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Religious Print Culture and the British and Foreign Bible Society in Canada, 1820-1904

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“Religious Print Culture and the British and Foreign Bible Society in Canada, 1820-1904”

by

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Abstract

This study addresses the central question of how Canadians came to obtain the bibles they read in nineteenth century Canada. Historians of religion in Canada have recognized the importance of evangelicalism in nineteenth century Canada, but have rooted their analyses largely in denominational and intellectual frameworks. This study seeks to examine Protestant evangelicalism through its outworking in the British and Foreign Bible Society, one of the largest voluntary societies in Canada in this period. The Bible Society's organization, its methods in Bible distribution, and its expansion across Canada in the nineteenth century reveal the enormous influence of evangelical Protestant faith in English-speaking Canada. The Bible Society garnered considerable support across Protestant denominations, building a broad coalition of evangelicals whose active involvement in the BFBS's enterprise was fuelled by their commitment to religious voluntarism and the centrality of the Bible in an individual's salvation. The BFBS's leaders in Canada defined themselves using popular ideas of anti-Catholicism, and used anecdotes of Catholic opposition to their Bible enterprise to highlight the importance of liberty and individual freedom in matters of faith and conscience. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Bible Society operated within a competitive book trade in which emerging consumer tastes created new demands on the Bible Society that challenged the way it operated as both a religious organization and a competitive bookseller. The BFBS's enterprise in Canada in the nineteenth century highlights the importance of the evangelical movement in Canadian society and offers a unique lens on religion and print culture in this period.

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Note on Terminology

I have chosen to distinguish between the proper and common nouns in reference to the Bible. I use the capitalized proper noun when I or my subjects refer to the Bible as a scriptural text with some inference to singularity and immutability. Recognition of the Bible and a belief in its divine message were shared among most Protestants in nineteenth century Canada. I use the common noun especially when bibles are referred to in plural form and when bibles are discussed primarily as material objects that had a wide variety of styles, sizes, bindings, and editions that shaped the way Canadians read scriptures. Although this is an imperfect convention, I adopt it here to signify the importance of the material differences in the bibles that Canadians obtained in this period.

INTRODUCTION

On the evening of the fourth of September 1904, Toronto's Fellowship Hall was filled for a public meeting in support of the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in Canada. The Bible Society's London-based Foreign Secretary John Ritson had been invited to convene a conference of the BFBS's Canadian auxiliaries with a view to coordinate its work under a single Canadian Bible Society. Ritson provided the evening's main address, describing the work of the organization around the world and explaining the decisions about the Canadian Bible Society that had been taken in the preceding days. Ontario's Lieutenant Governor Sir William Mortimer Clark responded to Ritson's address, praising the Bible Society's work in Canada and pronouncing the importance of its Bible distribution for the nation's development. "When we consider what a vast effect has been brought about in this country by the circulation of the Scriptures, and by the people generally being acquainted with it, I venture to say that our whole superstructure rests upon the word of God. All of our legislation, everything connected with the moral well-being of our community, rests upon the word of God."¹ Clark's response was an acknowledgment of the remarkable impact of the Bible Society's work in Canada. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Canadian auxiliaries of the BFBS distributed more than a million bibles and testaments and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations in support of the BFBS's global enterprise. Elite professionals, businessmen, lawyers, doctors, industrialists, and philanthropists joined with clergymen from numerous Protestant denominations to occupy leadership positions on the executive committees of fourteen

¹ Address, Sir William Mortimer Clark, Proceedings of the Canadian Bible Society conference, British and Foreign Bible Society archives, Cambridge University Library, BSA/D2/1/52, 280.

auxiliaries and more than twelve hundred branches that had spread across the country by the turn of the twentieth century. Bibles had become an unmistakable part of Canadian life. This study examines the material distribution of bibles in Canada, focusing on the British and Foreign Bible Society as the most significant organization behind the proliferation of bibles in Canada in the nineteenth century. Because of the significance of the Bible as both a sacred text and as a substantial material object, a study of the history of its distribution serves as a lens on the intersection between religion and print culture in Canada.

Canadian Religious History

Bible distribution in nineteenth-century Canada was for the most part an enterprise championed by English-speaking Protestants, and this study is rooted in the history of religion in Canadian society. In order to understand the influence of the Bible on Canadian society, historians of religion in Canada have examined the Bible primarily as it shaped the intellectual and theological developments among Protestant clergymen. However, the Bible was not only significant for its textual influence, but also for its material influence, and bibles as objects had an important place in Canadian society. Leaders of the Bible Society shared the evangelical belief that all Canadians should not only have access to the Bible, but also participate in making bibles available in Canada and around the world. Their efforts in distributing the Bible and undertaking an enormously ambitious distribution enterprise make the Bible Society a core part of the history of religion in nineteenth-century Canada.

Canadian Bible distribution in the nineteenth century is closely linked to the controversies surrounding the relationship between church and state and what role government should play in supporting Protestant religion. Debates about church establishment in British

North America early in the nineteenth century raised issues that remained central to religion in Canadian identity. In his study of the formation of Protestant culture in nineteenth-century Ontario, William Westfall presents two opposing visions of religion in Canada. One vision championed by staunch Anglicans and exemplified by the Archdeacon of Toronto Reverend John Strachan pursued a religion of order which was to be supported in policy and resources by the state. Establishmentarians sought exclusive rights to revenues from lands set apart for the maintenance of the clergy, which were known as the clergy reserves, and an education system governed by the Church of England.² On the other hand, voluntarists and sectarians like the Reverend Egerton Ryerson sought equitable status for all Protestant denominations in government support and recognition.³ Westfall argues that by the 1840s, the government of Upper Canada abandoned the social contract of official establishment in pursuit of the colony's material and economic advancement, forcing establishmentarians and dissenters to moderate their respective Toryism and revivalism, so that, "the old battle between church and dissent had little meaning: former enemies became allies, if not friends."⁴ Although theological and ecclesiastical differences remained between Protestant denominations, a broad and informal consensus emerged in the 1850s which aimed to advance the sacred in an increasingly secular and materialistic world.

² The Constitution Act of 1791 laid out provisions by which Christian churches were to be supported by the income derived from rents and use of lands set aside for them, the value of which was extensive. J. S. Moir described the land reserves: "In terms of economics they were a king's ransom. In terms of Upper Canadian politics, they were aptly described as 'Pandora's Box.'"² J. S. Moir, *Church and State in Canada West*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 27. For more on the clergy reserves, see Alan Wilson, *The Clergy Reserves of Upper Canada: A Canadian Mortmain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).

³ On Egerton Ryerson's opposition to the Church of England's establishment in Upper Canada, see Todd Webb, *Transatlantic Methodists: British Wesleyanism and the Formation of an Evangelical Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ontario and Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 78-9.

⁴ William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 83.

One of the features of this consensus was the prominence of religious organizations and voluntary societies operating in coalition with Canada's Protestant denominations. N. K. Clifford attributes this consensus to a shared vision of the country being under the power and authority of God, to be "His Dominion" in which a "Canadian version of the Kingdom of God had significant nationalistic and millennial overtones," a vision which fuelled the work of "[n]ot only the major Protestant denominations but also a host of Protestant-oriented organizations such as temperance societies, missionary societies, Bible societies, the Lord's Day Alliance, [and] the YMCA's and YWCA's."⁵ Because that vision was not contained within a particular denomination or set of denominations, voluntary societies became an important contributor to Protestant culture in Canada by linking Canada's national wellbeing with a religious imperative.⁶ As a voluntary society with one of the largest followings in Canada in the nineteenth century, the British and Foreign Bible Society is one of the most powerful reflections of this vision of Canadian society, and much of the BFBS's public rhetoric expounds its role in Canada's wellbeing.

The British and Foreign Bible Society was established in 1804 by England's Clapham group of evangelicals who banded together for social change, most famously for the abolition of the slave trade with the energetic support of William Wilberforce.⁷ It was founded with the express purpose of providing affordable bibles to any Briton who might want one, and to support

⁵ N. K. Clifford, "His Dominion: A Vision in Crisis," *Studies in Religion* 2 no. 4 (1973): 315-326.

⁶ See Darren Ferry, *Uniting in Measures of Common Good: The Construction of Liberal Identities in Central Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).

⁷ The Clapham Sect's efforts in founding the BFBS were similar to the involvement in other voluntary associations in Britain, reflecting a belief that the nation's feelings was more trustworthy than its political conscience. See David Spring, "The Clapham Sect: Some Social and Political Aspects" *Victorian Studies* 5 no. 1 (September 1961) 35-48, 43.

the distribution of bibles in foreign countries where missionaries were at work. A story that became famous within the Society describes a Welsh girl who had saved up for six years to buy a Bible and walked twenty-five miles barefoot to purchase one from the only Bible seller in the region, only to be told that he had sold all of his editions.⁸ Although aspects of this story may have been apocryphal, it became a foundational part of the BFBS's founding. It is on the back of this story that the idea of a Society for the publication of cheap bibles was presented to the Religious Tract Society in 1803, and by 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed. It was in a context of sectarian division among British Protestants that the organization was established, and in order to maintain unity in this Bible enterprise, the Bible Society expressly forbade any commentary or notation to be published in their editions of the Bible. Representatives from Anglicans and Dissenters served on the Society's Board to ensure neutrality would be maintained on all doctrinal matters.

The Bible Society was more than a benevolent society that sought to bring spiritual benefits to those who desired them. Leslie Howsam demonstrates that one of the Bible Society's most important roles in Britain was that of a publisher.⁹ Through the use of new technologies and shrewd business tactics, its printing and publishing of cheap bibles in mass quantities shaped Britain's book culture in the nineteenth century beyond the limits of religious publications. Printing and publishing the Authorized Version of the King James Bible presented enormous challenges, and the BFBS and privileged presses ushered in major technological advances in printing and mass publishing in the broader book trade. The BFBS created an extensive network

⁸ The Bible Society continues to use the story of Mary Jones to explain the essence of its ongoing work. See "Mary Jones," <http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/our-work/mary-jones/> Accessed October 16, 2015.

⁹ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 203-205.

of auxiliaries and branches in the United Kingdom, and quickly foreign Bible Society auxiliaries were established with institutional ties to the BFBS in London. The BFBS gained a presence in British North America through private citizens who wrote to the organization's London-based Committee asking for shipments of bibles with the intention of establishing a branch in their communities. The BFBS's presence grew along with British North America's population, and by the late 1830s, most urban centres had a local BFBS branch which facilitated Bible distribution there.

As the BFBS's work expanded in British North America, two characteristics were behind the broad support and extraordinary success it enjoyed there. One is found in the Bible Society's first constitutional rule: the central policy of including "no note or comment" in any of the bibles it published.¹⁰ The policy ensured that Protestants from any denomination could participate in the distribution of scriptures. Roger Steer explains the necessity for the provision, arguing that, "[I]f the Bible was to commend itself to all schools of thought, it must not include features that would unnecessarily offend any one group of readers."¹¹ Leslie Howsam argues that, "[d]enominational differences made it impossible for Dissenters and Anglicans to combine together in their religious characters to distribute the scriptures. The publication of notes and comments would have raised disagreements over interpretation. So the members met as lay persons, agreeing to disagree about doctrine."¹² This policy was key in distinguishing the BFBS's work from that of other tract societies and missionary organizations in the nineteenth century. The BFBS's leaders

¹⁰ See the Constitution of the British and Foreign Bible Society (appendix I).

¹¹ Roger Steer, "'Without Note or Comment': Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," in Stephen K Batalden, Kathleen Cann, and John Dean, *Sowing the Word: The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1804-2004* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2004).

¹² Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, 6.

used it to try to set their organization apart from sectarian debates, so that no one could be accused of fueling denominational rivalries or undermining a particular theological position through their support of the Bible Society. In British North America's increasingly plural religious environment, the BFBS was able to gain the support of members of any Protestant denomination.

The other important characteristic was the convention that bibles should be purchased and not be given away. There were exceptions to this rule: committees deliberated on requests for free grants of bibles by Sunday schools, hospitals, jails, and other institutions, weighing the financial need alongside the reliability of the supplicant and the likelihood that the bibles would be put to good use. But selling the Bible was at the heart of the BFBS's distribution methods. Leslie Howsam has coined the term "Bible transaction" to describe the exchange of money for a Bible that the BFBS encouraged. This transaction demonstrated that purchasers were choosing to part with their money to obtain their bibles, and that in doing so, the bibles would be valued by the purchaser.¹³ The entire Bible enterprise was predicated on the willing and voluntary participation of those who bought bibles, as well as the voluntary participation in that enterprise by its members and leaders who donated funds in support of the BFBS.

The BFBS's commitment to these two principles contributed to its success because it operated in a religious context that privileged voluntarism. As a result of the increased agitation by Protestant sects for equitable status, British North American governments abandoned church establishment, and a vision of order that relied upon an endowed and independent clergy was being replaced by a competitive religious market. The staunchest supporters of church

¹³ Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, 36-40.

establishment had warned that should the ties between church and state be severed, a crude market competition between denominations for their allegiance and financial support would be the result. William Westfall quotes a leading Presbyterian named Reverend Thomas Chalmers who was a friend of Strachan and who shared his grave concerns about the loss of establishment. Chalmers believed, writes Westfall, that voluntarism was “a form of religious free trade that worked on the heretical principle that individuals could make religious decisions based on their own self-interest. It assumed that success and failure should be decided by a religious open market: the churches that people chose to support would win out while those that the people did not support would fail.”¹⁴ Chalmers’s concerns were well-founded. The collapse of church establishment created a context in which Canadian churches would have to compete for their monetary support, subjecting a denomination’s fortunes to its ability to appeal to people’s needs and desires. In their important depiction of the American landscape for denominational growth in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark argue that “without state sponsorship, religions must compete, for religious affiliation becomes a matter of individual choice. Each must capture some segment of the market in order to survive. Hence, aggressive firms successfully appealing to large segments of the population will grow; those failing to attract and retain members will decline.”¹⁵ In the same way, Canadian churches competed for people’s monetary support, as did the voluntary societies who relied upon such funds for their survival. The British and Foreign Bible Society, through its emphasis on

¹⁴ William Westfall, *Two Worlds*, 101.

¹⁵ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, “How the Upstart Sects Won America, 1776-1850,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 28 no. 1 (1989), 29.

voluntary participation, was well-equipped to navigate the competitive marketplace of religious ideas.

As an important part of this religious milieu, evangelicalism benefited from its emphasis on an individual's voluntary conversion and personal choice in religious matters, and the Bible Society's work provides an important lens into Canadian evangelicalism. As Michael Gauvreau indicates in the title of his study of Canadian Protestant thought, much of Canadian Protestantism in the Victorian era and early twentieth century was aligned with the evangelical consensus described by William Westfall and N. K. Clifford.¹⁶ David Bebbington has defined evangelicalism by its four key tenets of biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and activism.¹⁷ Evangelicals' emphasis on the Bible as a central component to Christian belief and practice situates the BFBS within this movement. The BFBS's aim to equip believers with the Word of God was fuelled by the belief that reading the Bible would afford opportunities for conversion, maintain the centrality of the person and work of Christ in their faith, and empower Christians in their active participation in Christian mission in the world. This quadrilateral might also be supplemented, as John Stackhouse suggests, with transdenominationalism, in which adherents of numerous denominations shared the four aforementioned elements.¹⁸ Transdenominationalism is key to the BFBS's influence as an evangelical organization. Participation in and support for nondenominational Bible and tract societies was often a delineating characteristic separating High Church Anglicans and evangelical Anglicans, and the BFBS's leaders made explicit their

¹⁶ Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-17.

¹⁸ John G. Stackhouse, "Defining 'Evangelical,'" *Church and Faith Trends* (October 2007) Vol 1 n.1.

desire to involve all Protestant denominations in their enterprise. The BFBS provided an institutional platform for the cooperation and shared ideals of Canadian evangelicals. It was the effort and financial support of individuals rather than denominations upon which the BFBS most depended, reflecting the emphasis on individualism associated with evangelicalism.¹⁹ Though scholars have examined the movement's ideals among individuals and within Protestant denominations, none have examined the role of the BFBS as a powerful representation of Canadian evangelicalism in the nineteenth century.²⁰

The importance of individual choice provides a powerful link between evangelicalism and an emerging consumer society. In his examination of American business and evangelicalism, Timothy Gloege states that consumer culture “encouraged a definition of what it meant to be authentically human that placed a particular emphasis on choice.... The centrality of choice resonated most strongly with an evangelical disposition. Authentic faith was an individually chosen, personal relationship with God. And it was the act of choosing that made one’s faith authentic.”²¹ Canadian BFBS auxiliaries affirmed the importance of choice by insisting that people pay for their bibles and by relying on the private donations and subscriptions of its members.

As a voluntary society, the Canadian BFBS auxiliaries positioned themselves not as a rival to any of the Protestant denominations, but as a partner in their ministry. Nonetheless, the

¹⁹ For an analysis of “evangelical individualism,” see Robert F.J. Gmeindl, An Examination of Personal Salvation in the Theology of North American Evangelicalism: On the Road to a Theology of Social Justice,” Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1980.

²⁰ See especially George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

²¹ Timothy E. W. Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 141.

goals of the Bible Society's ministry were different: where denominations pursued long-term adherence and participation in church services and in local parish life, the Bible Society measured its success primarily by the number of bibles that were sold and the amount of money that was raised through subscriptions or donations to the Bible Society's domestic and international work. Using money as the measure of success indicated the willingness of members to demonstrate their support for the work by parting with their money. Anecdotes and testimonies of the powerful spiritual transformations that came about from the Bible Society's work affirmed the importance of its work in Canadians' spiritual wellbeing, but the primary measure of success was the amount of money collected, which itself provided for the BFBS leaders an indication of its spiritual significance. Another indication of its effectiveness was the amount of money auxiliaries were able to set aside each year as a remittance to the London committee of the "Parent Society," funds that were sent over-and-above the cost of any books that had been received. The sum of each auxiliary's contribution was published in the BFBS's annual report each year and served as a rough measure of an auxiliary's success in its operations for a given year.

The funds sent to London and its close oversight of Canadian auxiliaries signalled the close relationship between the BFBS in London and Canada. Until 1904, all of the work undertaken by the BFBS in Canada was administered by auxiliaries that worked independently from one another under the direction of the BFBS's committee in London. The BFBS's institutional orientation to Britain situates this study within the discourse of transatlantic religion and the importance of the British Empire in Canadian history. Thanks in large part to Carl Berger's classic study of the idea of imperialism as a form of nationalism, Canadian history has

oriented itself towards the social and cultural connections between Britain and its Canada.²² More recently, scholars have emphasized nineteenth-century British colonialism and the North American relationship to Britain.²³ Todd Webb exemplifies the importance of that broader British world with regards to religion, arguing that Canadian Methodists were linked to the British world both officially and informally, as they saw themselves as “an extension of a larger missionary field,” and that such a perception “was central to the process of cultural formation in the colonies.”²⁴ The institutional connections of the BFBS auxiliaries to London added to the legal and material realities of Canadian publishing that oriented Canada’s Bible trade primarily to Britain. Despite the rise of considerable religious publishing enterprises in the United States, there was relatively little movement of American editions of the Bible across the border into Canada because the BFBS’s well established trade links with London and its vast network of branches provided an adequate supply of bibles.

