

### THREE

## **The Anglican Church and the Disintegration of Red River Society, 1818-1870**

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In 1821 Red River was desolate, destitute and barbarous. The uncompromising struggle of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company for control of the British North American Fur trade bred ruthlessness and violence. Honourable men became dishonourable and death and whiskey became common. The miseries of the climate compounded those of violence. Grasshoppers more than once destroyed the crops, the buffalo hunt frequently failed, and floods sometimes prevented early spring planting.

Those who struggled for survival in this isolated wilderness were a wild and motley crew. The only thrifty and creditable inhabitants were the 150 Scottish remnants of the Earl of Selkirk's effort to create a North American empire. Neither the de Meuron mercenaries, hired by Selkirk to protect the Scots, nor the 170 Swiss settlers recruited in 1821, found Red River congenial. Both left after the great flood of 1826. It was just as well, for the former were "quarrelsome, slothful, famous bottle companions... ready for any enterprise, however lawless and tyrannical, "while the latter were "watch and clock makers, pastry cooks and musicians."<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of the population, the English-speaking half-breeds (the Country-born) and the French-speaking half-breeds (the Métis) drifted into Red River between 1822 and 1830 upon the encouragement of the Hudson's Bay Company which had seriously reduced its need for personnel after union with its rival the North West Company.<sup>2</sup> By the late 1840s each group of mixed-bloods numbered almost three thousand, while the whites numbered a few hundred.<sup>3</sup>

The Hudson's Bay Company was understandably concerned about Red River and endeavoured to encourage the establishment of a stable agricultural and deferential society there.<sup>4</sup> The fur trade's surplus commissioned officers, mostly Orkadians or Scots,

were encouraged to take their Country-born families to Red River, where along with the clergy, they would superintend, control, and govern their "inferiors." The retired gentlemen, however, had neither the knowledge, the financial resources nor the inclination to assume these responsibilities.<sup>5</sup> Few were accorded the respect and authority that the Company had possessed in the interior, and none could command a substantial following in the settlement. Responsibility for bringing moral and civil order to the barbarism that was Red River fell, consequently, to the missionaries.

Historians of the West tend to agree that whatever civilization there was in the settlement was due to the efforts of the clergy. The missionaries are depicted as the principal bulwarks of law and order, sobriety and morality. Whatever restraint existed, whatever sedentary life there was, was largely due to their perserverance. Morton and Giraud argue most convincingly that the end result of the interaction of the environment, the mixed-bloods, the clergy, and the fur trade was a society delicately balanced between civilization and barbarism with the mixed-bloods personifying that balance.<sup>6</sup>

But close examination of Red River society indicates not a community delicately balanced between civilization and barbarism, but a brittle society whose parts were mutually antagonistic, each pitted one against the other. It was a society in which white looked down on mixed-blood, Catholic suspected Protestant, Country-born distrusted Métis, and clergyman opposed commissioned gentleman. The tensions emerged first between the clergy and the commissioned gentlemen and were discernable by 1830. Passions remained submerged, however, until 1851, when a peculiarly nasty scandal, involving the Protestant clergy, broke the elite into its Country-born, white, and clerical fragments. By the late 1840s the Country-born generality, the Catholic clergy and their charges, the Métis, were infected, and by 1865 the whole settlement was on the verge of a sectarian and racial war. The settlement's clergy and more specifically the Anglican clergy were mainly responsible for this disintegration.

The Anglican clergy, financed principally by the evangelical Church Missionary Society, until 1851 represented the only Protestant denomination in Red River.<sup>7</sup> 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 little influence except among the Selkirk settlers. So it was largely by default that the Anglican clergy found themselves counselling the Protestant gentlemen and converting the Country-born settlers of Red River.

The vast majority of the Anglican clergy were mediocre products from Islington College, the Church Missionary Society's institute for the training of its agents.<sup>8</sup> The best of the College's students were sent to India, where the CMS had extensive operations, and the more marginal to Rupert's Land, a peripheral area of interest for the society.<sup>9</sup> The Rev. John Smithurst and Rev. Abraham Cowley are two cases in point. The first, who was out in Rupert's Land from 1839 to 1851 and considered of superior quality in local tradition, was referred to by his referees as "ambitionless, and without sincere [Christian] 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.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Abraham Cowley, in Rupert's Land for the entirety of his lengthy and honourable career, was first 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.<sup>11</sup> Both Smithurst and Cowley were accepted on condition that they commit themselves to the frozen wastes of the North American Territory. Most of the candidates coming from Islington merited neither praise nor criticism; their school records, however, indicate their intellectual mediocrity.

