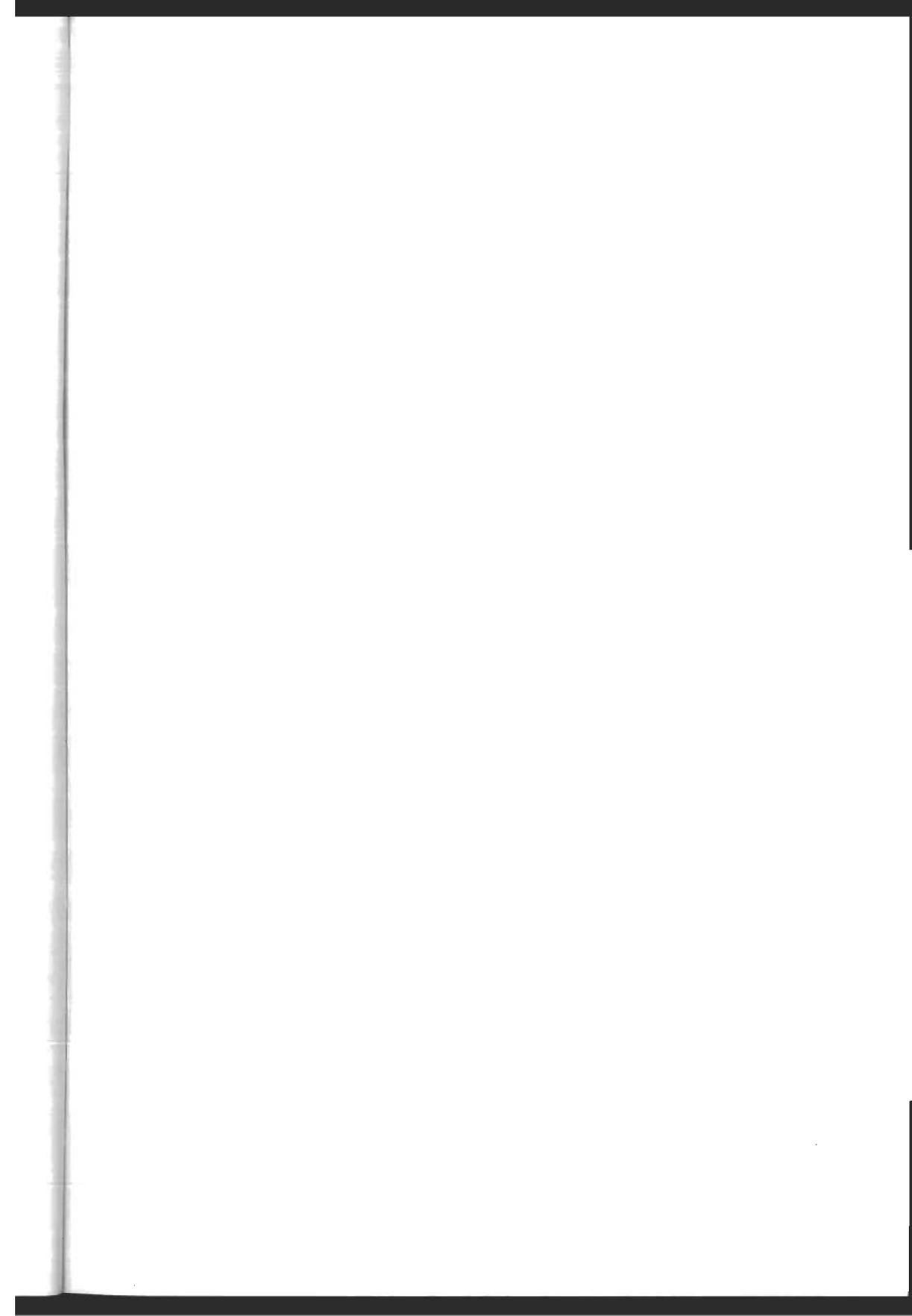
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A Snug Little Flock

The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-1870

Red River, in the 1830s, was a mix of Scottish farmers, Indians, fur traders, mixed-bloods of Scottish-Indian origin and Métis of French-Indian origin.

The colony was a challenge to missionaries who set out to create an English rural parish at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine. They believed and taught that indolence - the unchristian nomadic lifestyle of the buffalo hunt - must be replaced by the work of the Lord: agriculture. The traditional fur-trade marriage must be replaced by the Christian marriage which, they insisted, was 'the parent not the child of civil society'; the Christian marriage, however, could never correct the disastrous dilution of the Britannic race by Indian blood.

In the 'strife of blood' that followed, Red River became a society in which White looked down on mixed-blood, Catholic suspected Protestant, Halfbreed distrusted Métis and clergy opposed the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company. The end result was the 'civil war' of 1869.

Why did the Halfbreeds of Scottish and English origin submerge themselves in the 1860s among the white settlers or in the native community?

Why are they excluded from a national identity?

What factors formed the strong Métis identity?

What are the implications of the way the Métis identity emerged from Métis claims to rectify past injustices and settle aboriginal cultural and land claims?

This original and provocative book provides some of the answers.

Dr Frits Pannekoek, born in 1947 in Holland, took his M.A. (History) at the University of Alberta and his Ph. D. (History) at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

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