The link to London also offered prestige to the leaders of BFBS auxiliaries and their branches. The BFBS was an important institution in Britain with members of Britain’s elite filling the organization’s executive offices. The institutional links were important in British North America and remained so after Confederation. Describing the establishment of another prestigious colonial institution, the Upper Canada Law Society, Christopher Moore argues that

²² Carl Berger, *A Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

²³ See Nancy Christie, ‘Introduction: Theorizing a Colonial Past, in *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America*, ed. Nancy Christie (Montreal, 2008), 3–41; Philip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, “Introduction,” in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 1-10.

²⁴ Webb, *Transatlantic Methodists*, 164. See also, Webb, ‘How the Canadian Methodists Became British: Unity, Schism, and Transatlantic Identity, 1827–1854’, in *Transatlantic Subjects: Ideas, Institutions and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America*, ed. Nancy Christie (Montreal, 2008), 159–198.

British policy makers believed that “the way to keep the colonies loyal and British was to create in them the societies like Britain’s, where long-established patterns of deference would buttress the political power of local rulers much like Britain’s.” To that end, John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, believed that “by duplicating British institutions in its colonies, one could re-create British society itself, and so infuse a lasting commitment to Britain, its monarchy and its empire.”²⁵ Although the origins of the BFBS’s presence in North America was not initiated by government policies, the institutional links with London strengthened British identity in Canada, an orientation that Canadian BFBS leaders frequently and vociferously affirmed in their publications and public addresses.

The BFBS’s Bible enterprise shaped the means by which Canadians came to read the Bible. The profound influence of the Bible on Canadian thought and theology has been a feature of historical studies of religion in Canada. In his excellent study into the way the Bible featured in Canadian public discourse, Preston Jones highlights Canadians’ remarkable biblical literacy in the first half century after Confederation. His study demonstrates that the Bible was an important part of Canadian public discourse, and by inference, that the Bible was widely read by Canadians.²⁶ That inference must be critically examined. If Canadians were expected to understand biblical references and allusions, historians must investigate how they obtained the bibles they read and probe historical processes that enabled the popular access to the Bible that Jones evinces.

²⁵ Christopher Moore, *The Law Society of Upper Canada and Ontario’s Lawyers: 1797-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 20.

²⁶ Preston Jones, *A Highly Favored Nation: The Bible and Canadian Meaning, 1860 -1900* (University Press of America, 2008).

In addition to the Bible's place in public discourse, historians have paid considerable attention to the way that biblical teaching shaped Protestant clergymen's teaching in seminaries and sermons. Many of these studies have used intellectual developments to explain the impact of religious thought on Canadian society. The rise of biblical studies and higher criticism in the 1880s in Canada coincided with the emergence of new critiques of the Bible's authority through scientific inquiry.²⁷ Michael Gauvreau argues that "the Bible occupied a central place as the guide and organizer of Christian life and thought" and that, despite new intellectual attacks on the Bible at the turn of the twentieth century, Protestant clergymen and college leaders preserved "the Bible as an authoritative body of 'facts' and doctrines."²⁸ The Bible's place in Canadian religious history has been an important element in debates about the processes of secularization in Canadian society. For some, new questions about the Bible created a crisis of faith that compelled leading clergymen to make accommodations in the essence of their religious message which unwittingly ushered in a decline into secularization.²⁹ For others, secularization occurred much later, Protestants' continued evangelism and religious activity maintained the powerful, albeit different, evangelical essence in nineteenth century Canada.³⁰ These studies often reflect on the Bible's place in Canadian religious life, defining the terms of the secularization debate on intellectual lines to discern the extent to which the theological essence of Christianity and its

²⁷ John S. Moir, *A History of Biblical Studies in Canada: A Sense of Proportion* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 1.

²⁸ Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 19, 287.

²⁹ Questions over the Bible's authority were central to Ramsay Cook's argument that religious leaders were led to "attempt to salvage Christianity by transforming it into an essentially social religion," one that abandoned orthodox theology for a concern with a modernist and more secular theology. See Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 4-5. See also David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant clergy and the crisis of belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

³⁰ See Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: the Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), xi – xiv.

place in Canadian society were diminished. This is an important aspect of the transformations in Canadian religiosity at the turn of the twentieth century, but other means by which religious devotion and belief might be measured are rarely examined.

This study shifts the analytical focus away from these intellectual dynamics toward the material and experiential elements of Christianity.³¹ Despite the rancour over the receding authority of the Bible and the concerns about its diminished place in Canadian society, the BFBS's Bible enterprise continued to expand and the demand for bibles continued unabated well into the twentieth century. The BFBS's emphasis on the material possession of the Bible, rather than its interpretation or the application of its message, allowed it to continue to enjoy the consensus support of many Canadians who, though they might have been prepared to question the theological authority and the inerrancy of its text, continued to affirm the importance of the Bible in Christian life and Canadian society. For many Canadians, new questions about how it ought to be interpreted were secondary to the ways they experienced their faith in local, domestic, and private settings. The transformations in the way in which the Bible was interpreted that occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century caused some to re-imagine the Bible's authority and the way the Bible ought to be used, but Canadians continued to see the Bible as an essential part of their identity.

This previous historiographical focus on the intellectual history of clergymen and professors has also overshadowed an interrogation of the intellectual heritage of other important lay figures in Canadian Protestantism. Businessmen, professionals, entrepreneurs, and politicians

³¹ The shift towards the lived experiences of religion is forwarded by the collection of essays in David Hall's *Lived Religion in America; Towards a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

were important members of local congregations and helped shape denominational practices and the place of religion in Canadian society. The focus on intellectual currents of clergymen and seminary professors obscures the entrepreneurial and business skills that BFBS leaders used to overcome the material and financial challenges of Bible distribution. Lay Protestants actively contributed to the BFBS's enterprise, and the reality that Canadians could and should possess a copy of the Bible for themselves by the end of the nineteenth century was the result of their deftness in the business of book distribution, discounts, and retail. The work of the BFBS's leaders made the Bible a widely available and affordable commodity. In these activities, lay religious leaders like those who held executive offices in the Canadian BFBS auxiliaries contributed a very different intellectual perspective that emphasized the entrepreneurial and competitive aspects of religious life in Canada.³² That perspective has been widely understudied compared to those of professors and clergymen, vocations that are by their nature less entrepreneurial than they are endowed. This overlooks a critical element of Christian Canada in this period, the intellectual heritage of the businessmen, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists who were no less fervent in their religious practice and belief.³³ The Bible enterprise was by nature entrepreneurial as its leaders operated in a realm of market competition, and they held a belief of a free-market of ideas in which different views of religion competed.

³² For an example of the attention to competition, taste, and economic imperatives in religious enterprises, see Barry Magrill, *A Commerce of Taste: Church Architecture in Canada, 1867-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).

³³ As an example of the role of well-to-do lay professionals in churches' ministries, John Webster Grant points to the generous gifts of the Massey family and others like it as necessary for maintaining congregations and establishing new ones. See Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 179-180. William Westfall argues that "[e]ach congregation had to call on those who had prospered in the new economic order, and their benefactors are still acknowledged in the hundreds of memorials that grace the churches they helped build. Many religious leaders readily acknowledged that the business cycle had become an important religious consideration." Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 129.

A focus on the material aspects of Canadian Bible distribution also sheds light on the tensions between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Recently, Michael Gauvreau and Ollivier Hubert have noted “the necessity of a continued conversation and an ongoing elaboration of thematic comparisons between Protestantism and Catholicism.”³⁴ The BFBS’s leaders and supporters added urgency and weight to their enterprise by highlighting the Catholic Church’s opposition to it. J. R. Miller argues that a period of official anti-Catholicism in British North America ended with political and social accommodations for the Catholic Church, and that nineteenth-century anti-Catholicism was based on theological differences about the Bible, the core of which were based on “Protestants’ insistence that their beliefs, being based exclusively on the Bible, were more faithful to Christ’s teachings. Catholics were accused of taking their teachings not from Scripture, but from Scripture as interpreted by the humans whom the Catholic Church invested with authority.”³⁵ Miller points to theological objections over transubstantiation, idolatry and the veneration of Mary, the apostle Peter and papal succession, papal infallibility, and auricular confession as a means of priestly absolution; all were based on differing interpretations of biblical teaching. But equally objectionable to Protestants was the restriction Catholic priests placed on access and possession of the Bible. The importance of voluntarism and individual choice that remained a feature of Canadian Protestantism in the nineteenth century cherished an individual’s choice in matters of faith, and unfettered access to the Bible afforded its reader the opportunity for salvation and redemption. For evangelicals, prohibiting an

³⁴ Michael Gauvreau and Ollivier Hubert, “Beyond Church History: Recent Developments in the History of Religion in Canada,” in *Churches and Social Order in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 4.

³⁵ J. R. Miller, “Anti-Catholicism in Canada: From the British Conquest to the Great War,” in Terrence Murphy and Gerald Stortz, eds., *Creed and Culture: The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Pres, 1993).

opportunity for Catholics to read the unmediated Word of God was among the worst transgressions that the Roman Catholic Church committed. As the BFBS's leaders emphasized their enterprise as one that afforded anyone the choice to obtain the Bible, they cast the Catholic Church as its enemy because of the Church's restriction on the freedom with which its members could come to own and possess the Bible.

History of the Book in Canada

In this study of Canadian Bible distribution, these religious dynamics intersect with an examination of the history of the book, a field of scholarship that offers a unique lens into this religious historiography through bibliographical analyses. Robert Darnton argued that book historians must examine the myriad activities of the book business in a particular historical context, and trace the “variations of those activities at different stages in the evolution of technology and business practices.”³⁶ By studying the activities of printing and publishing, from paper-making, type-casting, press-operating, advertising, distributing, and selling books in a particular place and time, the scholar can discern their broader significance, especially with relation to social developments. In his influential work *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, D. F. McKenzie champions “focussing on the primary object, the text as a recorded form” in order to critique the history of a book in a particular time and place and the social interactions in which objects are made.³⁷ Reflecting on McKenzie’s emphasis on both sociology and

³⁶ Robert Darnton, “Histoire du Livre. Geschichte des Buchwesens. An Agenda for Comparative History” *Publishing History* 22 (Jan 1987), 33.

³⁷ D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29. For examples of how bibliography and history are used to examine the history of particular books, printers, and publishers, see Leslie Howsam, *Old Books, New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book and Print Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 24-27.

bibliography in the practice of book history, Michael Suarez argues that “books are the products of social processes” and he urges historians to pursue “the investigation of economic determinants, aesthetic conventions, and ideological factors” that affect “the practices and institutions of textual production, transmission, and reception.”³⁸ These factors are of considerable importance in determining the means by which the Bible became so widely available in Canada by the turn of the twentieth century, where social dynamics shaped the nature and form of Bible distribution in a broader context of book publishing and distribution.

The most comprehensive account of these activities in Canada has been undertaken by the editors and contributors to the three volumes of the History of the Book in Canada (HBiC) project which examine print culture from the earliest historical records to the late twentieth century. These volumes provide important insight into the earliest forms of reading, printing, publishing, bookselling among other activities involved in book history. What emerges from these studies is the unique print culture in Canada that was shaped by regional and cultural differences, the scarcity of resources, and the complications in copyright that restricted the development of the book trade in the colonial period and after Confederation. The contributions on religious texts demonstrate the importance of religion in Canada’s early print culture, and suggest that bibles were an important part of Canada’s book history. Janet Friskney demonstrates the collective significance of Bible and tract societies as distributors of religious materials. She rightly delineates the BFBS, the Religious Tract Society (RTS), and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) according to ecclesiastical affiliation, with the

³⁸ Michael F. Suarez, “Historiographical Problems and Possibilities in Book History and National Histories of the Book,” *Studies in Bibliography* 56 (2003-2004), 152.

SPCK's affiliation with High Church Anglicanism separating it from the non-denominational work of the RTS and BFBS.³⁹ Friskney also demonstrates that after 1840, the BFBS and other tract societies grew as distributors in both the volume of items disseminated and in the expansion of the societies' branches and auxiliaries into western Canada.⁴⁰ Together, these organizations used printed materials imported from Britain to equip local churches, but the BFBS's mandate to distribute only bibles made it the dominant figure in the Bible trade. In his examination of popular religious books, Raymond Brodeur briefly mentions rare instances in which portions of the Bible were published in Canada, but there is little examination of the circumstances which limited the Bible's publication.⁴¹ Stuart Clarkson and Daniel O'Leary suggest that bibles were "increasingly printed in Canada," citing *The Gospel of Matthew in Broad Scotch and Large-Type Edition of the Revised New Testament*, but these editions exemplify the reality that only portions of the Bible were printed in Canada in the nineteenth century.⁴² These contributions to the first two volumes in the HBiC series raise important questions about how Canadians practiced their religious devotion through print culture, and the impact of religion on the broader history of the book trade in Canada.

As a rule, bibles were not published in Britain's North American colonies or in the Dominion of Canada in the nineteenth century, with John Henry White's 1832 printing of the

³⁹ Janet Friskney, "Christian Faith in Print," *History of the Book in Canada* Volume 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 139-144.

⁴⁰ Janet Friskney, "Spreading the Word: Religious Print for Mass Distribution," in *History of the Book in Canada* Volume II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 365-368.

⁴¹ Raymond Brodeur, "Religious Books" *History of the Book in Canada* Volume 1(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 262-63.

⁴² Stuart Clarkson and Daniel O'Leary, "Books and Periodicals for an Expanding Community," *History of the Book in Canada* Volume II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 358.

complete Bible in Halifax as one notable exception.⁴³ Patricia Fleming provides a comprehensive account of materials that were printed and published in Upper Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century, and finds little evidence of any Bible being published in Upper Canada.⁴⁴ Fleming and Sandra Alston's compiled list of important Canadian printed material in the second-half of the eighteenth century includes only one duodecimo book which included passages and paraphrases of the Bible bound together with hymns printed in 1790.⁴⁵ Apart from these cases, it appears that the Bible was never printed in British North America in the nineteenth century. Perhaps more striking is how little attention has been given to the unique circumstances that contributed to such a striking absence.

The general paucity of book production in this period is a reflection of the sparse material and commercial resources in British North America before Confederation. Financing the printing and publication of a book required an enormous initial capital investment.⁴⁶ This material reality played a central role in limiting the publication of books in British North America before Confederation, including bibles. The absence of book printing and publishing in this early period continued to hinder later attempts by publishers to establish a more robust publishing industry. The absence of earlier capital investment stunted the availability of labour and resources, leaving a void that later publishers had to overcome. In addition to the scarcity of investment, George

⁴³ Marianne G. Murrow, "John Henry White, the Unknown Printer," *Island Magazine*, 22 (Fall/Winter, 1987), 29-30.

⁴⁴ One entry in Fleming's extensive list suggests that Joseph Wilson printed and published a Bible in Hallowell in 1831, although there is some evidence to suggest that the book's sheets were printed across the border in the state of New York and shipped to Hallowell to be bound and published there. See Patricia Fleming, *Upper Canadian Imprints, 1801-1841* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 760.

⁴⁵ Patricia Lockhart Fleming and Sandra Alston, Early Canadian Printing: A Supplement to Marie Tremaine's 'A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751 - 1800' (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 635A.

⁴⁶ Michael F. Suarez, "The Business of Literature: The Book Trade in England from Milton to Blake." *A Companion to Literature from Milton to Blake*, ed. David Womersley (Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 4.

Parker's examination of the early developments of the book trade in Canada shows the difficulty Canadian publishers faced in trying to develop a domestic book trade.⁴⁷ These difficulties were due in part to the enmity that existed between publishers and booksellers, as the former wanted to establish a printing and publishing infrastructure based on a domestic literary culture protected from foreign competition, while booksellers wanted continued access to cheap books which were coming from the United States and Britain. As a result, the laws governing the reproduction of literary works in Canada were of profound importance and the subject of intense political debate throughout the nineteenth century.

Along with Parker, other historians have focused on the importance of copyright legislation in stifling the book trade in Canada and frustrating Canadian publishers. Sara Bannerman has examined the impact of copyright laws on the Canadian publishing industry, focusing on the 1886 *Berne Convention*, “the world’s first broadly multilateral treaty on international copyright.”⁴⁸ Bannerman demonstrates that the *Berne Convention* carried on a persistent trend throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which structural tensions and a continued pursuit of copyright holders’ interests undermined Canada’s legislative sovereignty. Eli McLaren also examines the way that copyright shaped Canada’s publishing industry and book trade, arguing that “copyright compelled the book trade of the Dominion of Canada into modes of operation that were more or less incompatible with original publishing.”⁴⁹ Much of the history of Canada’s book trade and publishers focuses on the stifling of Canadian

⁴⁷ George Parker, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ Sara Bannerman, *Struggle for Canadian Copyright: Imperialism to Internationalism, 1842-1971* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 12.

⁴⁹ Eli McLaren, *Dominion and Agency: Copyright and the Structuring of the Canadian Book Trade, 1867-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

content where Canadian authors were the principal victims of copyright legislation. Because of its unique status, the Bible has understandably not figured in these historiographical inquiries. There was no author pursuing royalties and no apparent individual for whom the reproduction of their text in the United States was done without their authority. The Crown seems to have had little appetite for shutting down any printing of the text of the Authorized Version. Nonetheless, examining the history of the Bible in Canada offers a unique contribution to these lines of inquiry. Because of the patent associated with the Authorized Version of the Bible and the copyright on the English-language text held by the British Crown, the printing, publishing, and distribution of bibles all offer another lens into these legal battles that removes the interests and rights of an author from consideration.

The impact of department stores' mail order catalogues on Canadian Bible distribution and retail highlights their potential to disrupt established distribution and retail networks.⁵⁰ Although there has been some consideration of these catalogues as objects themselves, their potential for undercutting the business of other booksellers has yet to be examined. The sparse population across much of Canada's large geographical reach made distances for travel and shipping a significant consideration, and being able to obtain books through the mail disrupted traditional retail. Bibles were advertised in these catalogues and for the first time, the mail order catalogue challenged the BFB's geographical supremacy in its distribution. The branches that reached across Canada provided many Canadians with a local option for obtaining the Bible, but the inclusion of numerous bibles in various sizes and styles in these catalogues introduced a new

⁵⁰ Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman include the Eaton's catalogue as a preferred means by which trade books bought, diminishing the need for publishers to produce their own catalogues. Gail Edwards and Judith Saltman, *Picturing Canada: A History of Canadian Children's Illustrated Books and Publishing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

set of choices in the types of bibles that could be obtained and the source from which such bibles could be purchased. These developments mirror a rise in tastes and consumer culture at the end of the nineteenth century which, ironically, the BFBS's Canadian leaders had helped to foster in its own Bible selling and distribution.⁵¹

Bible Distribution in Canada

The analysis undertaken in this study draws on previous explorations of the intersection of religious history and the history of the book, especially as it pertains to the publication and distribution of the Bible. Considerable attention has been paid to place of the Bible in the history of the United States, where numerous studies have focused on the impact of the Bible's text on American theological and intellectual life.⁵² Colleen MacDonnell departs from this emphasis on the Bible's textual influence by studying the Bible in the context of material culture in America, arguing that the "physical book itself contained messages" so that the Bible became "not only a sacred text but a sacred object in the American home."⁵³ Other historians have examined religion in American print culture to understand the various forms in which the Bible was fashioned and the publishing industry that produced bibles and other religious literature in enormous numbers.⁵⁴ These studies constitute a rich historiography that considers the place of the Bible in America's cultural, literary, religious, and social contexts which have informed this study.