Before 1849 the Islington graduates never numbered more than five to six and were usually under the thumb of the senior missionary, the Rev. William Cockran, who himself never went to Islington. Cockran arrived in Red River in 1823, one year before the founding of that Institute. In the twenty years following 1849, the year the Right Reverend David Anderson was consecrated Bishop of the newly-founded Diocese of Rupert's Land, twenty new clergymen (four Cree Indians, four Country-born and twelve Englishmen) were priested and two new missionary societies, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and the Colonial and Continental Church Society, were introduced. But with few exceptions these clergymen bore the same stamp of mediocrity as their predecessors.

What was most remarkable about these clergy was the rise in status that their move to Rupert's Land signified. Where before they had had marginal livings, and their wives had been considered nothing more than "Dollymops" or barmaids, they now hobnobbed with the fur trade's gentlemen; indeed they often set the social pace for the entire settlement.<sup>12</sup> Cockran's case is typical. While in Northumberland he was an underbailiff tainted with

Presbyterian sympathies; in Red River as the incumbent of St. Andrew's and Counsellor of Assiniboia he enjoyed considerable prestige and access to the best society Red River could muster.<sup>13</sup> His energy and two 200-acre plots, for example, made him one of the more prosperous Red River farmers and he was to send his own son to University College, University of Durham.<sup>14</sup>

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 Company fiat. 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 as sharing these tasks with the other members of the elite: the squirearchy, the Company's officers and the settlement's Governor. The Anglican clergy's plans for this society placed them at the helm and made outcasts of all who did not comply.

Firm in their conviction that "civilization must go hand in hand with Christianity," they preached what they assumed were the virtues of nineteenth century England as fervently as the Gospel.<sup>15</sup> A sedentary life was especially mandatory. The habits of the hunter were believed to be inseparable from "prodigality and idleness," and his constant condition that of beggary and extreme want.<sup>16</sup> Barbarism 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."<sup>17</sup> Work established 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. Adherence to a Christian morality, especially a Christian marriage, was demanded with equal vigour, considered as it was "the Parent . . . not the Child of Civil Society."<sup>18</sup>

The clergy urged Red River then to cultivate its European heritage and to resist the pull of the wild, in order to avoid the degenerate fate of the "immoral," "capricious," "intractable," "indolent," "callous," "prideful," "wayward," "extravagant"; "ingracious," "improvident" and "heathen," Country-born and Indian.<sup>19</sup> The whites would always be dominant, but they must avoid the diabolical temptations and licentiousness of the barbaric wilderness, a wilderness that was the very antithesis of civilization. To be infected with the contagion of barbarism was to be no better than the Indian and Country-born, lost forever to civilization.

Red River turned inward and its imitation of British tradition and prejudice became slavish. This is not only illustrated by the monogrammed silver service, the letter seal, the fine glass goblet,



and the expensive carriage, but by the acquisition by many of the prominent fur traders, both active and retired, of white wives. The ability to support the latter reflected wealth and status, and was a sign that their proud possessors were above the surrounding barbarism. However genteel the moccasined Indian or Country-born wife might be, she had no place in the better society of Red River. The result was that many of the Country-born and Indian wives were, as the current phrase went, "turned-off," that is, either abandoned, or, as was more often the case with the elite, placed under the protection of, or married to, another fur trader.<sup>20</sup>

The great shift from native to European wives was made by most of the fur trade's elite in the early 1830s. The insistence of the clergy upon Church marriages caused some of the commissioned gentlemen to reconsider their liaisons "*au façon du nord*" and to seize the opportunity to dispose of an "old concern" and acquire a newer, younger and lighter-skinned wife. George Simpson, the Governor of Rupert's Land, set the example by ridding himself of Margaret Taylor, the Country-born daughter of George Taylor, a former York sloop master, who went to Pierre Leblanc, the mason for Lower Fort Garry. The latter bargain required a £200 inducement.<sup>21</sup> How many other Country-born or Indian wives were "turned-off" is difficult to assess. It is certain, however, that of the more respectable commissioned gentlemen, Roderick MacKenzie, John George McTavish, William Connolly, John Stewart, and Donald MacKenzie abandoned native for white wives.<sup>22</sup> Not all "turned-off" their wives. Some had never married, while others waited for their "Country-born" wives to die. But for the most part new wives were invariably white.

As wives of the retired chief factors, the new white wives 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 Pianoforte, & the new fashioned Government Carriage."<sup>23</sup> 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 which set 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 to extravagance into the place that is followed by all that can afford it.<sup>24</sup>

As wives of the retired chief factors, the new white wives found themselves at the very pinnacle of Red River society, presiding over the community's social life and being treated with de-

ference and ceremony. For most, marriage had meant a considerable rise in status. James Bird, the wealthiest of the chief factors, married, after the death of his Indian wife, 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 £3000 made over to "her and her heirs forever." Miss Armstrong, Mrs. Bird's successor at the school, married John Peter Prudent, a chief factor of crude habits but kind heart and generous pocket book. Miss Allen, a fussy spinster of frail antecedents nearly married James Sutherland, a retired chief factor of modest means, but if gossips are to be believed he fortunately died of an overdose of calomel.

No native, irrespective of her position, and no clergyman's wife was allowed to compromise the newly-found status of these women. Where before the clergyman's wife was undoubtedly more educated and more socially aware than her Indian and Country-born friends, she now found her status considerably diminished and questioned. And she fought back. She ridiculed and found unacceptable the new leader of fashion, Mrs. Bird with her dinner parties, balls, and dancing. Mrs. Bird was suspect because of irregularities concerning a former marriage. Her first husband was reputed to be still alive. The rumour mill also had it that Miss Armstrong, now Mrs. Pruden, apparently quite the lady, had been in the "habit of sleeping with Cap'm Graves on the voyage out." These white women resented, as did the Country-born women, the parson's wife's role as watch dog over Red River's morals. The result of the reluctance to recognize one another's status was exclusiveness and hostility.<sup>25</sup>

Mrs. Simpson's attitudes were typical of those of the élite towards the parsons' wives and the natives. She found the Rev. Mrs. Jones, the wife of the sociable parson who came out in 1823, "passable," but she was the only one. Cockran's wife was rejected by both Mrs. Simpson and the "blues," the term frequently used by Red River to refer to the retired gentlemen and their families, because she had had the misfortune to be "a Dollymop or some such thing." George Simpson further maintained, rather viciously but not without some truth, that Mrs. Cockran's "Puritanism ill-concealed the vixen," and that she only "shined when talking of elbow grease & the scouring of pots and pans."<sup>26</sup> At best Frances Simpson would take communion in private with the parsons' wives.<sup>27</sup> She, however, did not favour, nor was allowed to favour, the native ladies of Red River with her intimacies. Simpson, for example, refused to allow the coloured Theresa Chalifoux, the

wife of Chief Factor Colin Robertson, the privilege of visiting with his wife. Only two Country-born, both servants, were allowed into Mrs. Simpson's presence.<sup>28</sup> By 1833 all of Country-born Red River avoided her.

The clergy and their wives were for the most part equally censorious of the Country-born. Mrs. Cockran found them "indolent and licentious," and condemned their habit of going "from house to house, enshrouded in a blanket," indulging in all manner of "detestable conversation." She felt that they must be led out of their former ways to the paths of industry and discretion.<sup>29</sup> Although these comments were made specifically with regard to the poorer Country-born, her attitude to those of quality would have been similar, though probably kinder. The Country-born and Indian wives or the Red River "blues" were aware of the disdain with which they were held by the clergy and by their lighter-skinned peers. Mrs. Alexander Ross and Mrs. Robert Lane, the latter the wife of a respectable Red River merchant, seldom made any social appearances except at Church.<sup>30</sup> A new white society composed of the clergy, the commissioned gentlemen and their wives had displaced that of the Country-born. The former were now the indisputable leaders of society.

The outward sign of the tendency towards exclusiveness was a significant increase in gossip. Since everyone in Red River feared for his newly-achieved position or was upset over his apparent decline in status, all compiled an arsenal of information to be used both offensively and defensively against their most serious social rivals. Cockran's arrival on a cow at Mrs. Simpson's dinner party, or his wife's unfortunate social background, were noted with relish.<sup>31</sup> The priest's lack of education was also duly censured by one of the fur trade's gentlemen, Donald Ross. He unkindly commented in the privacy of a letter that Cockran "spun out his long yarns as usual, murdering the King's English most unmercifully in the flights of pulpit eloquence."<sup>32</sup> If criticism had to be confined to the parlour and the confidential letter, it was because the clergy were reckoned as powerful enemies. One prominent 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."<sup>33</sup> But before 1850 no social warfare erupted. Probably the threat of insurrection on the part of the Métis and the Country-born in the free trade crisis of the 1840s forced the "blues," irrespective of race, and the clergy to unite.<sup>34</sup>

The divisions between the clerical and Country-born élite were exposed in the spring of 1850 when the most explosive scandal of Red River's history erupted.<sup>35</sup> Rumour had it that Mrs.

John Ballenden, the Country-born wife of the officer in charge of Upper Fort Garry, was an adultress. Desiring to clear her name, Mrs. Ballenden brought charges of defamatory conspiracy against her detractors. The trial was *the* event of the decade.