⁵¹ See Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁵² See Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, eds. *The Bible In America: Essays in Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁵³ Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 68.

⁵⁴ See David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading : Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United*

This study adopts these approaches to cultural and social history and turns them towards an examination of the BFBS, the most significant institution behind Canada's nineteenth-century Bible distribution. Histories of the BFBS and other national Bible societies have varied widely in the extent to which historians have examined critically the operations and motivations of each.⁵⁵ More critical institutional histories have situated national Bible societies within their historical contexts, offering more insight into their social and cultural significance. Leslie Howsam's *Cheap Bibles* is the most important study of the British and Foreign Bible Society as a publisher in a competitive British book trade. Peter Wosh has studied the American Bible Society (ABS), describing the ways in which the organization transformed in the nineteenth century, "narrowing its functions, withdrawing from public life, and cultivating specific and limited constituency...evolving into a very efficient and successful private philanthropy in the service of other very efficient and successful private philanthropies."⁵⁶ These studies are critical histories that examine the impact of these institutions on the broader social and cultural developments in Britain and the United States respectively.

States, 1777-1880 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁵⁵ Institutional histories were created by the BFBS to commemorate certain milestones. See John Owen, *The History of the Origin and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: Tilling and Hughes, 1816); George Browne, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, From its institution in 1804, to the close of its Jubilee in 1854* (London: Bagster and Sons, 1859); William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, (London: John Murray, 1904). For the American Bible Society, see William Peter Strickland, *History of the American Bible Society from its organization to the present time* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1849); Henry Otis Dwight, *The Centennial History of the American Bible Society* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916); and Creighton Lacy, *The Word Carrying Giant: The Growth of the American Bible Society, 1816-1966* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1977).

⁵⁶ Peter Wosh, *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 34.

The history of the BFBS in Canada has been examined in a largely uncritical book by E. C. Woodley who was once the Canadian Bible Society's secretary. As an institutional history which considers some of the BFBS's milestones alongside important events in Canadian history, Woodley provides a chronological account of the BFBS's development.⁵⁷ More recently, the Canadian Bible Society's Gerald E. Benson and Kenneth Macmillan edited *To the Ends of the Earth: A History of the Canadian Bible Society* which provides historical studies of the organization's work in the twentieth century.⁵⁸ Outside of these internal histories, little sustained analysis of the BFBS in Canada has been done.

This study posits four main arguments in its examination of the material realities of Bible distribution in the context of book printing, publishing, retail, and the powerful religious impulses in Canadian society. First, it argues that the lack of Bible publishing in Canada was the result of both the absence of capital investment and the uncertain legal landscape of British North American copyright, and that the absence of a Canadian Bible edition contributed to the lack of development in Canada's publishing industry in the nineteenth century. The labour and materials put toward the publication of a Canadian edition of the Bible could have spurred significant growth in jobbing printing that would have created avenues for domestic authors to publish their work. Although historians have focused on the copyright issues that hindered Canadian publishing, an initial printing infrastructure of a size to sustain the publication of a Bible would have given Canadian publishers important leverage in obtaining more favourable terms in Imperial copyright negotiations. Instead, imported books through outside companies

⁵⁷ E. C. Woodley, *The Bible in Canada: The Story of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Canada* (Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1953).

⁵⁸ Gerald E. Benson and Kenneth Macmillan, *To the Ends of the Earth: A History of the Canadian Bible Society* (Toronto: Canadian Bible Society, 1998).

fulfilled the demand for literature in an operation that continued to stunt the growth of domestic publishing. Secondly, this study argues that the Bible Society became the most dominant Bible distributor in nineteenth-century Canada because of its appeal to a broad coalition of evangelicals after the 1830s. The Bible Society identified itself as a partner to churches and aimed to take a neutral stance in sectarian debates in order that the organization might provide an institutional expression of Canadian evangelicalism. But the BFBS gained this dominant position because of its ability to supply the growing demand for bibles. It was able to couple the institutional strength of the BFBS in London as a publisher and wholesaler with the growing network of local auxiliaries, branches, and depositories which the BFBS agent James Thomson spearheaded between 1838 and 1842 in order to ensure an adequate number of bibles could be distributed in Canada.

Thirdly, I argue that the Bible Society's expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century through agents, colporteurs, and Biblewomen was fuelled by various rhetorical expressions that defined both its institutional enterprise and the nature of Canadian evangelicalism. Canadian BFBS leaders legitimated the business of Bible distribution by identifying capitalism as a necessary function of evangelical Protestantism as the Bible transaction infused the Bible with value for its purchaser. Efficiency and financial stewardship were touted in public reports and in the minutes of auxiliary leaders' meetings, and the ability to maintain growth in financial collections and book distribution was the measure of both the society's success as a Bible distributor and the righteousness of its spiritual cause. Those rhetorical ideals were split along gendered lines. Given distinct roles within the BFBS's work, men were celebrated for their rugged stamina in traveling long distances, their "thrift," "efficiency," and "toughness," while these characteristics were muted in descriptions of Bible

women and female canvassers, who were instead depicted as maternal, caring, and compassionate. The most powerful rhetorical device in defining the BFBS's enterprise was the Roman Catholic Church's opposition to its object of making the Bible available to anyone who might wish to purchase one, as Bible Society leaders persistently characterized the Catholic restriction on the possession of bibles among its members as intrinsically opposing its cherished principle of voluntary association in matters of faith. Finally, I argue that the Bible Society's emphasis on the monetary purchase of bibles and its voluntary association placed its enterprise within a broader competitive book trade. For much of the nineteenth century, no competitors could match the enormous geographical reach of the Bible Society's distribution network nor its purchasing power as a global organization. However, the rise of department stores and their mail order catalogues at the end of the nineteenth century challenged the BFBS's dominance of Canada's Bible trade, forcing its leaders to navigate its role as both a competitive bookseller and a charitable religious organization.

The BFBS's Bible enterprise in Canada was largely concerned with the distribution of English bibles, but bibles in other languages became important to its work. Concerns with the Catholic Church's influence among French Canadians encouraged the BFBS to distribute French language bibles, and diglots became an important part of its distribution to immigrants at the end of the nineteenth century. It was in this capacity as a distributor that the BFBS leaders affirmed its enterprise as an important part of shaping Canadian society, using its efforts among French Canadians and immigrant groups to stress the need for all Canadians to enjoy access to the Bible as a critical element of Canadian citizenship. In these matters the BFBS auxiliaries in Canada relied on the "Parent Society" in London to supply these scriptures in other languages, and did not for the most part take on the role of a translating body. Although there were joint efforts with

the BFBS and Peter Jones for a Chippewa translation in the early years of the York Bible Society beginning in 1828 and several other initiatives, the work of translation was quite separate and secondary to the BFBS's Canadian auxiliaries' primary goals of distribution and retail. Though the BFBS had an important role to play in North American aboriginal Bible translations and the importance of Bible translation in the development of syllabics, these linguistic developments are outside of the scope of this study.⁵⁹

This study begins with an examination of print culture in Canada and the reasons behind the lack of Bible publishing in Canada in the nineteenth century, using William Lyon Mackenzie's attempts in 1836 to publish an edition of the Bible as an indicative case study of the material difficulties such a project presented. The second chapter focuses on the formation of the BFBS's enterprise in Canada, investigating the characteristics of urban auxiliaries by examining the Bible Society at York which later became the Upper Canada Bible Society. The third chapter highlights the work of James Thomson in bolstering the system of auxiliaries and branches that enabled the BFBS's rapid expansion in British North America and the use of local depositories to ensure an adequate supply of scriptures was available to meet the growing demand. The fourth and fifth chapters examine the work of the Bible Society's agents and colporteurs respectively, who were tasked with establishing local BFBS branches and travelling widely to sell bibles to those who might otherwise not be able to obtain them. These chapters examine the reports of both agents, colporteurs, and Biblewomen that were printed in the annual reports of the Canadian BFBS auxiliaries which articulated the values and priorities of the organization and celebrated

⁵⁹ For James Evans's development of syllabics, and the later interaction with the BFBS on the subject, see John MacLean, *James Evans: Inventor of the Syllabic System of the Cree Language* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1890), 199-200.

the ways in which these employees demonstrated those values in their work. The sixth chapter explores the tension between Protestants and Catholics over the way in which the Bible was meant to be used in the Christian faith. The Bible Society's reports reflected Canadian evangelicals' enmity toward the perceived restriction by Catholic priests and bishops of access to the Bible, robbing Catholics of the freedom to read the Bible for themselves and of the opportunity for spiritual liberation through the conversion that the unfettered reading of the Bible could facilitate. Finally, the seventh chapter examines the proceedings of the 1904 conference that united Canada's BFBS auxiliaries into a single Canadian Bible Society. At the conference, BFBS leaders faced the challenges associated with the rise of consumer society and the changes in Canadians' tastes for bibles and the ways they purchased them. Instead of rejecting the materialism associated with consumer culture, the Bible Society's leaders reaffirmed its commitment to operating within this Bible marketplace and to becoming more competitive and efficient in its work as a distributor and a Bible seller.

The BFBS's Bible enterprise was driven by two equally powerful imperatives. The first was a material imperative that placed the BFBS's work firmly within a competitive book trade. Although the BFBS's North American auxiliaries were almost entirely removed from many of the challenges of publishing, book-binding, and negotiations with printers in London, the material realities of Bible distribution demanded of its leaders the use of shrewd business methods and the pursuit of competitive advantages by appealing to consumers' tastes. The second impulse behind the BFBS's Bible enterprise in Canada was the powerful religious imperative that was driven by a belief in the Bible's power and its importance in the Christian faith. Like their British counterparts, the leaders of BFBS auxiliaries in North America emphasized the important religious imperative of their work by linking its own success to the

healthy growth of a nation, insisting that a strong Canada required a citizenry which could readily possess and read the Bible.

Together, these imperatives forced the leaders of the Canadian BFBS auxiliaries to increasingly negotiate the space between a competitive book trade and a charitable religious milieu. Within its own circles and in internal discussions, the Bible Society's leaders appealed to the material imperative by emphasizing its efficiency, thrift, shrewd fiscal stewardship, and business acumen. In public meetings and publications, the BFBS presented itself as a crucial part of a religious community that was primarily concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of Canada and its citizens within a broader British Empire. For these leaders, these two facets of its work were not contradictory, but equally important in achieving their goal of making the Bible available to anyone who chose to purchase it. It was through the world of market capitalism and consumer choice that the Bible Society would build the Kingdom of God. With its emphasis on an individual's choice in matters of religion and the importance of the Bible as a material object that all should possess, the BFBS's enterprise of Bible distribution provides a powerful lens into the nature of evangelicalism in nineteenth-century Canada.

The enormous success of the BFBS's Bible distribution enterprise reveals the powerful influence that evangelical ideals had in Canadian society in the nineteenth century. Though historians of religion in Canada have addressed these ideals and the way they informed various denominational religious activities, there has been no sustained examination of the venues where evangelicals came together to actively shape Canadian society. The work of distributing bibles provided evangelicals with a tangible presence in Canadian society, and the role of BFBS leaders in shaping the business-like nature of their enterprise linked the predominance of Protestant evangelicalism to the growth of industrial capitalism in Canada. The BFBS's Bible distribution

enterprise was fuelled by popular anti-Catholicism which added urgency to its work and offered a unifying platform upon which Protestants from across denominations could come together. The anti-Catholic rhetoric behind the BFBS's distribution contributed to the battles over matters of language, religion, and education that plagued relations between French and English speaking Canadians throughout the Dominion's history.

CHAPTER 1: PRINTING AND IMPORTING BIBLES IN BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

On 21 April 1945, William Lyon Mackenzie King, then Prime Minister of Canada, received a large book as a special gift from the University of Oxford Press. On its title page was printed the commemoration: “This is the First copy of the first Bible printed and bound in Canada.”¹ Although the imprint ignores the earliest successful printing of a single edition of the complete Bible in Halifax more than a century earlier, the statement is revealing. Before the Second World War, as a rule, the English-language Bible was not printed or published in Canada. Bibles were primarily imported from Britain, and secondarily from the United States. This is remarkable given the enormous demand for bibles: the British and Foreign Bible Society alone distributed more than a hundred thousand copies of the complete Bible and testaments each year by 1910.² Despite this growing demand and the vast numbers of books imported and distributed in Canada in the nineteenth century, no scholarly examination of the reasons for the lack of Bible production has been undertaken.

This chapter examines two distinct contributors that shaped Bible distribution in nineteenth-century Canada. First, this chapter explores the legal constraints on Bible printing and the economic challenges of book production, both of which contributed to the lack of domestic Bible production in Canada. The British Crown’s ownership of copyright of the Authorized Version of the Bible, and the royal charter which restricted its printing in Britain, limited the scope of its production. Secondly, because of the legal and economic restrictions on domestic

¹ *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 22 April 1944, 3. The Bible remains in the possession of Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa.

² For distribution figures of the Bible Society in Canada in the twentieth century, see Edward Carruthers Woodley, *The Bible in Canada* (J.M. Dent, 1953).

Bible production, this chapter then focuses on distribution and bookselling, and examines the conditions which fostered Bible importation from Britain and the United States. The history of copyright in Canada is complex as was the changing duty that was charged on books imported from the United States. Copyright legislation and import on books from the United States both contributed to Canadians' reliance upon importing the Bible from Britain.

Limitations on Domestic Bible Production

The 1611 edition of the Authorized Version, which is also known as the King James Version, was the most common and authoritative version of the English Bible, unrivalled in its predominance until the twentieth century. From the middle of the twentieth century, there has been a rapid growth in the number of English language translations and versions of the Bible, so that in the twenty-first century, readers can choose from more than a hundred versions in English. This is, however, a relatively recent development. By 1604, when James I of England commissioned a new translation of the Bible, a very small number of English-language Bible versions existed, such as the Geneva Bible and the Bishops Bible. None, however, had gained widespread acceptance by the seventeenth century. Scholars at Cambridge, Oxford, and London used these existing versions as they toiled over the language and phrasing of the new Authorized Version, which became the overwhelming favourite in the English language until the 1900s.³

³ Lori Ann Feller and Adam Nicolson both emphasize the political context that shaped the translation of the text and the committees' use of words that emphasized the institutional rather than the congregational aspects of the Church. See Lori Anne Ferrell, *The Bible and the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 88-92; see also Adam Nicolson, *When God Spoke English: The Making of the King James Bible* (London: HarperPress, 2011). Various versions of the Bible, including Matthews, Coverdales, and Whitchurch's were all heavily dependent on Tyndale's translation, which in turn influenced James 1611 version. See Adam Nicolson, *When God Spoke English: The Making of the King James Bible* (London: HarperPress, 2011), 81.

Although the Roman Catholic Church came to endorse the Douay-Rheims Bible which was translated in France from the Latin Vulgate into English, that version remained in relative obscurity among Protestants.⁴

Since its publication, the Authorized Version has been protected by a copyright of the Crown. The Authorized Version was so named because of the provisions made by the British Crown to limit its printing in England to three authorized printers by way of a royal patent. The printers included the university presses at Oxford and Cambridge, and the King's (or Queen's) printer, all of whom were licensed to print the Bible and stamp those bibles with the words "cum privilegio," the Latin phrase which, according to Cambridge University Press, is used "to denote the charter authority or privilege under which the [Authorized bibles] are published."⁵ Cyndia Susan Clegg demonstrates that letters patent preceded the publication of James I's Bible in 1611, and that they were issued by the Crown to the Stationers' Company as a means by which the Crown could censor and control what was being read in England. The patent empowered its holder "to make rules for the patent's execution and to impose 'paynes, punyshments, and penaltyes' on those infringing it," and that patents "functioned as commodities that were bought, sold, and assigned, and while not all book and printing patents were procured for a fee, the Crown derived economic benefits from many of them."⁶ Cambridge University Press continues

⁴ For more on the Douay-Rheims bibles reception among Roman Catholics and the motivation for the Catholic Church to publish a Bible, see Alexandra Walsham, "Unclasping the Book? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Vernacular Bible" *Journal of British Studies* (vol 42 no. 2: April 2003), 141-166). See also John L. Mackenzie, "English Versions of the Bible" in *The Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1962), 235-238.

⁵ For further explanation of the role of patent holder and current owner of Royal Letters of Patent as The Queen's Printer in relation to the Authorized Version, see "The Queen's Printer Patent," Cambridge University Press website, <http://www.cambridge.org/about-us/who-we-are/queens-printers-patent> accessed 16 April 2015.

⁶ Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 39-41.

to use its patent to the present day to print the Authorized Version, and cites the textual integrity of its bibles as the patent's primary function. Accuracy was a characteristic that often set legal editions apart from pirated ones, especially before stereotyping methods improved accuracy of various editions by the middle of the nineteenth century.⁷

The patent that restricted printing of the Authorized Version was ineffective in stopping Bible publishing by those who did not hold the license to do so. G. E. Bentley demonstrates that illegal editions of the Bible were quite commonly printed in Britain. The origins of the Family Bible, which became a valuable item in Victorian homes, are rooted in the efforts of publishers to circumvent copyright restrictions. Because they did not hold the privilege to print the Authorized Version, these publishers added text to the title along the lines of *The Family Companion or Annotations upon the Holy Bible* in order to give the impression that the book contained more material than just the text of the Bible in order to avoid censure for copyright infractions. They added notes, commentary, or other functional materials like family records pages to the book, believing that adding enough material to differentiate their Bible from others would allow them to avoid punishment. Publishers without a patent "found that they could publish without impunity annotated and illustrated editions of the Bible, so long as the titles were something other than 'The Holy Bible.'"⁸ The proliferation of the British "Family Bible with Notes" was thus "the invention of British Printers" and was "first motivated in England by attempts to get around 'the privilege question' – or the restriction of bible publication to the two

⁷ "The Queen's Printer Patent," Cambridge University Press website, <http://www.cambridge.org/about-us/who-we-are/queens-printers-patent> accessed 16 April 2015.

⁸ For more information on the publishers' efforts to produce the Bible despite not having the licence to do so, see G. E. Bentley, "The Holy Pirates: Legal Enforcement in England of the Patent in the Authorized Version of the Bible CA. 1800," *Studies in Bibliography* vol. 50 (1997): 373-374.

university presses and the few printers who held a royal license.”⁹ In spite of the difficulty enforcing the patent on editions with additional material, the patent remained important in investing bibles published by the privileged presses with the sense of authority, accuracy, and quality of the Authorized Version.