Writs were carried to every hole and corner of the colony, in high & low life: Knights, Squires, Judges, Sheriffs, Counselors, Medical-men, 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!<sup>36</sup>

The final judgement was to be expected; a substantial settlement for Mrs. Ballenden amounting to some £400.<sup>37</sup>

What was important was not the trial itself, but its impact on Red River society and the tendencies it revealed within that society. The principal result was the splitting of Red River into two distinct and opposing factions that had been in the making since 1830 and were based on social status and race. Mrs. Ballenden's adultery did not make the affair so important. What made the matter bitter was race. Robert Clouston, the brother of one of the defendants, maintained that "it seemed to be a strife of *blood*—for even the Jurymen were all either *Half-Breeds* or married to *Half-Breeds*."<sup>38</sup> Those who favoured Mrs. Ballenden included the plainer folk, the romantics, and, most important, the Country-born, while those who opposed her included the clergy and the influential whites.<sup>39</sup> The clergy and their wives were particularly venomous in their condemnation of poor Mrs. Ballenden.

Antagonisms grew so bitter that by 1852 neither party spoke to the other. Insults were hurled at clerical meetings, missionary gatherings and school examination committees.<sup>40</sup> The colony's Governor, Major Caldwell, for example, found himself at the heart of the controversy. 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.<sup>41</sup> Eden Colville, the Associate Governor, found his attempted role as mediator even a month after the trial impossible:

Altogether the state of things is most unpleasant, though somewhat ludicrous in that for instance, today the Bishop and his sister were calling on us and in the middle of the visit I

heard a knock at the door and suspecting who it was rushed out and . . . 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 Pelly's he had to pass through this room, so that I had to bolt out and put them into a third room. It was altogether like a scene in a farce.<sup>42</sup>

The divisions caused by the Ballenden scandal reinforced those caused by the coming of the first Presbyterian minister, John Black, in 1851. The question of the pew, burial, and property rights of the Presbyterians, who had worshipped in Anglican churches for forty years, became a *cause célèbre*.<sup>43</sup> The anti-Ballenden group, influenced by the clergy, were fervently Episcopalian and anti-Presbyterian and would give no quarter. The pro-Ballendens, while not all Presbyterian, were not as firm as the clergy and Bishop Anderson in the belief of Presbyterian wickedness. Instead they were in favour of a conciliatory policy that would have allowed for close relations between the two groups. Emotions were so intense that it became impossible for the partisans to separate the issues.<sup>44</sup>

The unity of the elite was plainly breaking down as a result of the Ballenden scandal and the Presbyterian question. The two were inter-related and mutually reinforcing, splitting the upper levels of the community along deep racial, status, and religious lines. There was no turning back to the more placid society of the pre-Ballenden years. No one faction emerged, however, to dominate the new scene. While the clerical faction controlled the Council of Assiniboia until 1855 when Governor Caldwell retired, this did not mean control of the white society centered at the Upper Fort, or a change to missionary policies on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>45</sup> The elite never again achieved any semblance of unity and, as will be seen, proved itself completely unable to provide leadership for the settlement in the crises of the 1860s.

The clergy's relations with the Country-born generality were not much better than its relations with the retired officers and deteriorated during the free trade crisis of the later 1840s. The struggle was essentially for the right of the mixed-bloods to participate in the means for the good life, the fur trade.<sup>46</sup> The arrest of Pierre Guillaume Sayer, a Métis, in 1849 for illicit trading brought the issue to a climax. The Company, unwilling to antagonize the mixed-bloods to the point of rebellion, capitulated and suspended Sayer's sentence. Their monopoly could now be violated with impunity.

Initially the clergy's influence over the Country-born was substantial. That this should be so was largely determined by the



previous experiences of the fur trade. All in the trade, the boatmen, servants, clerks, mixed-blood offspring, and Indians were dependent upon the commissioned gentlemen for everything. They frequently punished and chastised their subordinates and infrequently even educated them. With the move to Red River the Protestant missionary assumed these responsibilities. Now he was the source of charity and knowledge essential in the new struggle to create a sedentary and Christian life on the banks of the Red River. Accustomed to look to others for direction, the Country-born assumed that the clergy, often at social odds with the elite and therefore seemingly independent of the Company, should lead them in their fight against the fur monopoly and the supposed injustices of the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>47</sup>

The Church of England's clergy refused, however, to come to the assistance of the Country-born, and without the approval of the beloved clergyman, William Cockran, few dared to join the demonstrations of 1849. To Cockran, the pressure tactics advocated by the Métis and some of the Country-born was un-British and tantamount to rebellion against the Crown. Like the rest of the clergy, he was convinced that the unrest was an evil "Jesuitical plot" to increase the power of the Pope in Red River.<sup>48</sup> All in the settlement knew that Father Georges A. Belcourt, a French-Canadian Catholic priest, was behind the Métis agitation. Support of the free traders implied support of the Church of Rome.