The letters patent that governed the printing of the Bible extended to Britain’s dominions and colonies, including those in North America. No printer obtained the license or the privilege to print the Authorized Version in any of the British North American colonies in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, nor indeed in Canada after Confederation. Nor did any of the designated royal printers in what became Canada use their printing privilege to produce their own edition of the Bible. They were entitled to print the Authorized Version as the King or Queen’s Printer, as Scott Mandelbrote demonstrates was the case for publishers in Ireland, where the King’s Printer Andrew Crime “made little attempt either to exercise or to enforce his theoretical monopoly on the trade in Bibles in Ireland.”¹⁰ That privilege was never used in nineteenth-century British North America or Canada in order to undertake the publication of a domestic edition of the Bible, and therefore there was no authorized printing of the King James Version of the Bible.

The relatively simple legal position of the extension of the patent in North America was complicated by the American Revolution, after which printers in the United States no longer recognized the Crown’s patent, and the reproduction of the Bible was not restricted. David McKitterick notes that outside of the possibility of an early pirated edition in 1761, before

⁹ Mary Wilson Carpenter, *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality, and Religion in the Victorian Market* (Ohio University Press, 2003), 5.

¹⁰ Scott Mandelbrote, “John Baskett, Dublin Booksellers, & Printing of the Bible,” in *The book trade & its customers, 1450-1900: historical essays for Robin Myers*, ed. Robin Myers, Arnold Hunt, Giles Mandelbrote, Alison Shell (Winchester : St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1997), 117.

Independence “the limitation seems to have been generally observed: no New Testament was printed there until 1777.”¹¹ Although the economic and material challenges of printing bibles in the new republic would have been substantial, being free of the legal constraints printing the Authorized Version created what Lori Ann Ferrell describes as a state of “economic separatism” where the United States declared itself “independent of the Crown’s claim to have sole privilege of reproducing, printing, and selling the Word of God.”¹²

Once the United States banned imports from Britain, bibles could be printed using the text of the Authorized Version without a concern about sanctions. But publishers had little success before the turn of the nineteenth century in producing a viable edition. The printing of an American edition of the Bible was still not financially feasible by the 1780s, despite the growing demand for the book in the new republic, which J. M. Matthews described in 1851:

During the Revolution there was a painful scarcity of Bibles throughout the country. Few, if any, were imported, and booksellers had not the capital and other means for publishing an American edition. The subject was brought before Congress, and was referred to a Committee, who gave it their careful attention. On the 11 of September, 1777, they reported to the house: “that the use of the Bible is so universal, and its importance so great, that your Committee refer the above to the consideration of Congress, and if Congress shall not think it expedient to order the importation of types and paper, the Committee to recommend that Congress will order the Committee of Commerce to import 20,000 Bibles from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere, into the different States of the Union.”¹³

¹¹ David McKitterick, *A History of Cambridge University Press*, vol 2 Scholarship and Commerce 1698 – 1872 (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 186.

¹² Lori Ann Ferrell, *The Bible and the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 121.

¹³ J. M. Mathews, *The Bible and the Civil Government in a Course of Lectures* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1851), 212. The shortage of bibles was contributed to by a ban on importing goods from Britain, including books. See Lori Ann Ferrell, *The Bible and the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 119-121.

Although apocryphal anecdotes circulated about the publishing of the Bible in Boston in 1761, the earliest Bible printed in the United States was accomplished by Robert Aitken in 1781.¹⁴ The financial challenges of printing the whole Bible is demonstrated by Aitken's effort, who had already published a number of New Testaments before attempting to publish the whole Bible. Lori Ann Ferrell describes the result of his ambition succinctly: "Promptly, he lost his shirt."¹⁵ Aitken lobbied Congress repeatedly to finance his endeavour, but there was little appetite to finance such an ambitious project, even if the idea of printing an American Bible was lauded. He also pleaded to the Pennsylvania General Assembly who eventually provided a small loan, which was little help for the enormous cost of his project. Ultimately Aitken fell victim to his own speculation.¹⁶

These limitations on printing the Bible in colonial America and the early republic provide important comparative antecedents not only because of the legal boundaries shared in the colonies before Independence, but also because of the stunted demographic and economic growth in British North American colonies in the first half of the nineteenth century. Population, credit, and a commercial market for books in the British North America colonies lagged behind both British and American development and contributed to the slower development of book publishing. In British North America, the population had still not reached one million by the middle of the nineteenth century, whereas the population had reached that mark in the United States almost a century earlier in the 1750s, when already more than six and half million people

¹⁴ For the detailed but fictional account of Kneeland and Green's printing of the Bible in Boston in 1761, see T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society* vol. I, (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1903), 285.

¹⁵ Lori Ann Ferrell, *The Bible and the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 122.

¹⁶ Derek Wilson and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The People's Bible: The Remarkable History of the King James Version* (Lion Books, 2011), 147.

lived in Britain and Ireland.¹⁷ The population which drove demand for books and printed materials was far lower in British North America when books were being published in large quantities in the United States and Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century.

In addition to the disparate population figures, the paucity of credit, corporate investment, and money in British North America by the middle of the nineteenth century also stood in stark contrast to the market conditions in the United States and Britain. Robert E. Wright argues that there was a lack of economic institutional development in Canada until after Confederation, and the slow development of banks, credit systems, and joint-stock exchange developments stifled its economic growth. “Canada’s per-capita GDP and its overall level of development trailed those of the United States,” he argues, “until after the Civil War and Canada’s independence.

Unsurprisingly, so did its corporate development.”¹⁸ This was a problem for publishers and printers who relied heavily on credit to publish books. Larger and more complex books, like the Bible, required even greater reliance upon credit, as the investment in paper, type, labour was substantially greater, as was the time needed to use the presses resulting in potential losses in income from other jobs. Both a smaller population and muted economic growth in British North America had important significance for the publishing industry, which could not undertake larger printing projects without a sufficient population to sustain a market, and sufficient capital to finance them.

¹⁷ “Between 1821 and 1851, British North America’s population increased from 750,000 to 2.3 million; Upper Canada’s soared from 95,000 at the end of 1812 to 952,000 in 1851.” J. R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 94.

¹⁸ Robert E. Wright, *Corporation Nation* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). 77-78. For further analysis of capital investment in British North America in this period, see Michael Bliss, *Northern Enterprise: Five Centuries of Canadian Business* (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

These difficulties faced by Canadian printers were magnified when those printers considered producing larger books. Such books were not typically printed in British North America until after the 1850s, and even then printers and publishers struggled against copyright legislation and the high cost of materials. George Parker traces the advancement of printing technologies like type, paper, and presses that ushered in an era of expansion in the book printing industry that occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. Those developments coupled with the decrease in postal and shipping costs eventually led to the expansion of markets after Confederation.¹⁹ Despite these advancements, book production remained a struggle in Canada in of the second half of the nineteenth century, as firms grew in fits and starts amid numerous economic setbacks. The Canadian printing industry failed to reach the heights its leaders sought, a reality that no doubt contributed to the unwillingness of any Canadian publisher to consider printing and publishing a Canadian edition of the Bible.

The printing of bibles in British North American colonies before Confederation was such an enormous investment of labour, material, and capital that it was almost universally prohibitive to any printer who might have undertaken the venture. One of the largest costs of printing a book was the type and the labour of typesetting to fit a printing press. The Authorized Version of the Bible contains 774,746 words, all of which, before the 1830s, would have required setting type for each character, a process that was very labour intensive.²⁰ By the 1830s, that labour intensive process was beginning to be replaced by stereotype plates. Previously, individual moving letters had to be assembled on a tray for each sheet, but stereotype plates eliminated the need to re-

¹⁹ George L. Parker, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Pres, 1985), 160-165,

²⁰ For the British and Foreign Bible Society's experiences with printers and the challenges presented by the size of the Authorized Version, see Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*.

assemble the moving type for each use. A mold produced from a matrix or a mat of papier-mâché which was laid over form containing type, and then hot metal was poured into that mold to create a permanent plate.²¹ The use of stereotype plates was especially useful for printing books like the Bible because the text of the book was unchanging. The Bible's textual accuracy was also of paramount importance, and stereotype plates could be amended without risking the creation of new mistakes by setting type once again beginning with a blank tray. These plates were not cheap, however, and purchasing them and shipping them was a considerable undertaking. Nonetheless, they were an enormous improvement upon the standing-type of the whole Bible, and plates could replace an entire room of standing type for a book of the size of the Bible.²² In addition, the stereotype plates eliminated the recurring cost of labour for a compositor to place the type into their frames, which meant that additional runs could make up for the initial investment.

Along with the necessary cost of the standing type or plates, the amount of paper required to produce a run of complete bibles was enormous. Paper was very expensive, and James Mosley considers it “the most expensive single element in the cost of printed books” before 1830.²³ The cost of the paper that would have been required to print a run of bibles was astronomical. Paper produced by rags and cloth was expensive, and according to George Parker, increasingly scarce in Canada: “By the middle of the nineteenth century, newspapers around the world devoured so

²¹ See Nadja Guggi, “Stereotyping,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Book* Vol. II eds. Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen, 1178-79, (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²² For the improvements that stereotyping brought to Bible printing in particular, see David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 636.

²³ James Mosley, “The Technologies of Print,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Book* vol. I eds Michael F. Suarez, S.J. and H. R. Woodhuysen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 95.

much paper that linen and cotton were getting scarce and expensive.”²⁴ Paper was not manufactured from wood pulp until the middle of the nineteenth century, and only in 1869 did Canada produce paper by mechanical pulping, which contributed to a fall in paper costs for publishers. Until then, the paper needed to print a book as large as the Bible was likely one of the chief factors in making such a project prohibitively expensive.

In addition to these challenges, the labour involved in printing was an immense cost for any publisher wishing to print the Bible. The material resources needed for the publication of a complete Bible in a sufficient run to make it worthwhile was steep, but it also presented a major disruption to a printing office. Compositors and pressers were needed to set the type and to operate the printing press, which demanded considerable hours of labour.²⁵ For most publishers in British North America before the middle of the nineteenth century, jobbing, which Michael Suarez describes as the printing of “handbills, invitations, trade cards, and the like... that was an essential source of income for [a printer’s] business.”²⁶ Unlike jobbing work, where printers were able to produce material quickly and receive pay for their product in short order, printing large books did not bring in revenue until the run was complete. Because of this, printing a book required an enormous financial outlay up front, the return on which might take up to two years to recoup.²⁷ Printing a large book was often a lower priority to jobbing work which was an important source of income. Large projects delayed the printing of smaller pamphlets and

²⁴ George L. Parker, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada*, 149.

²⁵ On the labour involved in printing and a general overview of the process of making a book in “the long eighteenth century, see Michael F. Suarez, “The Business of Literature: The Book Trade in England from Milton to Blake.” *A Companion to Literature from Milton to Blake*, ed. David Womersley (Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 4.

²⁶ Michael Suarez, “The Business of Literature: The Book Trade in England from Milton to Blake,” in *A Companion to Literature from Milton to Blake* ed. David Womersley (London: Wiley, 2001), (131-147), 137.

²⁷ *The History of the Book in Canada* vol. I, 6. Under the heading: “Working in the Trades” by Claude Galarneau and Gilles Gallichan.

booklets and disrupted an important and more immediate source of income. In order to combat these difficulties, publishers often turned to the common practice of raising subscriptions in order to finance the printing of a large book.

The combined costs of the materials and the labour required to produce books in this period made the project enormously speculative. Although the *Upper Canada Christian Almanac* was considerably smaller than a complete Bible, its publication figures provide a useful comparison for the capital required to print a Bible in the 1830s.²⁸ The 32-page octavo edition of the *Almanac* accrued costs of £25 10s for paper, £10 4s for folding and stitching 10,000 copies of the book, as well as £19 for printing.²⁹ Together, this means that a 10,000 copy run of the *Almanac* would have cost its printer more than £54 in the 1830s, a sum that would have been enormous for a publisher to invest in a project at its outset. Because the production of the book required printing the full number of each sheet at once, and then assembling them after all the sheets were printed, much of that sum would have been required up-front to pay the full measure of the materials and labour before any of the books could be sold.

This example reveals the enormous scale of the capital investment required to print the Bible in the 1830s, which dwarfed the size of the *Almanac*. Each copy of the *Almanac* required two full sheets of paper to print the 32-page octavo book, for which each sheet was folded and

²⁸ See Patricia Fleming, *Upper Canadian Imprints, 1801-1841* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 898. For remarks on its usefulness in establishing the expense associated with book production, see *History of the Book in Canada* vol. I

²⁹ For another example of the issues associated with printing scriptures in Richard E. Bennett and Daniel H. Olsen, “Of Printers, Prophets, and Politicians: William Lyon Mackenzie, Mormonism, and Early Printing in Upper Canada,” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio and Upper Canada*, ed. Guy L. Doriis, Craig K. Manscill, and Craig James Ostler (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2006), 177–208. http://rsc.bry.edu/es/archived/regional-studies-latter-day-saint-church-history/printers-prophets-and-politicians-william#_edn2

cut to make eight leaves, on which sixteen pages were printed. In comparison, a duodecimo edition of the Authorized Version of the Bible consisted of roughly 900 pages and required thirty-eight sheets of paper which were each folded and cut to produce twelve leaves on which twenty-four pages were printed. The costs of printing an edition of the Bible, then, would have been astronomical for a publisher in the 1830s: the paper, binding, ink, as well as the labour and the use of the printing press were almost all spent before any of the books could be sold to recoup the cost of production. These demands on resources together with the paucity of credit and low population in British North America in the first half of the nineteenth century were the most likely factors in limiting Bible production in Canada in this era.

William Lyon Mackenzie's Edition of the Bible

William Lyon Mackenzie provides a useful example of the difficulty of printing the Bible in British North America, offering some explanation as to why the book was not generally produced in Canada in the nineteenth century. Mackenzie left a record of his attempts to produce a Canadian edition of the Bible in 1836 and 1837 in his newspaper *The Constitution*. His efforts can be traced through his advertisements in the newspaper, providing some indication of the challenges such a project posed in this era and demonstrating the enormous material resources needed to achieve a complete run of the Bible.

As a famed bookseller and newspaperman of Upper Canada, Mackenzie was driven by his love of books to establish a profitable bookshop in York after he arrived there in 1820. Beyond selling books, he also printed and published various items. He used newspapers, tracts, and books to advocate the reform of Upper Canada's politics, aiming his criticisms most often at the ruling elites of the conservative Family Compact. A particularly scathing article aimed at two

prominent Tory families led to a famous attack on his printing premises in 1826, with a group of well-dressed Tory supporters smashing up his print shop and dumping the type from his printing press in Lake Ontario.³⁰ The *Colonial Advocate*'s printing continued after a successful court case in which Mackenzie was granted compensation for the damages, which he continued until 1834. He took up printing again in 1836 by publishing *The Constitution* newspaper which ran until his participation in the doomed Upper Canada rebellion in the autumn of 1837.³¹

Beginning in the summer of 1836, Mackenzie began advertising in *The Constitution* a Canadian edition of the Holy Bible, to be printed using plates obtained from New York. Over the next fifteen months, the newspaper ran various advertisements and information notices outlining the plan to produce a domestic edition of the Bible. The first advertisement for Mackenzie's edition appeared in 19 July 1836 issue of *The Constitution*. The book was to be printed using "a copy of the OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS on stereotype, metal plates, in beautiful order," an edition that was to be "perfectly correct and of the approved version by the Protestant churches, and as printed in Scotland and England under royal authority." Although Mackenzie evokes the weight of "royal authority," there is no mention of his obtaining the patent required to legally print the book from the Crown. Instead, the advertisement highlights that the plates were imported from the agents of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New York. Mackenzie likely

³⁰ Charles Lindsey describes the group as "a genteel mob composed of persons closely connected with the ruling faction," See *William Lyon Mackenzie* ed. G.G.S. Lindsey (Toronto: Morang & Co., Ltd, 1908), 113. See also William Kilbourn, *The Firebrand: William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion in Upper Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008), 68-71, and David Flint, *William Lyon Mackenzie: Rebel Against Authority* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), 43. For more on the conservative political violence in Upper Canada, particularly aimed at Mackenzie, see Carol Wilton, "'Lawless Law': Conservative Political Violence in Upper Canada, 1818-41," *Law and History Review* 13, no. 1 (1995): 111-36.

³¹ Mackenzie's printing career began with the *Colonial Advocate*, one of a number of independent newspapers which operated without government contracts. See Chris Raible, *A Colonial Advocate: The Launching of his Newspaper and the Queenston Career of William Lyon Mackenzie* (Creemore: Curiosity House, 1999), 28-30.

stated the association with a church organization along with the assurance of being “correct and approved” in order to ease the concerns of any who might be suspicious about the quality of the product being advertised.³²

Mackenzie’s edition as he advertised it was to contain “about 900 pages 12mo (or small 8vo) and will be found very suitable for schools and private families,” which equated to roughly seven and a half inches in height and five inches across. 12mo and 8vo were abbreviations for the duodecimo and octavo sizes of the book, the names of each having been derived from the number of folds made to a sheet in order to create the pages of the book. The more folds to a sheet, the more pages there would be printed on each sheet, and the smaller each page would be.³³ The size of Mackenzie’s edition was common for bibles being produced by the Bible Societies in the United States and Britain. Of the nineteen complete bibles listed in the British and Foreign Bible Society’s 1836 catalogue, there were five varieties of its duodecimo (12mo) bibles.³⁴ It was a bible designed for personal reading, rather than a larger size meant for pulpits or study, and was clearly a popular choice among its readers.

The advertisement not only served notice of the project to the general public to whom the book was being marketed, but it also signalled to others in the book industry of Mackenzie’s need for collaboration. With the enormous costs that came with producing a book of such size, Mackenzie sought out those who might be willing to contribute at the outset. Text in the paper read that “Mr. M would agree with a binder or with any person having on hand a large quantity

³² *The Constitution* (Toronto), 19 July 1836. For an examination of the importance of authority and correctness in American bible publishers’ advertisements before 1840, see Seth Perry, “What the Public expect”: Consumer Authority and the Marketing of Bibles, 1770-1850,” *American Periodicals* 24, no. 2 (2014): 128-144.

³³ Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen, *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁴ BFBS Annual Report 1836, xii.

of paper of a suitable size, to print such a number of copies as might be agreed upon,” and Mackenzie opened up possibilities of collaboration with booksellers, writing that “he trusts that those associations and individuals who exert themselves in circulating bibles will extend their patronage to the first edition, he believes, ever printed within Upper Canada.”³⁵ The notice reveals the early stage of the project, where a binder had yet to be secured, which also hints at why no price for the Bible is listed in the advertisement. The cost of the binding was a significant portion of the overall cost, and until a binder was agreed, no price could be given. The advertisement also reveals Mackenzie’s appeal to “associations and individuals” who might order copies for their own businesses or enterprises. In addition to booksellers, churches and benevolent societies were attractive purchasers for the success of his edition. If any chose to make a bulk order for his Bible to sell or to grant to schools, Mackenzie would have gone a considerable distance in ensuring the edition’s financial viability.

It was not until October, three months after the initial advertisement, that Mackenzie produced a specimen of the Bible. The front page, along with portions of the book of Genesis from the English-language Authorized Version, occupied a large portion of a page in *The Constitution*, giving readers a sense of the size and the layout of his edition. The title page read “The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments: translated out of the original tongues and with the former translations diligently compared and revised. Stereotype Edition. Toronto, Upper Canada. Printed and Published by William Lyon Mackenzie. 1836.” Just above the specimen was printed a note explaining the edition and its importance. “We would recommend it to serious consideration of our readers whether it would not be better to encourage the circulation

³⁵ *The Constitution* (Toronto), 19 July 1836.

of a domestic edition, corrected as this is, with the Edinburgh version, and the authorised version of the Bible Society.”³⁶ Here, Mackenzie addressed his edition’s accuracy and authority, using the Edinburgh version and the authorised version as the measures by which his Bible retained the sacred accuracy that was expected in the Bible. Although he was not by legal definition “authorized” to print the King James Version, he was alerting prospective buyers that the accuracy and authority of the text were of the same standard.

The text above the specimen also asked the *Constitution*’s readers to consider the common benefit of a domestic edition of the Bible. In a burgeoning colony in which social, economic, and political development was a constant concern for many of its citizens, Mackenzie was rhetorically associating the success of his Bible edition with the colony’s maturity and wellbeing. Although he did not explicate what specifically the “benefits” might be, Mackenzie seems to have been evoking the idea the colony’s capacity to sustain a domestic Bible edition would lift its moral and religious climate and would evince its vitality. In spite of this vague appeal to moral and civil benefits, the possibility of lucrative profits was Mackenzie’s most likely motivation. It seems that Mackenzie was driven to undertake this edition because of the potential windfall he stood to make if he was to succeed in gathering the initial investment of labour and capital to be able to produce an initial run of bibles. Once a single run had been produced, the sales from those books would have financed further impressions from the stereotype plates, constituting a reduced cost in future runs.³⁷ Nonetheless, the specimen and its description still did not list the price of the Bible.³⁸

³⁶ *The Constitution* (Toronto), 4 October, 1836.

³⁷ See Michael Suarez, S.J., “Book history from descriptive bibliographies,” in Leslie Howsam, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 205-06.

³⁸ *The Constitution* (Toronto), 4 October, 1836.

Although Mackenzie was an experienced printer, bookseller, and merchant, publishing the full text of the Bible was an enormously ambitious undertaking. His edition of the Authorized Version was to have 882 pages, requiring at least 74 full stereotype plates to print the sheets, with each sheet holding twelve leaves that made up the book. Later that year, Mackenzie released more details of edition, noting that “it is intended to print an edition of 1000 copies,” this would mean an initial capital outlay on paper alone at 74,000 sheets of paper to print the edition, in addition to the price paid for the plates, and the ink and other incidental materials required to print the sheets.³⁹

The labour involved in printing was another enormous outlay required before any of the books could be sold. As Mackenzie advertised the new bible edition in *The Constitution*, he also printed advertisements requesting both journeymen and apprentice printers to work for him. On 4 October 1836, *The Constitution* advertised three positions for journeymen printers. Several weeks later on 2 November, Mackenzie advertised a further position for a printing apprentice, “a stout, active Young man, 15, 16, or 17 years of age... to apply at the Office of the *Constitution* newspaper.”⁴⁰ The additional staff Mackenzie sought while he advertised the specimen for his edition suggests that he had to take them on for this project, demonstrating the extraordinary amount of labour that went into the printing of the Bible.

Adding to the complexity of Mackenzie’s project was the increasing tension with the union of Printers in Toronto, formed in 1832 as a Society to protect the interests of labourers in the printing business. The association, facing economic hardship by 1836 after having paid for

³⁹ *The Constitution* (Toronto), 28 December, 1836.

⁴⁰ *The Constitution* (Toronto), 4 October, 1836.

the care of one of its sick members, pushed for greater wages for its members. In October of that year, its members walked off the job demanding better working wages and conditions, and Mackenzie railed against the printers in a lengthy article in *The Constitution*. The union decreed that all of its members must be paid eight pounds a week, and some of Mackenzie's printers demanded the instant payment of that amount despite Mackenzie having just the day before paid the seven dollars they were due for the work of the previous week. Mackenzie wrote in *The Constitution* that his workers blamed him for taking the contract too low, and that demanding the eight dollars immediately was unjust. As a result, he wrote that he "instantly discharged six of them, and sent notice to the House of Assembly that if the strike continued I could not do more work." Mackenzie laid out the details of the case and his sympathy for the protection of labourers in many cases, before stating that journeymen printers had consistent work, good working conditions, and that the strike was not justified.⁴¹ The printers' strike was noted by other newspaper publishers in Toronto at the time, but none of them including Mackenzie were so affected by it that their publications ceased. Mackenzie's paper was truncated in parts, giving less detailed accounts of the news given the fewer hands with which the type could be set. Regardless, after only a month and perhaps recognizing the little impact the strike made on the industry, the printers returned to work having failed to obtain the conditions they demanded.⁴² Although the strike was short-lived, it demonstrates the importance of labourers within a print shop of considerable size, and it was of particular consideration given its timing alongside Mackenzie's first publishing of the Bible specimen.

⁴¹ *The Constitution* (Toronto), 26 October 1836.

⁴² For an account of the printers' strike, see Frederick H. Armstrong, *A City in the Making: Progress, People & Perils in Victorian Toronto* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1988), 122-33.

One of the developments that might have helped Mackenzie overcome the enormous reliance on labour and aid in the feasibility of printing his Bible was the availability of new technology in the printing press. The same *Constitution* issue that first pronounced the plans for a Canadian edition of the Bible also held a notice about the improved printing presses that Mackenzie had recently obtained. “There are now in successful operation two new printing presses of the improved Washington Patent,” the article boasted, “with inking machines attached, by means of which one pressman can do as much work on one press in a day as a pressman and a roller-boy could have done without the machine. The ink is better distributed than by the common method, and the impression is uniform and beautiful. The machine distributes the ink on the roller and on the types by a very simple apparatus, and the whole is a great curiosity when at work.”⁴³ Obtaining the improved press was likely an important contributing factor to Mackenzie’s ambition to print the Bible, which meant that he could use the plates with less labour tied up exclusively in that project, and with greater speed.

The costs of the paper sheets, the ink, printing presses, and labour were enormous, and Mackenzie decided to call in the outstanding debts from his days of printing the *Colonial Advocate*. Two years earlier, in 1834, Mackenzie had retired his operation of that newspaper, but the accounts of its business were resurrected in the 2 November edition of *The Constitution*. Mackenzie printed a list of names of those who still owed some money for business with the *Colonial Advocate*, a list that occupied more than five full columns of the newspaper. There were dozens of names in the list with a sum of money owed that would go a considerable way in offsetting the costs of publishing his Bible.

⁴³ *The Constitution* (Toronto) 26 July 1836, 2.

In addition to calling in debts, Mackenzie was keen to find supportive merchants and booksellers who might order copies and pay some of the cost in advance, and also to raise subscriptions for the book. Mackenzie's intention of printing a run of 1000 bibles in the edition signalled both the seriousness of the project and the need for subscribers' advanced payments. As a result, an advertisement in *The Constitution* informed those in the trade of the size of the run, urging traders to "make an effort to obtain subscribers and to send in their orders as early a day as possible." The advertisement also noted that "to Merchants and Traders, a reasonable discount will be allowed as their profit."⁴⁴ Assurance that the Bible would have sufficient retail interest was necessary for Mackenzie to secure before undertaking its printing.

That September, Mackenzie stated the cost of the book in the advertisements in *The Constitution*, which he set at one dollar for subscribers, perhaps deciding that stating a price was a useful strategy in trying to induce further subscriptions. As a comparative price, the one dollar he set was within a range of prices for bibles available in North America. The American Bible Society was selling duodecimo bibles ranging from forty cents for the cheapest books bound in sheepskin with nonpareil lettering, to the most expensive at \$1.75 which was a nonpareil edition with references bound in morocco with gilt edgings.⁴⁵ The Toronto Auxiliary Bible Society (later renamed as the Upper Canada Bible Society) had a small depository and though its stock was limited, the range of bibles that were kept on hand were listed along with prices in its 1834 report. The least expensive complete bible available was a nonpareil, duodecimo (12mo) book costing 5 shillings 2 pence, or for a reduced price of 3 shillings 11 pence for members.⁴⁶ In

⁴⁴ *The Constitution* (Toronto) 26 July 1836.

⁴⁵ *Fourth Annual Report of the American and Foreign Bible Society* (New York: American Bible Society, 1841), 23.

⁴⁶ *The Sixth Report of the City of Toronto Auxiliary Bible Society; For 1834* (Toronto: City of Toronto Auxiliary Bible Society, 1835), 14.

comparison, The British and Foreign Bible Society's Annual Report for the same year listed the same nonpareil, duodecimo bible as costing 4 shillings and for subscribers a reduced price of 3 shillings. The higher prices for books ordered from the Toronto Auxiliary represented the additional costs incurred by shipping the books overseas. The books listed in the BFBS catalogue in London shows the range of bibles available to the British North American auxiliaries to order in bulk, but the single bibles that those in the colonies wished to obtain were limited to what was available through a local auxiliary. Mackenzie's Bible, priced at a dollar, was the equivalent of five shillings which would have placed it within the range of prices available to non-subscribers in Upper Canada, considering added shipping costs to the British prices.⁴⁷ Although Mackenzie's edition was not the cheapest Bible available in that size, the cost was set in order to ensure a measure of competitiveness in the Upper Canada trade while trying to ensure the viability of his enterprise.

Eventually, however, Mackenzie's vision for a domestic edition of the Bible fell victim to the economic realities that faced any printer in the nineteenth century. Having secured a stable and lucrative contract with the Upper Canada government, he could not maintain progress on the Bible while producing the more urgent material demanded by the government, which provided a more immediate income. Mackenzie posted a notice in *The Constitution* that the project was put on hold.⁴⁸ The government contract may have been seen as a blessing-in-disguise, affording him more time to raise the necessary subscriptions to be able to pull it off. Jobbing provided the most

⁴⁷ Simon Powell calculates the value of a William IV half-crown in 1836 at 2 shillings and 6 pence, or 50 cents, which translates to five shillings equalling a dollar. Comparisons of prices are complicated by varying shipping costs and the persistent problems of differing currencies across British colonies, including those in North America. See Simon Powell, *A History of the Canadian Dollar* (Ottawa: Bank of Canada, 2005), 19.

⁴⁸ *The Constitution* (Toronto), 28 December 1836.

immediate access to funds, where printing handbills, letterheads, invitations, and other smaller items required very little initial investment, were completed quickly, and were paid for in short order. These jobs were a stark contrast to printing and publishing a book, which took an enormous initial investment in materials and labour, and occupied the press for long periods of time without bringing in any money.

It is unlikely that Mackenzie's Bible was ever printed in whole, and it was never produced for the commercial public. A notification was printed in *The Constitution*'s final issue of 1836, explaining the "delayed publication until early next Spring in consequence of a Contract made with the House of Assembly for a part of its Printing, the fulfilment of which, under Bond, took precedence of every other work."⁴⁹ The notice ran every week in the newspaper for the first half of 1837, and occasionally after that, until its final appearance at the end of September, 1837. Only two months later, of course, William Lyon Mackenzie spearheaded the rebellion that would ensure his career as a printer and bookseller in Upper Canada in the 1830s was over. There is no known record of the fate of the plates Mackenzie obtained for his edition.

It is uncertain what motivated Mackenzie to pursue publishing his own edition of the Bible. There was an earlier apparent publication of the Bible in Hallowell, Upper Canada (now known as Pictou, Ontario) by Joseph Wilson, which is listed in Patricia Fleming's catalogue of material published in Upper Canada.⁵⁰ In this case, however, there is some uncertainty about the place the pages for Wilson's Bible were printed. He did indeed have printing capabilities at his office in Hallowell. According to 1831 advertisements about his publishing business, Joseph

⁴⁹ *The Constitution* 28 December 1836

⁵⁰ See Patricia Fleming, *Upper Canadian Imprints, 1801-1841* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 760.

Wilson had purchased a “Book binding apparatus” capable of printing larger books, and he had indeed printed a number of items at his premises. However, Wilson had previously published a book that was printed by Knowlton & Rice, a papermaking and printing firm in Watertown, Jefferson County, New York. Located sixty miles east of Hallowell across Lake Ontario, its premises were certainly within a distance from which Wilson could obtain the printed sheets and bring them to Hallowell to be bound and published. The book that Wilson printed and published entitled *A Compendious History of the Rise and Progress of the Methodist Church* had one issue which bore the imprint: “New York: Printed for the Trade. Knowlton & Rice. 1835.” In investigating its author A.G. Meacham, J. William Lamb argues that two issues of the book are “identical [in] typography, layout, pagination, and ‘errata’ and similar paper.”⁵¹ It is likely that the sheets for Wilson’s edition of the Bible were printed in New York, purchased and imported by Wilson, and bound in Hallowell. This previous instance casts some considerable doubt on the possibility that Wilson printed the Bible in Hallowell. Regardless of where it was printed, Mackenzie will have certainly known about this edition, and he still stated in *The Constitution* that his edition was the first believed to have been printed in Upper Canada, further supporting the argument that Wilson’s Bible was printed in the United States. In seeing Wilson publish his Bible, Mackenzie might have been convinced that printing the Bible would not bring prosecution for copyright infringement. Having almost a decade earlier protested the illegal publishing of a Bible in Upper Canada because of copyright infringement (see below), he might have seen

⁵¹ See J. William Lamb, “The Identity of A.G. Meacham, Author and Compiler of Canada’s First Methodist History,” in *Papers of The Bibliographical Society of Canada* 20, no. 1 (1981).

Wilson's Bible as an indication that such a venture would not be prosecuted, thus emboldening him to pursue his own edition in 1836.

Another pioneering printer who attempted a commercial edition of the Bible was John Henry White who actually succeeded in producing a run of the complete Bible.⁵² Like Mackenzie, White was a newspaper publisher who set out to print and publish a complete edition of the Bible.⁵³ The size of John Henry White's Bible was in keeping with what was most commonly produced by pirating printers without the legal patent to do so, who G. E. Bentley argues produced most bibles in folio or quarto size because of their profitability.⁵⁴ It is likely that White relied on subscriptions to finance the edition, as he would have faced the same financial burden that beset Mackenzie. Although it is unclear how many bibles were printed, an auction listed 350 volumes for sale after White's death. This may signify that White had difficulty selling his bibles, and that he had managed to publish the run of bibles without the pre-paid subscriptions and purchases that Mackenzie insisted upon.⁵⁵

Although Mackenzie did not achieve the final product that John Henry White was able to produce, his efforts provide an important insight into the lack of bible publishing in nineteenth century Canada and the barriers that confounded anyone who might have considered it. The material resources required to produce a Bible provide the most compelling explanation for the

⁵² A copy of White's Bible now resides at Library and Archives Canada after being purchased in 2013. The author wishes to thank Meaghan Scanlon for her knowledge on this edition and its acquisition.

⁵³ For more on John Henry White as a printer and publisher, see Marianne G. Morrow, "John Henry White, The Unknown Printer," *Island Magazine* no 22 (Fall, 1987), 29-30.

⁵⁴ G. E. Bentley argues that because of the higher risk unlicensed publishers faced in producing bibles, profitability was an essential consideration, and "clearly it was felt that the large format Bibles were the ones most likely to prove profitable. See "The Holy Pirates: Legal Enforcement in England of the Patent in the Authorized Version of the Bible CA. 1800," *Studies in Bibliography* vol 50 (1997): 381.

⁵⁵ Marianne G. Morrow and Nicolas J. de Jong, "WHITE, JOHN HENRY," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003. Thanks are due to Meaghan Scanlon, Rare Books Librarian at Library and Archives Canada for her assistance with information on John Henry White and his Bible.

lack of any sustained production in Canada, despite the immense demand for the Bible in the nineteenth century. The amount of labour needed to undertake such a project was immense, and the labour in a printing office was almost certain to be dedicated to other projects that provided more immediate income. The capital expense of the paper, ink, and type was made upfront and subjected a printer to enormous financial exposure. The legal circumstances that made such a printing illegal added to the speculative nature of printing the Bible, with the reality that the government could enforce the patent restrictions an important consideration for printers.

Legal Restrictions on Importing the Bible

As a result of both the legal restrictions on its printing and the economic challenges of producing such a book, British North Americans relied almost entirely on importing the Bible, a situation that continued in Canada into the twentieth century. The importing of bibles had its own economic and legal challenges that shaped the ways in which bibles were obtained. The rapid expansion of American printing and publishing and the lack of patent restrictions meant that bibles were produced at an enormous pace there by the early 1800s, and the reality of a ready supply of bibles from the United States was always apparent in Canada. But copyright restrictions and the establishment of importing channels from Britain meant that British North Americans and those in the Dominion of Canada possessed mostly British editions of the Bible in the nineteenth century.

The expansion of the book trade and publishing in the United States in the nineteenth century had a profound effect in British North America. The predominant version of the Bible printed in the United States was the Authorized Version, but because the United States did not recognize the Royal Charter protecting the printing of bibles, American Bible printing was more

broadly practiced than in British North America after American independence. Eli Maclaren summarizes the problem in that although the “colonies that would become Canada were implicitly subject to British copyright law, which prohibited the unauthorized reprinting of British works... those colonies were also uniquely close to the United States, where printers and booksellers had been free to ignore British copyright since the American Revolution.”⁵⁶ The ability for Americans to produce the Bible without concern about the patent created a large supply of bibles which raises the question about whether or not American bibles were imported into Canada, and whether such importing was legal.

Ironically, a strong protest against importing American editions of the Bible into Britain’s North American colonies was made by William Lyon Mackenzie, the man who himself attempted to print an unlicensed edition a decade later in 1836. In 1827, Mackenzie used the pages of his *Colonial Advocate* to rail against the attempt by S. Thompson who had “obtained 800 subscribers for a quarto bible to printed on home made paper, in Upper Canada, to cost five or six dollars.” Mackenzie also wrote in the *Colonial Advocate* that Thomson “had told the people they were subscribing for the first Canada edition of the scriptures,” but that he “had since expressed to us and others his intention of planning on his subscribers some Yankee stereotype edition in place of the Canadian one for which they had signed.” Mackenzie wrote that he had evidence that the books were nearly ready printed and about to be brought across the Niagara into Upper Canada.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Eli Maclaren, *Dominion and Agency: Copyright and the Structuring of the Canadian Book Trade, 1867-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 16.

⁵⁷ *Colonial Advocate* (Toronto), 9 August 1827.

Mackenzie criticized Thompson's deception in dealing with his subscribers falsely, selling them a Canadian Bible when the edition was actually printed in the United States. He wrote that "if need be we can bring 100 credible witnesses to prove that this person has been guilty in form and manner as charged in our late indictment." More importantly, Mackenzie laid out the legal prohibitions against importing American bibles into Upper Canada and why Thompson should be stopped from doing so, citing a law passed in 1825 by which "books, such as are prohibited to be imported into the United Kingdom are prohibited to be imported into Upper Canada from foreign parts. Bibles and Testaments in the English language are permanent copy right works in the hands of the King's printers and the two universities, and may not be lawfully imported into the United Kingdom, consequently cannot be admitted from the United States into Canada." He also stated that "if Thompson shall attempt to smuggle them in, contrary to the true and evident intent and meaning of the above imperial act, he may rest assured that we and others our associates will look sharply after him."⁵⁸ Mackenzie may have been motivated to publicize this specious attempt to bring bibles from the United States because of his own desire to sell bibles among the stock at his print shop, and had been restrained from doing so by the law. Mackenzie notes that Thompson responded to these allegations in an advertisement run by Francis Collins in his *Canadian Freeman* newspaper, though the issues from the summer of 1827 are not extant, and we do not know how the issue was resolved. Nonetheless, Mackenzie publicized the legal prohibitions against importing bibles into British North American colonies, basing his argument on the permanent copyright over those texts by the university presses and the King's printers.