Cockran's virulent anti-Catholicism explains his support of Adam Thom, the Company's anti-French and anti-Catholic Recorder, who symbolized to many mixed-bloods, Métis as well as Country-born, the arrogance of the Company. Cockran's speeches at St. Andrew's in support of Adam Thom alienated the congregations, whose members felt that the clergy had forsaken them. Some threatened to burn Cockran's houses.<sup>49</sup> But at the same time the anti-Catholic tone of Cockran's exhortations must have had their effect, for few Country-born took any part in the events of 1849. The clergy emphasized and re-emphasized the positive nature of Protestantism and the evils of Catholicism. Any assistance to the Métis would place a Protestant's soul in mortal danger.

In the 1840s this religious animosity was only sufficient to prevent concerted action in opposing the monopoly; after 1860 it grew to such intensity as to cause open sectarian strife. Prevented by religion, then, from joining their racial brothers, the Métis, and prevented by race from participating fully in white European Red River, the Country-born, without the unique national past of the Métis, became increasingly isolated and confused.

This confusion of identity coincided with a demographic crisis

in Red River. Between 1849 and 1856 Red River experienced a phenomenal increase in population which placed a substantial burden on the means of livelihood: the river lot, the hunt, and the fisheries.<sup>50</sup> The river lots could not be divided indefinitely among the numerous sons, as had been the tradition, so many Country-born moved to the plains along the Assiniboine River. The Rev. William Cockran had led the first such expedition to Portage la Prairie in 1854. Not all, however, were willing to abandon their friends, families, and churches along the Red. Consequently by 1856 two or three families occupied what once had been single family dwellings. Opportunities for the young were also less available than previously. As the changing sex ratio indicates—in 1849 there were 137 more males than females, in 1856, 73 more females than males—many of the more ambitious single males moved to the United States or into the western interior along the Saskatchewan at places such as Victoria and Prince Albert to realize their ambitions.

An observant clergyman remarked on the consequences of overcrowding:

There is an increase of those that drink . . . and sad & sickening of late have been the consequences of an excessive indulgence in whisky. 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.<sup>51</sup>

Because the buffalo hunt was still for the most part successful, because there was no open division within Métis society, and because of their strong identity forged in the formative years of the settlement, the Métis were still able to cope with the population and economic pressures of the late 1850s and early 1860s and were not as affected as the Country-born, although drinking problems were not entirely absent.<sup>52</sup>

The clergy attempted to combat the evils by the foundation of temperance societies, but the largest Protestant society, founded in St. Andrew's in 1857, met with little success.<sup>53</sup> A considerable number attempted to find solace and meaning for life in religion. Prayer meetings were increasingly well-attended. Both Anglican and Presbyterian clergy noticed a quickening of spirit, but there were no "cases of awakening."<sup>54</sup>

Increasing political uncertainty aggravated the economic and social difficulties of the Country-born. As interest by Great Britain and Canada in Rupert's Land grew in the 1850s, a struggle ensued in the settlement to hasten the end of Company rule and the coming either of Crown Colony government or annexation to Canada. But there was never any unity to the movement, and it only served to split the settlement further among its various factions.<sup>55</sup>

Since the most serious problems in Red River were those of the Country-born, since the central problem was one of identity, and since the Country-born had a tradition of religious leadership, it should be no surprise that a factious cleric should emerge to give direction to discontent. Rev. Griffiths Owen Corbett, in Rupert's Land from 1852 to 1855 and from 1858 to 1863, was such a cleric.<sup>56</sup> Corbett was always a contentious and difficult gadfly with strong convictions about the Parliamentary rights of Englishmen, and even stronger convictions that these rights were being denied to Red River by the joint tyrannies of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Church of Rome. Corbett convinced the Country-born that their future lay with Protestantism and with the British Empire as a Crown Colony. Crown Colony status implied not merely the rights and privileges of the British constitution but a fellowship of English-speaking folk, for the Empire was always a kind of nationalism stretched overseas. The country-born came then, because of Corbett's teachings, to think of themselves as Englishmen rather than mixed-bloods.

Since these changes in the attitudes of the Country-born are important, the limitations of the evidence must be noted. First, little of Corbett's correspondence survives, especially regarding his views on Crown Colony status. All that remains of substantial importance is his tract, "Notes on Rupert's America" and a hand-bill, "A Few Reasons for a Crown Colony," published on his own press. Only brief summaries of his speeches on the subject of the value of the British Constitution and connection were carried by *The Nor'Wester*. 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 so fervently and combined it so well with the increasing anti-Company and anti-Catholic sentiments of the Country-born as did Corbett.<sup>57</sup>

The agitation for change began in earnest in 1856 and gained in momentum and acrimony to 1862. Meetings were held throughout the settlement with increasing frequency, and a number of

petitions circulated advocating either annexation to Canada or Crown Colony status, with the latter appearing more certain. Most of the Anglican clergy of the elite withdrew their support from the agitation in 1862 when the Company relieved Rev. John Chapman, their chaplain and a cohort of Corbett's, of his position for unduly criticizing the Company. Corbett, along with James Ross, the Country-born son of the historian Alexander Ross, continued to agitate. For his efforts Ross was deprived of his public offices of sheriff, governor of the gaol and postmaster.<sup>58</sup>