⁵⁸ *Colonial Advocate* (Toronto), 9 August 1827.

Although Mackenzie was confident in his assessment of these legal prohibitions of importing bibles from the United States, the reality of copyright legislation was unclear before 1842. In this early period, there was no distributor that maintained a persistent supply of bibles from the United States. Instead shipments of bibles were infrequent, irregular, and limited, likely only made as a result of the direct correspondence between American publishers and inquirers in British North America. Egerton Ryerson, editor of the *Christian Guardian* and later manager of the Methodist Book Room in Toronto, though supplying many other books, rarely provided bibles printed in the United States, and its advertising was explicit in stating its supply of bibles was from Britain. “FOR SALE AT THIS OFFICE,” pronounced one advertisement in the *Christian Guardian* in 1830, were “Excellent Bibles and Testaments, printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society, at very low prices.”⁵⁹ The legal restrictions around the copyright of the Authorized Version likely contributed to the absence of American editions of the Bible in the Methodist Book Room’s stock.

In addition to the legal concerns, the cultural and political concerns were perhaps the most important factor in determining the source for bibles. Scott McLaren argues that the origin of books sold and materials used in printing was subject to extraordinary scrutiny in Upper Canada, and sensitivity to issues of loyalty and political affiliations placed increasing pressure on the Methodists to dissociate from American Methodist bishops’ influence in Upper Canada despite continuing its economic ties to the American Methodists’ Book Concern in New York.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Christian Guardian* (Toronto), 11 September 1830, in Scott McLaren, “Books for the Instruction of the Nations: Shared Methodist Print Culture in Upper Canada and the Mid-Atlantic States, 1789-1851, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011, 204.

⁶⁰ Scott McLaren, “Books for the Instruction of the Nations: Shared Methodist Print Culture in Upper Canada and the Mid-Atlantic States, 1789-1851, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011, 206-7

For British North Americans, the connections to Britain and the discourse of loyalty remained a salient issue in determining what books were deemed appropriate and acceptable.

Nevertheless, British North Americans sought out whatever source they could find to supply their want of bibles. Writing from Montreal during a four-year agency in the colonies in 1838, James Thomson, an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), remarked in a letter to that organization's Foreign Secretary that bibles were wanted "after the American fashion," confirming that those in Montreal had access to bibles from the United States and that this was not uncommon. Thomson also advocated establishing Bible depositories in Montreal and Toronto in order to keep the British North American auxiliaries of the Bible Society from applying to the American Bible Society for supplies:

On several occasions I understand this society has suffered a lack of Bibles on the spot where they were immediately wanted this want has been in part remedied at times by applying to the American Bible Society which is near at hand. Applications have been made to that institution on another ground also. Namely, from a fear of being burdensome to you through requesting supplies which they could not well pay, and which they were loath to ask you to put down as grants. I am sure it is the wish of the whole Committee in Earl Street to do everything possible to secure an extensive and useful circulation of the Scriptures in this quarter; and that you would not wish to throw any of the burden on our American friends, however kindly they might be disposed to participate with you in supplying us, as they have actually done on several occasions, and to a considerable extent.⁶¹

According to Thomson's observations, a precedent already existed of obtaining Bible reprints from the United States. Thomson returned to Britain that summer, and did not comment on the potential impact of the legislation passed that year on the movement of bibles across the border with the United States.

⁶¹ James Thomson to Andrew Brandram, 31 August 1830, British and Foreign Bible Society Archives, Cambridge University Library, BSA/X/T.

The legal parameters became much clearer with regards to American reprints of books under British copyright. Sara Bannerman demonstrates that the 1842 Copyright Act “prohibited the import of cheap, unauthorized American reprints of British works that Canadians had enjoyed until then. British publishers favoured expensive library editions of their books, versions that most Canadians, especially those in remote and rural areas, could not afford.”⁶² The law was further clarified though the passing of the 1847 *Foreign Reprints Act* although it did not assuage the grievances of Canadian publishers who wished to reprint British books and compete with the cheaper editions coming from the United States. Instead, the law allowed American editions to be imported providing that a duty of 12.5 percent was paid in order to compensate British copyright holders and protect their interests.⁶³ This had direct implications on American bibles, which were reprints of a book under British copyright, and subject to the 12.5 percent duty.

The study of the history of the book in Canada has focused on the impact of copyright legislation on prohibiting publishers in British North America from developing a profitable industry based on reprinting, but the Bible represents a unique case where publishers were not seeking to print that particular book. Regardless, the legislation passed in 1842 and 1847 both perpetuated the reliance on importing books rather than the development of a domestic printing and publishing industry, making the possibility of printing a Canadian edition of the Bible all the more remote. Although there was no immediate grievance voiced by those unable to republish the Bible, the issue was part of the broader British imposition upon Canadian publishing.⁶⁴

⁶² See Sara Bannerman, *The Struggle for Canadian Copyright: Imperialism to Internationalism, 1842 – 1971* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 17.

⁶³ Sara Bannerman, *The Struggle for Canadian Copyright*, 18.

⁶⁴ George L. Parker, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada*, 106-108.

On the passing of the 1847 *Foreign Reprints Act*, Simon Nowell-Smith argues that the legislation did little to protect the British publishers' interests, and that the promise of ensuring local authority over copyright was worthless for Canadians. “[The *Act*] allowed such colonies as secured the concession to import foreign-printed books which would otherwise have been piratical.” Instead of an outright prohibition on these books, “[a]n *ad valorem* protective duty not exceeding 15 percent was to be imposed on such imports, and the proceeds less the cost of collection and transmission were to be applied in compensating the British copyright owner.” Further complicating the new law, and obscuring the actual number of bibles that moved across the border was the difficulty in enforcing it. “But the duty proved unenforceable,” Nowell-Smith writes, “particularly along Canada’s 3000 miles of open frontier with the United States, so that in practice very little cash reached very few United Kingdom authors and publishers.⁶⁵ The 1847 *Foreign Reprints Act* therefore impressed British control over Canadian publishers, to little benefit of either the British or those in British North America.

Copyright restrictions and the availability of scriptures in British North America were further complicated by the growth of printing and publishing in Scotland, and the separate terms by which the Authorized Version of the Bible was governed there. Though Scottish printers were not bound by the royal patent restricting the Bible’s printing in England, there were restrictions governed by letters patent issued to a Bible Board that oversaw the publication of the Authorized Version and the Book of Common Prayer after 1839. This body provided the license for which

⁶⁵ Simon Nowell-Smith, *International Copyright Law and the Publisher in the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 86. See also James J. Barnes, *Authors, Publishers, and Politicians: The Quest for an Anglo-American Copyright Agreement 1815-1854* (London: Routledge, 1974), 138-141.

other publishers were able to legally print the Bible.⁶⁶ The larger number of printers in Scotland was seen as a contributing factor to cheaper bibles being produced there, a growing concern for the privileged printers in England whose prices were being undercut by imports from the north. This opened up new sources of legally printed bibles within British colonies and territories, and Scotland became an important option for British North Americans seeking to obtain bibles.⁶⁷

Although legislative restrictions provide some explanation for the limitations on sources of importation, examples from printed catalogues demonstrate that Canadians could obtain bibles through retailers advertising in Canadian catalogues. A number of advertisements placed in directories and newspapers after 1850 show bibles from both Scotland and the United States, demonstrating that copyright restrictions did not shut off the movement of bibles from these places. The advertisements for American editions being sold by American publishers demonstrates the willingness of American publishers to sell in Canada in spite of the 12.5 percent duty on all books moving from the United States into British North America and Canada. The Robert Sears publishing house of New York featured a large Family Bible in an 1858 *Directory* advertisement: “We feel anxious to introduce our ‘LARGE TYPE QUARTO PICTORIAL FAMILY BIBLE’ with about 1000 Engravings, into Canada, and trust you will order at least one Copy for your own family.” The advertisement urges readers to “Secure without delay this precious gift for your Wife and Children,” demonstrating the belief that a

⁶⁶ For a description of the Bible Board’s founding and operation, see National Library of Scotland, Manuscripts Division, “Inventory Acc.11182 HM Sole & Only Master Printers (Scotland): the Bible Board (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Library of Scotland, undated). <http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/cnmi/inventories/acc11182.pdf> Accessed April 2015.

⁶⁷ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*,

Family Bible was meant to be shared with the entire household.⁶⁸ In the same edition of the *Directory*, Glasgow's Collins publishers advertised its bibles for sale through its agent Jos. Leeming in Montreal. Collins held a license to legally print the Authorized Version in Scotland, making its sale in British North America legal. The advertisement lists "COLLINS'S EDITIONS OF FAMILY, PEW, AND POCKET BIBLES" for sale, with sizes ranging from a quarto Family Bible to a 24mo pocket bible boasting "larger sized type than any Pocket Edition hitherto published." Collins also distinguished its editions for both their quality and low price. Without sacrificing "excellence in the material and workmanship," the advertisement assures buyers of "the great advantage which he possesses in having them Printed and Bound on his own premises, and the large and constantly increasing demand for his Editions, enable him to offer them to the Public at Lower Prices than similar works have ever been furnished."⁶⁹

The Methodist Book and Publishing House also represents an important example of retail Bible sales in Canada. Its catalogue for 1872 lists "BIBLES. Pulpit, Family, and Pocket Bibles, in great variety, kept constantly on Hand" but provides no details about the origins of those bibles, the varieties available, or the pricing.⁷⁰ In its next catalogue for 1873 and 1874 however, four pages are dedicated to listing the wide variety of bibles available. The heading reads "BIBLES. Pulpit, Family, and Pocket Bibles, in great variety, kept constantly on hand," and then immediately below gives the information of the publisher supplying the stock: "A. J. HOLMAN

⁶⁸ *The Canada Directory for 1857-58: Containing Names of Professional and Businessmen, and of the Principal Inhabitants, in the Cities, Towns and Villages Throughout the Province, Alphabetical Directories of Banks ... Post Office Department, Post Offices ... and Railway and Steamboat Routes Throughout Canada, Corrected to November 1857* (J. Lovell, 1857), 1414.

⁶⁹ *The Canada Directory for 1857-58*, 1320.

⁷⁰ *General catalogue of new and standard books, for sale at the Wesleyan Book Room, 80 King Street East, Toronto* (Toronto: Methodist Book & Publishing House, 1872), 37.

& CO.'S EDITIONS OF Family, Pulpit, and Reference Bibles, With New Original Illustrations by Gustave Dore.”⁷¹ It is notable that the Methodist Book and Publishing House used Holman & Co., an American publisher based in Philadelphia, to supply their bibles. The Holman edition comprised the text of the Authorized Version, It is likely that the 12.5 percent duty on the bibles being ordered from Holman & Co. was not prohibitive for the Methodist Book and Publishing House’s customers, as the Catalogue for 1876-77 continued to advertise four pages of Holman & Co.’s bibles for sale.⁷²

The persistence of American editions being sold in Canada continued into the twentieth century. As a result of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge both establishing branches and representation in Toronto in the first decade of the 1900, each took an increasing interest in the sale of bibles and the assurance that copyright laws were observed.⁷³ Alfred W. Briggs was working on behalf of Oxford University Press (OUP) in Canada, and notified Henry Frowde, OUP’s Publisher in London, of copyright infringement that was taking place in Canada on the 1885 Revised Version of the Bible, a version that was subject to the same royal patent on printing and copyright that governed the printing and distribution of the Authorized Version. In May 1903 Frowde sent a memorandum to the Delegates of the OUP with the subject heading “The sale of contraband editions of the R.V. in Canada.” Frowde explained that he asked Briggs

⁷¹ *General Catalogue of New and Standard Books, for sale at the Wesleyan Book Room, 80 King Street East, Toronto* (Toronto: Methodist Book & Publishing House, 1873), 57 - 60.

⁷² *General catalogue of books, published and on sale at the Methodist Book & Publishing House, 80 King Street East, Toronto, and at the branch book room, Montreal, P.Q.* (Toronto: Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1876).

⁷³ For the opening of the Oxford University Press branch in Toronto and its bible-selling ventures in Canada before the branches opened, see Thorin Tritter, “Canada, Australia, and New Zealand,” in *The History of Oxford University Press: Volume III: 1896 to 1970* ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 631-632. On Cambridge’s struggles and its representation by Macmillan & Co, see David McKitterick, *A History of Cambridge University Press: Volume III, New Worlds for Learning, 1873-1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151.

to take preliminary steps, short of legal proceedings, to curtail the illegal sale of that version of the Bible by Nelson & Sons and Holman & Co., two American booksellers who had been found to be selling the bibles in Canada in contravention of the Crown's copyright. Frowde believed that "if legal action should ultimately become necessary I apprehend that it would have to be taken in the corporate names of the two Universities."⁷⁴ By making the claim with the unified interests of the University Presses as patent holders, Frowde was clearly making the case that the printing privilege forbade the importing of the Bible into Canada.

Despite the strong instructions to Briggs and the confidence expressed in his letter to the Delegates of the Oxford University Press, it is unlikely that Frowde's claims had any legal merit. The 1847 *Foreign Reprints Act* allowed for such books to be imported subject to a 12.5% duty. This certainly served to undercut their favourable position in the Canadian market, but the patent that the University Presses held did not grant a monopoly on selling books in Canada. The practical outworking of copyright law had always been subject to challenges and interpretation, and it is possible that Frowde genuinely misunderstood the limitations of the patent in Canada. Frowde may have also wanted to dissuade competitors knowing that the legal foundations of his case were not secure. Had any firm established a printing operation in Canada, his attempts at litigation would have been justified, but not so with importing bibles. Nonetheless, Frowde's remarks indicate the importance of the Canadian market it at the time. Although bibles sent to

⁷⁴ Henry Frowde to the Delegates – Archives of the Oxford University Press – Frowde Foreign Correspondence. For more on Henry Frowde's role as Publisher to the University and manager of the London Warehouse where bibles were published, see Thorin Trieter, "Canada, Australia, and New Zealand," in *History of Oxford University Press: Volume III: 1896 to 1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 622.

Canada were only a small portion of the trade for the university presses' bibles, their position in that market was still worth protecting.⁷⁵

Another point that complicates the matter is that Frowde's pursuit of copyright infringement did not come from the copyright holder, the Crown, but instead from Oxford University Press, one of the three parties which stood to lose its position in the Bible market if the monopoly on the version's distribution in Canada was broken. The Canadian Copyright Act of 1875 appears to have gone further to allow for a British copyright holder to control the publication of a work in Canada by requiring consent for any edition of that work to be imported, but the issue remained murky because of the necessity of a "Canadian-copyright" in order for a British author to "possess the Canadian market and render nugatory the Foreign Reprints Act."⁷⁶ But the new legislation failed to stop American reprints moving into Canada. "Even when, in the 1870s, Canada was striving to reform copyright in the interest of its publishing sector, it could not bring itself to deactivate the Foreign Reprints Act, so obvious were the advantages of cheap access to new works."⁷⁷ The push for reform had come from Canadian publishers who were prohibited from publishing cheap reprints. Because no Canadian publisher was seeking to print the Bible in Canada, the reforms that were being pursued had only a tangential effect on the distribution of bibles. Even with the remaining questions as to whether Frowde and the Oxford University Press was pursuing their role as the Copyright holder for Canada, the persistence of

⁷⁵ Nonetheless, bibles were moved to Canada from the privileged printers themselves. Cambridge University Press printed 20 percent of its bibles for the Bible Society's (largely foreign) distribution, which included Canada, but five percent for its own distribution in Canada. See David McKitterick, *A History of Cambridge University Press*, vol III: New Worlds for Learning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 313.

⁷⁶ MacLaren, *Dominion and Agency*, 58.

⁷⁷ MacLaren, *Dominion and Agency*, 18.

the Foreign Reprints Act after 1875 continued to provide the legal grounds for importing bibles from the United States into Canada.

The significance of determining the copyright restrictions on bibles in British North America weighed heavily on other British territories, as the Canadian case in dealing with these copyright restrictions provided an important precedent for other British territories and colonies. Simon Nowell-Smith argues that the copyright legislation in Canada vis-à-vis international copyright laws was crucial because “anything Canada got away with, other overseas territories would be sure to copy.”⁷⁸ Canadians were driven to pursue copyright reform, particularly in the 1870s, out of interest for the development of a domestic publishing industry. If Canadians successfully challenged imperial copyright legislation, other dominions and colonies were certain to seize the opportunity afforded by such a precedent to affect change in their own legal position.

Conclusion

In general, the economic conditions of book publishing and the legal dynamics of the Authorized Version’s patent in Britain and its territories kept the Bible from being published in nineteenth-century Canada. With the exception of John Henry White’s 1832 edition of the Bible, the Bible trade in Canada in the nineteenth century was based entirely on the distribution of imported books. The study of the Bible trade in Canada necessarily focuses on the wholesalers and retailers that distributed bibles in Canada. This context makes the Canadian book trade

⁷⁸ Simon Nowell-Smith, *International Copyright Law and the Publisher in the Reign of Queen Victoria*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 86.

comparable to the British provincial book trade, as each was dependent upon the peripheral distribution of books produced in a central location. In his examination of the provincial book trade in England, John Feather demonstrates that “the country trade was distributive rather than productive, despite the fact that some books were indeed produced.”⁷⁹ Newspapers and ephemera were exceptions to this rule of production and distribution, in British North America as well as provincial England, but as for books, the economic basis for a book business was rooted in the process of maximizing the returns on importing books and distributing them. The Bible trade in Canada then came to favour the organizations and institutions that could most effectively overcome the physical and geographical challenges posed by Canada’s vast boundaries, sparse population, and poor transportation networks. The Bible trade in many ways reflected the problems of Canada’s twentieth-century book trade, which George L. Parker argues “had their origins in Canada’s unique nineteenth-century situation, first as a group of separate colonies and then as an underpopulated, rather poor, and economically dependent Dominion in the last third of the century. ‘Importation’ was the name of the game.”⁸⁰

Had a Canadian publisher like William Lyon Mackenzie or John Henry White succeeded in producing a sustainable and viable British North American edition of the Bible, the impact on the history of the book in Canada would have been profound. Presuming that a license for its printing would have eventually had to have been obtained, the enormous investment in the type, labour, and printing works for such a project could have provided an enormous benefit to the printing infrastructure in the colonies. The immense investment in an ongoing project of that size

⁷⁹ John Feather, “The Country Trade in Books,” in *Spreading the Word: The Distribution of Networks of Print 1550-1850* (Winchester: St. Paul’s Bibliographies, 1990), 165- 183.

⁸⁰ George L. Parker, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), ix.

would have certainly been accompanied by the publisher's solicitations for other works to be published in order to make use of that infrastructure and labour pool. Instead, extraordinary sums of money were sent outside of Canada to further fuel the production of bibles in foreign print shops. The heavy costs of importing books meant capital was invested in shipping rather than book production processes. *The Bookseller* magazine highlighted these costs for books shipped to Australia for sale, where, in order to import them, "we have to pack all books in zinc-lined cases, to pay freight, insurance, dock charges, cartage, commission agents, and other expenses incidental to shipping."⁸¹ The costs of importing, though not as demanding as printing the Bible, were still significant, and that money represents a considerable amount of capital that was invested elsewhere.

The significance of the loss of capital investment that is represented in the absence of Bible production in Canada was enormous. In his study of the ledgers of the Bowyer Press, a father and son printing firm that operated in London in the eighteenth century, K. I. D. Maslen argues that the ephemera printed by jobbing printers like the Bowyers provides an enormous amount of information about bibliography and book history because of the types of jobbing they did, the means by which they printed the material, and who those jobs were done for. But beyond the information about the printing itself, Maslen argues that jobbing printing might provide an "index of civilisation," a way of measuring the advancement of a society.⁸² For Maslen, the relationship between the amount of printing being undertaken, even print so passing and ephemeral as jobbing printing, was a measure of the cultural development of a given people. Publishing the

⁸¹ "Bookselling in Australia," *The Bookseller* 1874 pp 465-466 in Wallace Kirsop, *Books for Colonial Readers* (Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand, 1995), 13.

⁸² K. I. D. Maslen, "Jobbing Printing and the Bibliographer: New Evidence from the Bowyer Ledgers," *Bulletin of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand* Vol 3 no. 1 (1997), 15.

Bible in Canada may not have thrust colony and then the country faster towards a more sophisticated domestic culture, but it would have provided some stimulus for a positive feedback loop, one where capital investment in printing infrastructure would have driven printers to seek out such jobbing printing, which in turn would enable larger and more elaborate print undertakings. A print works of the capacity necessary to print the Bible would have demanded, and produced, both ephemera and larger books and contributed to a more robust print culture in Canada in the nineteenth century.

The exigencies of printing a Canadian edition of the Bible might have been greater had no organization been able to supply the growing demand for bibles, leaving Canadians in a position where they were unable to obtain them with any ease. However, the British and Foreign Bible Society provided the extensive foundations of a Bible distribution network across British North America that persisted into twentieth-century Canada. Its system of local auxiliaries and branches and their ability to manage the logistics of shipping, inventory, distribution, and sales negated any destitution of bibles, and provided a supply upon which Canadians came to rely. Although there was a healthy demand for an ample supply of scriptures in Canada that would have likely rewarded a Canadian printer's success in producing a Canadian edition, that demand was met by the coordinated efforts of organizations dedicated to the distribution of scriptures, chief among whom was the British and Foreign Bible Society, whose development as the principle distributor of bibles was a result of the unique legal and economic circumstances that governed the history of publishing in nineteenth-century Canada.

CHAPTER 2: THE TRANSDENOMINATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE BFBS

On 3 November 1828, dozens of men and women gathered in the Masonic Hall in York to discuss the formation of an auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The gathering featured some of the leading politicians, professionals, businessmen, and clergymen in the colony who shared a desire to see the Bible distributed widely in Upper Canada. Those in attendance were greeted by an address from John Henry Dunn, a leading figure in Upper Canada's colonial government. He pronounced the sole object of their organization to be the distribution of scriptures without note or comment, and encouraged the hearty support of that great cause. A list of rules was presented which was to govern the auxiliary's activities and decision-making processes. A committee of twenty-seven members was nominated to oversee the society's business, and motions laying out the work of the Society were passed. The York auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society began its work of Bible distribution and institutional expansion that would continue well into the twentieth century.¹

Similar gatherings took place in a number of other communities in British North America in the 1820s and early 1830s. These local auxiliaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society were the bedrock of North American Bible distribution in the nineteenth century. The earliest stages of this Bible enterprise were marked by the cooperation of Protestant evangelicals who shared a commitment to making the Bible available to anyone who might wish to read it. In positioning itself as a distributor of *only* bibles, without any accompanying literature, the Bible Society was able to garner the support of many evangelical Protestants for whom the Bible was

¹ The meeting was recorded and are found in the Minute Book of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter UCBS Minutes LAC MG17F1).

especially revered as the Word of God. As such, the Bible Society became a transdenominational platform for evangelicals from a wide spectrum of Protestant denominations, including Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans, and Congregationalists.

This chapter traces the earliest work of the British and Foreign Bible Society as intermittent and isolated patches of support to the establishment of urban auxiliaries at the end of the 1820s that provided a sustained presence in British North American urban centres. The leaders of these auxiliaries were embedded within the urban elite in British North America. Their involvement in the Bible Society provides a unique lens into the participation of lay professionals and clergymen who worked together to popularize the Bible Society's enterprise and lay the groundwork for local Bible distribution. The influence of businessmen and lay professionals enabled the Bible Society to establish a successful model not only for its distribution, but also in the management of its stock and in the receipt of supporters' donations and subscriptions.

The British and Foreign Bible Society's Early Work in North America

In its earliest work in British North America, the BFBS translated the Bible into the Mohawk language. An application for the BFBS's financial support of the translation was made by Tyonenhokarawen, who assumed the English name of John Norton. He served as a captain in the British Army and a chief of the Iroquois Confederacy, and undertook much of the translation at the home of Lord Teignmouth, the BFBS's first president.² The first institutional presence of the

² Owen, *History*, 125- 128; see also Roger Steer, "'Without Note or Comment': Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," in *Sowing the Word: The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1804-2004* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2004), 67.

BFBS was in the form of a Bible Society branch founded in Quebec City in 1804. The connections between London and Quebec were very loose and it was not considered a formal auxiliary of the BFBS. Bible Societies began in Nova Scotia at Stewiacke and Pictou in 1809 and 1813 respectively, and a consignment of Bibles was sent to Burton, New Brunswick in 1808. A Bible Society was established at York in 1817, but that work failed to maintain its support and became dormant for more than a decade.³ These origins of the Bible Society's presence in Canada were marked by isolated and irregular establishment of local auxiliaries that had little longevity in their work.

The establishment of these branches was the result of local BFBS supporters who sent requests to the BFBS's London Committee, for supplies of Bibles in order to start a local branch. Many of the earliest auxiliaries in North America were based in port towns where ready communication and shipping access to London was an asset in the connection to London. Typically individuals wrote to the BFBS committee in London expressing interest in establishing an auxiliary in their local community.⁴ Judith Fingard has examined the earliest work of the Bible Society in the Maritimes, arguing that the connection of British North American auxiliaries with the Parent Society in London ensured their survival and their important cultural influence. The early distribution of Bibles depended in large part on the movement of naval, merchant and shipping vessels that would carry goods from one settlement to another. Fingard demonstrates that one of the key groups responsible for this movement "comprised officers of the army, navy, and merchant marine stationed in or visiting the principal settled areas of the colonies."⁵ The

³ Edward C. Woodley, *The Bible in Canada*, (Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1953), 18-19.

⁴ Edward Carruthers Woodley, *The Bible in Canada* (J.M. Dent, 1953).

⁵ Judith Fingard, "Grapes in the wilderness": the Bible Society in British North America in the early nineteenth century," *Social History/Histoire Sociale*; 5(1972):no. 9, 7

soldier and scientist Sir Edward Sabine was an early proponent of the Bible Society, and wrote on two occasions in 1813 to the Bible Society to support the possibility of Bible Society activities in Halifax and Quebec.⁶ Officers and merchants used their own travels to facilitate the movement of books, and connections could be made between different settlements in the colonies to coordinate small shipments of Bibles. The frequency of journeys and the number of books that could be procured in a single shipment varied widely and offered little in the way of a regular and consistent supply of scriptures that could fully meet the demand for scriptures of a community.

Until the late 1820s, the presence of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Canada was characterized by isolated and disjointed auxiliaries that communicated directly with each other in sporadic ways. A number of these auxiliaries were abandoned due to a lack of financial support or public interest, a result of the reliance upon individuals' own initiatives to establish local auxiliaries. The personal circumstances of these individuals often determined the longevity and sustainability of a local auxiliary, and the change in health or residence could severely affect its viability. In 1825, the Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society lists fourteen auxiliaries in British North America: Halifax, Liverpool, Yarmouth and Pictou in Nova Scotia; Prince Edward Island; St. John's, Fredericton, and a Ladies' Auxiliary at Miramichi in New Brunswick; and Montreal, Quebec, York, Kingston, the Midland District, and the Hudson's Bay in the Canadas. Two other Societies at Niagara and Amherstburg were listed but set apart because they had "other objects besides that of distributing the Holy Scriptures."⁷ All of these auxiliaries were

⁶ BFBS Archives, Cambridge University Library, BSAX index, incoming letters.

⁷ British and Foreign Bible Society, *The Twenty-First Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, (London: BFBS Bible House, 1825), 50-51.

characterized not by their cooperation and connection with one another but by a direct relationship with the “Parent Society” in London and their contact principally the Foreign Secretary. These auxiliaries received scriptures shipped from England and subsequently sent the surplus funds from donations and subscriptions back to the Committee in London to support its global initiatives.

By 1828, a new era emerged in which Bible society auxiliaries enjoyed sustained membership and organizational structure that provided the foundation for the Bible enterprise that continued into the twentieth century. The revitalization of lapsed auxiliaries, the renewed fervor for local distribution, and a greater sense of attachment to a global project characterized the increasingly stable auxiliaries and the broadening support for the BFBS enterprise in British North America. A key to the BFBS’s growing stability was greater oversight by its London Committee of affairs in North America. In 1828, the BFBS commissioned an agent named John West to tour British North America Bible Society auxiliaries. The BFBS’s Annual Report for 1828 described communications from British North America alluding to new settlements where “it is most desirable and necessary that the Scriptures should be introduced.” The Committee decided “to engage the Rev. John West to visit that country on behalf of the Society; to confer with the existing auxiliaries and friends of the Society, with a view to the enlargement of the operations; and to form connexions with individuals to whom the distribution of the Scriptures may be confided, where Societies cannot at present be organised. Mr. West will also prosecute inquiries as to what has been done, or may yet be practicable, with reference to the languages of

the various tribes of the Indians.”⁸ West summarized the goal of his North American tour as a journey “with a view to extend their operations.”⁹ John West had previously served in the Red River settlement from 1820 and worked with Nicholas Garry, the Deputy Governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company to establish a Bible Society auxiliary at York Factory in 1821.¹⁰ West returned to England for a furlough from his missionary work where his employment was ended by the HBC Committee.¹¹ West toured the territory in 1825 and 1826 and had contact with a number of BFBS auxiliaries, and was now returning on behalf of the Bible Society to make contact with local leaders and survey the state of local auxiliaries in order to encourage their growth.

One of the most important tools for West to gain access to important figures in British North America were letters of introduction from esteemed acquaintances. As West travelled across the Atlantic to New York City, he was in the company of the “Hon. Mr. Rush” returning from his position as his embassy to America, and he remarks that Rush provided him with “letters of introduction to some distinguished families, with a view to my obtaining some useful information on the state of the Indians, in my route through the eastern part of the United States,

⁸ British and Foreign Bible Society, *The Twenty-Fourth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, (London: BFBS Bible House, 1828), xvii.

⁹ John West, Report, in British and Foreign Bible Society, *The Twenty-Fifth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, (London: BFBS Bible House, 1829), index.

¹⁰ Richard A. Willie, “WEST, JOHN,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003. http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/west_john_7E.html. See Rev. Bertal Heeney, *John West and His Red River Mission* (Toronto: The Mission Book Company, 1920), 33-37.

¹¹ John West was working for the Christian Missionary Society (CMS), but was unique in that he was ordained and of a higher status than most of the other CMS missionaries working in Britain’s colonies. See Alan Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada: Controversies and Identity in Historical Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 18. See also Jamie S. Scott, “Cultivating Christians in Colonial Canadian Missions,” in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad* eds. Alwyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott, (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 22-28.

to the British Provinces.”¹² These letters provided important social connections that he relied upon in raising awareness of the BFBS’s work, offering introductions to “some distinguished families” in the provinces which afforded West opportunities to meet local leaders and raise support for the Bible Society’s work. The use of these letters was, in this period, a long-standing practice in British North America. In his biography of Robert Baldwin, Michael Cross makes note of their use, where “personal ties were all and the family was the most important instrument of advancement.” He cited Baldwin’s grandfather ‘Robert the Emigrant,’ who had “come from Ireland armed with introductions to well-placed people in Upper Canada” which placed the Baldwins among the York’s elite upon his arrival.¹³ The use of these letters of introduction was not new, then, when John West arrived in British North America, but his use of them in his tour signals his acknowledgement of the importance of urban elite and commercial ties in the colonies to underpin the expansion of the Bible Society’s work there.

At the outset of his tour, West journeyed up the eastern coast of the United States from New York City and arrived on Deer Island, north-east of Portland, Maine, and met with leaders of the Deer and Indian Island Branch Bible Society. Inquiries he had made of Bible distribution there led him to “hope that every family was in possession of the Bible.” But upon his arrival, he discovered that “the Society, however, was nearly become extinct, and in the hope of its *reanimation*, I mentioned the necessity there was of looking beyond their own immediate narrow horizon, and of never forgetting the great object of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the supply of the Sacred Scriptures to every family of every island and continent of the world.”¹⁴ As

¹² John West, *A Journal of a mission to the Indians of the British provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and the Mohawks on the Ouse or Grand River*, (London: L. B. Seeley & Sons, 1827), 211.

¹³ Michael Cross, *A Biography of Robert Baldwin: The Morning-Star of Memory*, (London: OUP 2012), 9.

¹⁴ John West, Report, in *Annual Report of the BFBS* 1829, 95.

West continued his tour throughout New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, he encountered a similar state of near extinction and lapse among many of the local iterations of the Bible Society. Annual meetings, which were held to celebrate the work of the auxiliary in the previous year and to keep members apprised of both local and global occurrences in the BFBS's Bible distribution project, served as a measure of an auxiliary's vitality. If these "Anniversary Meetings" were not held, especially if missed in more than one year in succession, that auxiliary was perceived to be "no longer in existence," which he found to be the case at Yarmouth.¹⁵ He travelled to more than a dozen communities in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia where he encountered a number of local auxiliaries which had become dormant or inactive.¹⁶

The geographical challenges presented by the distances between centres and inclement weather limited the reach of West's tour. West was unable to reach the auxiliary at Miramichi, because of storms that had made travel untenable, and the auxiliaries at York and further west were too far for his planned journey.¹⁷ Although West was an experienced traveller in that landscape, overland routes were often undeveloped before the 1830s, and some of these conditions explain in part the limited communication and cooperation between auxiliaries before the 1830s.

The tour continued into Lower Canada by way of Boston as a precaution against the possibility of fogs delaying his journey through the Gulf of St. Lawrence to Quebec, where West continued to encounter failing auxiliaries. West cited the presence of Roman Catholics as the reason that many difficulties existed in the distribution of Bibles in the region. His visit to the

¹⁵ John West, Report, in *Annual Report of the BFBS*, 1829, 97.

¹⁶ For a description of West's tour in the Maritimes, see William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: John Murray, 1904), 60-63.

¹⁷ John West, Report, in *Annual Report of the BFBS*, 1829, 97.

Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society was more encouraging: apart from its branch at La Prairie which had “fallen into a languishing state,” its other branches “manifested an energetic spirit and increased activity in the circulation of the Bible.”¹⁸ Although there were some hopeful and positive signs of growth in local distribution, they were the exception in the communities West visited on his tour.

John West’s reports reveal the fragmented nature of the Bible Society’s work in British North America to this point, perpetuated by the lack of support he found among some ministers. In a number of places during his tour, West wrote that he encountered a “spirit of apathy and indifference toward the Bible Society.”¹⁹ From Anglican leaders in particular, he found little support for his work. “[N]o Missionary from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel stood with me on the platform at any public meeting, to advocate the cause of the British and Foreign Bible Society in either of the British provinces,” he lamented, nor did any give “testimony publicly in favour of the Institution; nor does the Bishop of Nova Scotia, or the Bishop of Quebec, patronise or encourage the formation of Bible Societies or Associations in their respective dioceses.”²⁰ Indeed, Judith Fingard has written that Bishop John Inglis “openly opposed the British and Foreign Bible Society as a competitor of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, which itself was a proprietor of bibles to the Church of England. He fostered local committees of the SPCK in order to counteract the impact of the Bible Society’s literature.”²¹ These rivalries, especially in the case of the Church of England’s ministers’ lack of

¹⁸ John West, Report, in *Annual Report of the BFBS*, 1829, 100.

¹⁹ John West, Report, in *Annual Report of the BFBS* 1829, 100.

²⁰ John West, Report in *Annual Report of the BFBS* 1829, 100.

²¹ Judith Fingard, “INGLIS, JOHN,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed March 24, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/inglis_john_7E.html.

support for the Bible Society was a common thread in the growth of the Bible Society in the first half of the nineteenth century in Canada. James Thomson, an agent who worked on behalf of the BFBS between 1838 and 1842 encountered similar apathy from the Church of England ministers. West's reports demonstrate that by the end of the 1820s, the Bible Society had still not gained the broad support from all Protestant denominations that it came to enjoy later in the nineteenth century.

In spite of these difficulties, West's tour marked a renewal in the support for the Bible Society's work in British North America, beginning a new era of sustained activity by local auxiliaries and branches. In spite of the number of dormant societies he found and the geographical challenges he encountered, John West was positive about the prospects for growth in North American communities. Summarizing his tour, John West wrote that he was witnessing God "reviving the cause, and giving a fresh impulse throughout the provinces of British North America in favour of the British and Foreign Bible Society."²² Until this point, Bible distribution remained largely dependent upon individuals who took an interest in the Society's mission to organize local societies and coordinate distribution through channels that were infrequent, irregular, and unreliable. West's tour initiated a period in which collective responsibility was taken for the maintenance of local Bible Society auxiliaries, where committees were formed in order that the work of the Bible Society could be carried on without interruption.

Urban Auxiliaries and their Administration

²² John West, Report, in *Annual Report of the BFBS* 1829, 101.

Much of John West's success in his tour was a result of his strategy of connecting with the urban elite and professionals British North America and in the added oversight from London. From his visit to Halifax, with the hopes of establishing an auxiliary and branches on the Miramichi River, West was "led to open a correspondence... with several influential persons, as magistrates, in the neighbouring settlements, in the hope that it might lead to the formation of an Auxiliary and Branch Societies."²³ West was able to connect with community leaders who ensured that Bible Society auxiliaries would be subject to organized meetings and record keeping. There was a renewed sense of accountability not only to other local leaders but also to the parent society in London. In each of these townships, the local Bible Society auxiliary remained deeply embedded within the broader Bible Society institution. The close association with the BFBS meant that local auxiliaries were bound to the constitution and policies laid out by the London Committee. This meant adopting the constitution of the BFBS that had been written in 1804 and had since remained largely unchanged.²⁴ Auxiliary committees operated as a local representative of the BFBS, accountable to the Committee in London for their governance and subject to various decisions made by that London committee. In the written reports of the York Bible Society auxiliary, formed in 1828, the adoption of the wider British and Foreign Bible Society constitution was made explicit as was its affirmation of its place under the BFBS's central authority.²⁵

At the center of each local BFBS auxiliary in British North America were the formal organizational roles filled by its leading a group of leading citizens who filled formal

²³ John West, Report, in *Annual Report of the BFBS* 1829, 96.