So when in early December, 1862, Corbett was jailed for five times attempting to induce miscarriage by Maria Thomas, pregnant with his child, his protestations of innocence and accusations of a Company conspiracy were believed by the Country-born. Many were convinced that Maria Thomas' father, who had pressed the charges, was in the Company's pay.<sup>59</sup> When Corbett was jailed, the Country-born pressed for his immediate release and vindication. Throughout the episode the Church refused to add its considerable weight to the Country-born cause and instead conducted a separate investigation. It too found Corbett guilty.<sup>60</sup>

The only alternative was for the Country-born to take the law into their own hands. On April 21, they forcibly released Corbett and on April 23 they freed James Stewart, the schoolmaster who had been imprisoned for his efforts in the Corbett jail break. The anti-Corbett faction was persecuted in every area of the settlement, especially in Corbett's parish, Headingley, and in the neighbouring parish of St. James. Not only was the new incumbent of Headingley denied entrance to his church, but the Country-born refused to send their children to the church-sponsored school.<sup>61</sup> Various clergymen were attacked for their views, especially Archdeacon James Hunter, who had conducted the clerical investigation into the Corbett case, and Bishop Anderson. Hunter observed 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, & my prophecy is that in two years there will not be four clergymen on the two rivers.<sup>62</sup>

By 1867 all of the most prominent clergymen had left Red River: Anderson in 1865, Hunter in 1865, and Chapman and Taylor in 1867. Their numbers were further reduced by Cockran's death in 1865.

As Corbett crystallized the Protestant Anglo-Saxon identity of the Country-born he increased their hatred of the Catholics. He felt that the British liberties of Red River, a Protestant colony of a

Protestant Queen, were under attack and succumbing to the tyranny of the Pope. Corbett, seeing (as he imagined) too many examples of the growing power of the anti-Christ, felt it his duty to warn all of the dangerous consequences. His greatest concern was with William Mactavish's Catholic tendencies. Mactavish, the Governor of Assiniboia, had married a Catholic in Saint-Boniface Cathedral, and in the following years baptized his children into the Catholic faith.<sup>63</sup> All of Protestant Red River considered the marriage an insult to Bishop Anderson, who had apparently expected to conduct the ceremony. 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."<sup>64</sup>

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 of Popish ascendancy. According to the priest, and legally he was correct, only Bishop Anderson, who wanted no part in the controversy and who unsuccessfully cautioned Corbett to moderation, was entitled to that honourable designation. Only he was appointed by "Her Most Gracious Sovereign the Queen." The use of the title for Bishop A. A. Taché was considered both "insidious" and "unconstitutional." When during the dispute the Council of Assiniboia passed a law forbidding all government activity on Catholic holidays, there could no longer be any doubt for Corbett—Red River had fallen to the Pope.<sup>65</sup>

The degree to which the two communities had separated is apparent in the Stewart Jailbreak referred to earlier. After Corbett had been released and Stewart incarcerated, the Governor of Red River, suspecting a plot to free Stewart, called upon twenty-five Métis and twenty-five Country-born to defend the prison. Only five of the Country-born were willing to serve; the Métis, who had no use for "Corps bête" or his cause, appeared in full force. The Country-born mob defied the Métis guard and liberated Stewart. Fortunately most of the twenty-five Métis were from Saint-Boniface and under the control of moderates. Had "les hiversants," the Métis boatmen and tripmen living at Cheval Blanc and Saint-Norbert, been involved, as had been initially intended, blood would have been shed. They were hardly as charitable as their brethren at Saint-Boniface and after the long confinement of winter would have been ready to flex their muscles in the Red River spring air to teach the insolent Protestants a lesson.<sup>66</sup>

So by 1863, largely because of Corbett, the Country-born were certain of their identity. They were to liberate Red River



from the two tyrannies of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Church of Rome and follow Corbett into a thoroughly Protestant and liberal British Empire in which they, as Protestant Englishmen, would have the balance of power. Indifferent or hostile towards the Métis, the Country-born were ready, if indeed not eager, for the transfer to Canada that was formalized in 1870. But because of the scandals of the 1850s and the 1860s neither the Church nor the fur trade gentry were unified or influential enough to give direction to their wishes. The Country-born, lacking leaders of their own after Corbett's departure in 1864, looked eagerly to dynamic Canadians like John Christian Schultz for leadership. For the Country-born the Riel resistance would be an obstacle to the political fulfilment of their new orientation formulated during the 1860s. Feeling themselves members of the Britannic race and Empire, they did not have the same need or desire to protect their religion, language or race that the Métis did.

Twice during the Riel affair, once in December 1869 and again in February 1870, the Country-born marched against the Métis in order to restore the authority of the British Crown. By December 7, approximately two months after Riel had refused William McDougall, the Governor-designate, access to Red River, the Country-born had become so angered by Riel's activities that some four hundred armed themselves for a march on Upper Fort Garry to put down the arbitrary dictatorship. Because the Country-born lacked effective leadership the movement collapsed. The February counter-insurrection, involving some five hundred semi-armed Country-born, also failed because John Christian Schultz, in spite of Country-born pleas, refused to assume direction of the movement at the crisis hour. The intent had been to seize Saint-Boniface Cathedral and with the single cannon Schultz had brought down from the Lower Fort, breach the walls of Fort Garry across the river. Instead the Country-born dispersed in frustration. Since the Canadians were not yet strong enough to replace the traditional leaders of Country-born society, the Country-born had to wait for British troops to restore right and Empire.<sup>67</sup>

It should perhaps be noted that the Catholic clergy and their charges, the Métis, experienced a history distinct from that of the Country-born. They had a unique identity formed during the founding years of the settlement, which came to include as an intrinsic part, the Roman Catholic Church. Neither the Métis nor their priests were, however, fully integrated into Red River's social structure. They contributed few members to the wealthy upper crust, with only the priests having any social contact with the principal settlers or governors. Because the Métis and the clergy

were on the periphery of the elite that dominated Red River's affairs, and because the Catholic clergy had no wish to create a little France or 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 responded to the events that were changing Red River's social structure; they did not initiate them.<sup>68</sup>

While attempting to create an economic balance between the nomadic and sedentary life, and a moral balance between civilization and barbarism, the Anglican clergy at the same time inadvertently precipitated by their actions and teachings the steady deterioration of the social balance among the various parts comprising the settlement. This ensured that Red River from 1820 to 1870 became a comical community with little confidence in itself, imitating and adopting inappropriate pretensions; a community rife and vicious with gossip, in which everyone slandered, and few escaped the sharp tongues of their neighbours. It is fortunate that Canadian annexation came when it did and with it a new elite from Ontario, for old Red River was spent.

## NOTES

1. Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement* (London, 1856), pp. 41, 57.
2. Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien* (Paris, 1945), p. 688.
3. The best study of Red River demography is Barry Kaye, "Some Aspects of the Historical Geography of the Red River Settlement," (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1967).
4. Public Archives of Canada, Bulger Papers, II, 249, 250, G. Simpson to Committee, February 27, 1822. Hereafter the Public Archives of Canada will be cited as PAC.
5. P.A.C., Selkirk Papers, 7625-7626, G. Simpson to A. Colville, May 20, 1822.
6. E. E. Rich, ed., *London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colville, 1849-1852*, intro. by W. L. Morton, Vol. XIX (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956), p. cxv. Hereafter cited as Morton, *Colville*.
7. For a complete account of the Society consult E. Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society* (4 vols.; London: The Church Missionary Society, 1899).
8. The material relating to Islington College is scattered throughout the Church Missionary Society Archives, General Minutes, 1830-1860. The archives will be cited as CMSA.
9. *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, February 5, 1839.
10. *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, October 9, 1838.

11. *Ibid.*, Vol. 17, July 3, 1838; January 30, 1843.
12. *Ibid.*, Annual Report, Park's Creek School, 1842-43.
13. The best background for the Anglican missionaries is found in T.C.B. Boon, *The Anglican Church from the Bay to the Rockies* (Toronto, 1962), pp. 1-45.
14. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, E.6/7, fo. 31, Land Memoranda Book. Hereafter the archives will be cited as HBCA.
15. CMSA, J. Smithurst, Journal, October 21, 1842.
16. *Ibid.*, W. Cockran to the Secretary, July 25, 1833.
17. *Ibid.*, W. Cockran to E. Bickersteth, August 3, 1829.
18. John West, *The Substance of a Journal During a Residence at the Red River Colony* (London, 1824), p. 52.
19. These are the most common adjectival condemnations of the Indian and Country-born found in the CMSA.
20. An excellent study of the problem of the "turning-off" process in the 1830s in the Northwest is Sylvia Van Kirk, "Women and the Fur Trade," *The Beaver* (Winter, 1972), Outfit 303, pp. 4-21.
21. HBCA, 8. 135/c/2, fo. 54, G. Simpson to John George McTavish, January, 1831.
22. See Van Kirk, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.
23. James Hargrave, *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. by G. P. de T. Glazebrook, No. 24 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), p. 61, Alexander Ross to James Hargrave, December 18, 1830. Hereafter cited as J. Hargrave, *Correspondence*.
24. Glenbow Archives, Sutherland Papers, James Sutherland to John Sutherland, August 7, 1838.
25. F. Pannekoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area 1818-1870," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, 1974), pp. 58-59, 62.
26. HBCA, 8. 135/c/2, fo. 54, G. Simpson to J. G. McTavish, January 3, 1831 and 64d, G. Simpson to J. G. McTavish, April 10, 1831.
27. CMSA, D. Jones, Journal, May 24, 1833.
28. Pannekoek, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
29. CMSA, W. Cockran to the Secretaries, August 3, 1831.
30. Elaine Allen Mitchell, "A Red River Gossip," *The Beaver*, Outfit 291 (Spring, 1961), p. 8.
31. Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. by Margaret Arnett Macleod, No. 28 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), p. 69, L. Hargrave to Florence Mactavish, September 1-5, 1840.
32. P.A.C., Hargrave Papers, 1002, Donald Ross to James Hargrave, March 13, 1835.
33. J. Hargrave, *Correspondence*, p. 18, Francis Heron to J. Hargrave, August 1, 1826.
34. On these crises see Pannekoek, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-117.
35. The best secondary account of the scandal is Morton, *Colville*, pp. ci-civ.
36. Archives of the Province of British Columbia, Donald Ross Papers, Alexander Ross to Donald Ross, August 7, 1850. Hereafter cited as ABC, DRP.

37. For a complete transcript of the trial see Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Records of the General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia, July 16-18, pp. 181-221. Hereafter cited as PAM.
38. ABC, DRP, Robert Clouston to Donald Ross, December 17, 1850.
39. Morton, *Colville*, p. cii.
40. ABC, DRP, John Smithurst to Donald Ross, January 19, 1851; HBCA, D.5/30, fo. 204, Adam to G. Simpson, February 5, 1851.
41. HBCA, D.5/28, fo. 441/ Eden Colvil to G. Simpson, August 15, 1850.
42. *Ibid.*
43. P.A.M., Alexander Ross Papers, Eden Colville to Alexander Ross, April 16, 1851; John Black to Alexander Ross, May 9, 1851.
44. CMSA, James Hunter to Donald Ross, June 23, 1851. Hunter certainly thought the matters inter-related.
45. E. H. Oliver, *The Canadian North West, Its Early Development and Legislative Records* (Ottawa, 1914), pp. 350-380.
46. For background to the 1849 difficulties see Giraud, *op. cit.*, pp. 898-944.
47. Pannekoek, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
48. CMSA, J. Smithurst to the Secretaries, August 6, 1849.
49. CMSA, W. Cockran to the Secretaries, August 1, 1849; HBCA, D.5/25, fos. 318-319, A. Christie to G. Simpson, June 28, 1849.
50. 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, pp. 176-178.
51. Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Archives, D. 26, W. H. Taylor, Report, July 13, 1860. Hereafter cited as SPGA.
52. Giraud, *op. cit.*, pp. 945-964. See also Archives Generales des Oblats de Marie Immacule, Rome, Bishop Tâché to the Superior General, November 29, 1862.
53. HBCA, D. 4/75, fo. 656, G. Simpson to Bishop Taché, June 29, 1855.
54. PAM, Rev. John Black Papers, John Black to James Black, March 17, 1860; April 26, 1860.
55. For a more complete discussion of the Crown Colony movement see A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (London, 1939), pp. 852-869.
56. For background on Corbett see Pannekoek, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
57. For references to his sentiments in *The Nor'Wester* see the issues of February 1, 1861; February 15, 1861; June 15, 1861; November 15, 1861; November 17, 1862; and November 29, 1862.
58. *Ibid.*, April 27, 1863.
59. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1863.
60. CMSA, John Chapman to the Secretaries, February 19, 1862. For a complete transcript of the trial see PAM, General Quarterly Courts of Assiniboia Records, February 19, 1863, ff.
61. SPGA, D.41, W. H. Taylor, Report, July 1, 1863.
62. CMSA, James Hunter to Henry Venn, January 28, 1865.
63. *The Nor'Wester*, June 15, 1861.

64. *Ibid.*, December 14, 1861.
65. *Ibid.*, April 1, April 15, May 1, May 24, June 15, and December 14, 1861.
66. The best account of the events is provided by Archives de l'archêvêché de Saint-Boniface, 1313, Father Lestanc to Bishop Taché, April 21-23, 1863.
67. For an account of the Country-born involvement in the first Riel resistance see Pannekoek, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-27. The argument there is that the Country-born and Métis were at odds during the resistance. G. F. G. Stanley, in *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto, 1936) maintains, on the other hand, that the Country-born and the Métis were united.
68. See Pannekoek, *op. cit.*, Chapters III, IV, VI, and VII.