²⁴ See the Constitution of the British and Foreign Bible Society (Appendix I).

²⁵ UCBS Minutes, LAC MG17F1, 27 October 1828.

organizational roles. Auxiliaries were led by a President and several Vice-Presidents, a treasurer, a secretary, and in some cases, a depositary who was charged with maintaining a stock of bibles. Auxiliaries were governed by a Committee of up to twenty-seven members who were nominated to fill that office. The BFBS had been careful at its outset to ensure no particular denomination was dominated any level of leadership, and auxiliaries in British North America also sought to broadly represent Protestant denominations in their leadership. Auxiliaries sought a named patron, whose role was ceremonial but meaningful to the auxiliary because of the prestige and profile that the patron brought. The structure of local auxiliaries was designed to mimic that of the organization in England and maintain formal processes of governance, ensuring a fluid institutional continuity from the Parent Society to the auxiliary.

Committees were typically comprised of leading businessmen or professionals in a local community, a mixture of laymen and clergymen who expressed interest in participating in the Bible Society's scheme of Bible distribution. Each auxiliary had a President and numerous vice-presidents that met regularly to discuss the local outworking of the Bible distribution cause. The office of President was prestigious, and that office was often filled by a high ranking government or military official. The office of vice-president also carried some prestige and was regularly filled by leading professionals in the community.

The balance between lay officials and active clergymen on the boards of the Bible Society auxiliaries was one of the unique characteristics of the Bible society among other philanthropic and religious organizations. The roles filled by pastors and priests who led local denominational churches and clergymen who occupied higher leadership roles at the levels of bishop, presbytery, and national assemblies were all represented on the boards of BFBS auxiliaries in North America. Auxiliaries maintained a general policy of inviting all local Protestant clergymen to

hold positions on its Committee. The work of the Bible Society was tied closely to the work of local churches, and local auxiliaries were never without strong input from churches. In spite of this open invitation, clergymen never dominated auxiliary boards, as local professionals were consistently well represented. Judges, lawyers, and magistrates, bankers, financiers, magnates, philanthropists, doctors were all common occupations among those who took an interest in the leadership of Bible Society auxiliaries.

The York Bible Society is a useful example of the make-up of a local auxiliary's committee. After earlier fits and starts which left the Bible Society's work dormant, the York Bible Society was formed in the fall of 1828.²⁶ At a meeting in York on 19 September, a number of leading businessmen and clergymen gathered to discuss the formation of a Bible society auxiliary and a committee was formed to organize a public meeting for that purpose. That committee was given the task of organizing a group of gentlemen that would serve as the committee and its executive to the newly revived York Bible Society. Because of the BFBS's conventional practice of including all local Protestant ministers on local auxiliary committees, letters were circulated to the clergymen in York to notify them of the plans being undertaken and to invite their support and involvement.

The number of powerful and influential people who served on the board of the Bible Society auxiliary at York placed it firmly within the city's urban elite. From its formation, a number of governing officials amongst the ruling executive of Upper Canada filled important positions of the auxiliary. Its first President was John Henry Dunn, the receiver general for

²⁶ John West provided bibles for the York Auxiliary Bible Society at its outset. See Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1, 27 October 1828.

Upper Canada from 1820 until 1836, and was party to many of the political developments surrounding the uprisings in 1837 and 1838 as well as the Union of the Canadas. Sir Peregrine Maitland was named as the Society's Patron, and the request to Maitland to be patron might have held further weight because of the close business dealings between the Dunn and Maitland, one in which Maitland assured the financial backing of the government for Dunn's business dealings.²⁷ Dunn's connections to both the business and political elite ensured that his appointment was one of considerable influence. With Maitland and Dunn as the President and Patron respectively, the most prominent figures in Upper Canada's governing elite lent an air of prestige to the Bible Society's work.

The Bible Society had several vice-presidents at any given time, and these vice-presidents were drawn from the most prominent professionals and businessmen in York at the time. One was Jesse Ketchum, a leading businessman in York. After emigrating to York early in the nineteenth century, Ketchum established a tannery that achieved enough commercial success that he was able to expand his property.²⁸ His success as a merchant and tanner gave him a place amongst the urban elite at York and an influential voice in its political and social developments. Ketchum was publically minded, and was involved in a number of initiatives in York for the establishment of public works. One of the most important was the provision of education in the town, and in 1816 he was elected to the Board of Trustees for the Common School in York in 1816. He threw his weight behind the cause for public education – a stance that pitted him

²⁷ Ken Cruikshank, "DUNN, JOHN HENRY," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003 http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/dunn_john_henry_8E.html.

²⁸ Ernest Jackson Hathaway, *Jesse Ketchum and His Times: Being a Chronicle of the Social Life and Public Affairs of the Capital of the Province of Upper Canada During Its First Half Century* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1929, 68).

against the Anglican Bishop John Strachan and his desire to see the Church retain control in the way schools were managed. Ketchum “founded York’s first common School in 1819,”²⁹ but these debates became more contentious in the 1820s, when Upper Canada’s Common Schools were under threat. The historian Anthony Di Mascio argues that Strachan and the province’s executive elite aimed to “replace the common school system with a British National one” in order to create a “centralized general board of education, headed by Strachan, to oversee the common schools.”³⁰ With his brother Seneca, Ketchum remained committed to the broader provision of education in the province.³¹ As J. K. Johnson has speculated, the selection of school trustees in Upper Canada provided opportunities “for people of dissenting political or religious views to take local leadership roles.”³² Ketchum’s involvement as a trustee for the York’s common school was an opportunity for him to do so.

Ketchum’s service as Vice-President for the York Bible Society auxiliary was in keeping with these broader efforts in public service. He sat on important sub-committees for the Bible Society in its first two years, most notably a committee to pursue with Peter Jones the translation of scriptures into the Chippewa language, as well as his involvement in canvassing York to sell bibles and receive subscriptions. His importance to the Upper Canada Bible Society remained after his death with the gift of an endowed Trust that provided for the purchase of a Bible House

²⁹ Wayne Townsend, *Orangeville: The Heart of Dufferin County* (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2006), 29.

³⁰ Anthony Di Mascio, *Idea of Popular Schooling in Upper Canada: Print Culture, Public Discourse, and the Demand for Education* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 83.

³¹ For Seneca Ketchum’s role in public service, education, and religious societies, see Wayne Townsend, *Orangeville: The Heart of Dufferin County* (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2006), 27-32.

³² J. K. Johnson, *In Duty Bound: Men, Women, and the State in Upper Canada, 1783-1841* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2013), 162-163.

for its operations.³³ The Ketchum Trust remained important to the operations of the Upper Canada Bible Society into the twentieth century, and a powerful representation of the role that prominent businessmen played in establishing the Bible enterprise from within a growing urban elite. Politics was an important sphere of public engagement for Ketchum, an area where many other members of the York Bible Society auxiliary's executive board were active. The election in 1828 reveals the striking connections between the politics and the leadership of the Bible Society in the city. Ketchum stood alongside James Small, allied himself with Reformers in Upper Canada as opposed to leading figures of the Family Compact, and stood with Robert Baldwin in the 1828 election, though they were defeated.³⁴ With his reformist and egalitarian tendencies out in the open, Ketchum stood as a moderate reform candidate in the provincial election of 1828.

Other important figures in the development of Upper Canada's politics and economy were prominent members of the BFBS executive. Dr. William Warren Baldwin, an auxiliary vice-president, was a leading lawyer whose professional interests were closely aligned with the commercial development of the colony.³⁵ Dr. Thomas David Morrison was an Anglican who converted to Methodism who had been an important participant in organizing the first Methodist Church in York. The Treasurer of the York Bible Society was Peter Paterson, an Anglican merchant whose family, in spite of their Reform tendencies, became "one of the pillars of the

³³ For more on Ketchum and his business developments, see Ernest Jackson Hathaway, *Jesse Ketchum and His Times: Being a Chronicle of the Social Life and Public Affairs of the Capital of the Province of Upper Canada During Its First Half Century* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1929).

³⁴ For more on the "Saddle-bag Parliament" elected in 1828 and the connections between the religious and political reform impulses, see John Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 89-92.

³⁵ As Robert Fraser writes, "Commerce was the basis of any Upper Canadian legal practice and William's was no exception." Robert L. Fraser, "BALDWIN, WILLIAM WARREN," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed February 24, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/baldwin_william_warren_7E.html.

Toronto establishment.”³⁶ Paterson served as the first treasurer of the Bible Society, and his enormous business credentials proved an important asset for the Bible Society in managing its financial affairs. His son carried on the Paterson family’s prominence in the financial establishment of Toronto, as a founder of the Consumers’ Gas Company of Toronto, the Canada Permanent Building and Saving Society, the Toronto Board of Trade, the Toronto Board of Fire Underwriters, and a director of the Bank of Upper Canada.³⁷ All three of these prominent Upper Canadians were members of the Church of England, demonstrating the strength of the BFBS’s coalition among British North American evangelicals.³⁸

The prominence of political reformers on the board of the Upper Canada Bible Society demonstrates the relationship between religious adherence and political allegiance that emerged in the 1820s and 1830s. In his analysis of Members of the House of Assembly in Upper Canada, J. K. Johnston demonstrates a considerable trend between Conservative and Reform which shows that religious affiliation between the two “diverged significantly.” Among the Conservative ranks, more than half of the representatives belonged to the Church of England, while among Reform members, the largest denominational affiliation was the Methodists with almost a quarter of the members.³⁹ Many of the leaders of the Bible Society in York had strong associations with reform politics in the province.

³⁶ Frederick H. Armstrong, “PATERSON, PETER,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/paterson_peter_11E.html.

³⁷ Frederick H. Armstrong, “PATERSON, PETER,” in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/paterson_peter_11E.html.

³⁸ Members of the Church of England were at times divided by their identification as High-Churchmen or evangelicals, a distinction that often was reflected in one’s support for the British and Foreign Bible Society.

³⁹ J.K. Johnson, *Becoming Prominent: Regional Leadership in Upper Canada, 1791-1841* (Montreal, QC, CAN: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 138-139.

Another important figure in the history of the Bible Society in York is James Cockshutt who was a recent immigrant to York when he first sat on its committee. He arrived in British North America in 1827 and after starting business as a general merchant in York, he opened a store in Brantford, a venture which lasted only a short time. A few years later, in 1832, Cockshutt re-established his enterprise in Brantford where the business was very successful and where his son continued in its operation for the next half century. Cockshutt helped establish a Bible Society branch there that was closely connected to the Auxiliary at York. His son Ignatius served as treasurer for the branch from 1837 until 1907, making him one of the longest serving members of any branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Cockshutt's philanthropic efforts were recognized in Douglas Reville's 1920 *History of the Country of Brant*. "In so far as one individual can be singled out in a general community as having proved the biggest factor, among many workers, in the early upbuilding of the place, such recognition, in the case of Brantford, must undoubtedly be given to Mr. Ignatius Cockshutt," Reville wrote, praising his "keen business insight and habits of thrift" which allowed him to gain money and influence, spending much time "in private and public enterprises, besides devoting much to philanthropic purposes."⁴⁰ Cockshutt's close connections to the business community and the growing urban professional elite in Upper Canada, and the similar connections of Jesse Ketchum, are characteristic of a number men who, having gained prominence in the community, served on the executive board of the York Bible Society.⁴¹ Much of the operations of the Society involved actually distributing bibles, managing shipments and stock, and organizing the collection of subscriptions

⁴⁰ F. Douglas Reville, *History of the Country of Brant* (Brant: The Hurley Printing Company, 1920), 502.

⁴¹ For the guidelines and initial regulations of the York Upper Canada Bible Society, see Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1, 22 September 1828.

and recruiting members was done by the auxiliary's two Secretaries. The first was the Reverend James Harris who was an Irish Secession Presbyterian whose church and lands were donated by the Bible Society Vice President Jesse Ketchum. The other was Alexander Stewart, a staunch Baptist who was one of the founding members of the BFBS auxiliary at York, who was the minister of the first Baptist church established in York.⁴² Each was accountable to the auxiliary's local committee and provided suggestions for some of decisions made on acquiring bibles and employing funds for their distribution.

In addition to its regular business meetings, members of the Committee and Executive were also actively involved in the distribution work of local auxiliaries. This work took the ideals of the Bible Society from abstract discussions to real intervention in the settlements in British North America. Local distribution, the employment of colporteurs, the translation of scriptures into indigenous languages, and the expansion of branch societies were all aspects of the Bible Society's work that involved the participation of the public and expanded the reach and influence of the Bible Society in British North America. Local distribution of bibles and the canvassing of residences within urban centres took the ideals of the Bible Society onto the street. In York, the town was divided up by the Committee members into nine wards, each demarcated using particular streets as boundaries. Members of the Committee were assigned in pairs to approach each home in their area of the city.⁴³ The members were to learn whether each home was in the possession of a Bible and whether there was want of one, a question that also required learning about whether or not at least one individual in the home was literate and able to make use of the

⁴² Glenn Tomlinson, *From Scotland to Canada: The Life of Pioneer Missionary Alexander Stewart* (Guelph: Joshua Press, 2008), 172-174.

⁴³ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1, 10 November 1828.

book, which was a necessary condition before a Bible was to be sold. In many cases, it appears that most were welcoming and supportive of the Bible society's work. When a home without a Bible was encountered, the volunteer would offer an edition for a particular price. In the case of destitution, the volunteer was given the freedom to use discretion as to whether or not a particular case warranted the "free-gift" of a testament for no charge. Testaments freely given were very rare, as bibles could be obtained by subscription where the full payment of a book could be divided and collected in a number of installments.⁴⁴

Canvassing the town's residents also sought to extend the institutional reach of the Bible Society and ultimately connected the work of the local auxiliary to the global project of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In addition to selling bibles, the canvassing members sought to obtain subscriptions for membership and donations for Bible distribution, using the organization's distribution of bibles in foreign lands to compel the participation of residents in a noble civilizing effort.⁴⁵ The use of this rhetoric carried weight in a society that perceived the expansion of empire as a moralizing force in the world which brought Christian principles to heathen lands.

In this early period of the Bible enterprise, few colporteurs were employed, as much of the work was centered on the settlements closer to larger urban centres in which auxiliaries were based. At its inaugural meeting in November 1828, the York auxiliary moved that it "be recommended to Ladies as well as Gentlemen in York and in the country around, to form

⁴⁴ See Leslie Howsam, "The nineteenth-century Bible Society and 'The Evil of Gratuitous Distribution'", in *Free print and non-commercial publishing since 1700*, ed. James Raven (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), 119-34.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1, 15 February 1830.

associations in aid of this Society,” with James Cockshutt commending such an object.⁴⁶ Less than a year later, the Committee at York raised the possibility of employing an agent for the purpose of organizing branch societies to be connected with their own auxiliary. In 1833 the auxiliary’s secretary Alex Stewart was tasked with touring the country for two or three weeks in order to establish branches that could represent the Bible Society’s efforts in communities further afield.⁴⁷ Bible Society leaders recognized the large task required in realizing its goal of distributing bibles to all Canadians and set out to establish institutional auxiliaries in small towns “that recognizing the formation of local societies throughout the provinces as indispensable to the fully supply of the population with the word of life, it recommends to the Committee for the ensuing year particularly to attend to the formation of auxiliaries.”⁴⁸ By investing more time and energy into establishing outposts of the Bible society work in smaller communities, its leaders sought to establish trade and distribution networks that reached out from a central hub with a much larger scope. Local auxiliaries also gave the Bible Society the advantage of working within the established ecclesiastical and social networks within a town, so that businessmen, clergymen and other leaders could take advantage of existing social and business networks in order to advance the work of Bible distribution.

The work of the Bible Society in its distribution, colportage, and translation was all undertaken with a spirit of broad ecumenism, characterized by the desire to be as inclusive in its work as possible. At its founding in 1804, the leaders of the BFBS in London shared concerns

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1, 28 October 1828.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1, 30 May 1829, 2 August, 1833.

⁴⁸ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol., 10 Feb 1834.

about inclusivity and its efforts to remain neutral on various contentious political, theological, and ecclesiastical debates which centered on the role of the Book of Common Prayer and the inclusion of notes and comments within the King James Version of the Bible.⁴⁹ Such inclusions could imply a preference or endorsement of a particular theological position on baptism, communion, sanctification, and a host of other theological debates. In order to ensure broad support, the leaders sought local subscriptions for membership in the Society. There were varying levels of commitment to the Bible enterprise, with varying levels of financial investment into the enterprise. Membership was extended to a subscriber of five shillings per year, and a gift of five pounds sterling constituted life membership. Members were allowed to purchase bibles at a discounted rate from the Bible Society catalogue. Subscriptions and donations of any amount were accepted, and this encouraged any member of the community to feel that they could buy a stake in the project. Besides being rooted in an urban elite, perhaps the most important factor determining the success of the Bible Society and its enterprise was the broad support it maintained from across the spectrum of Protestantism.

Support for the BFBS raised concerns among some conservative members of the Church of England who believed their Church represented the supreme expression of Christian communion and should maintain control over the distribution of religious literature. In Upper Canada especially, this belief was manifested in the writings and sermons of the coalition between the Anglican Church and the ruling political elite known as the Family Compact. John Strachan has been widely recognized by historians as the chief religious leader of this powerful elite. British

⁴⁹ On the importance of “no note or comment” in defining the Bible Society’s work, Roger Steer, “‘Without Note or Comment’: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” in Stephen K Batalden, Kathleen Cann, and John Dean, *Sowing the Word: The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1804-2004* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2004): 63-80.

colonies in North America witnessed varying levels of tension and discord between various tract and missionary societies based on their denominational stripes.⁵⁰ The Church of England's own Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) fell within the control and oversight of the Church. As such, staunch Anglicans saw the dissipation of support between multiple societies as harmful to the efforts of the Church's own organizations.

For some, support for missionary and benevolent societies also undermined the pre-eminence of the Church of England in the state. If the efforts of sectarian denominations were supported, it would undermine the notion that an established Anglican Church was still an achievable and realistic ambition.⁵¹ Another source of tension was the belief by some that the support of other societies also served to grow the prominence and strength of the sectarian influences, which rankled those who felt the Church of England represented the supreme expression of the Protestant Church and ought to be exclusively supported by state institutions.⁵²

In British North America, the relationship between Church and State remained uncertain in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Central to the issue was the Clergy Reserves that were set aside for the support of Protestant religion in the colonies.⁵³ Whether these lands, by which religious groups would benefit from their sales or rents, were to sustain any Protestant

⁵⁰ See Judith Fingard, "Grapes in the wilderness": the Bible Society in British North America in the early nineteenth century," *Social History/Histoire Sociale*; 5(1972):no. 9, 17-20.

⁵¹ This vision was for many conservative Anglicans predicated on the exclusive privileges of establishment being conferred on the Church of England. See John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 90-94.

⁵² William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 88.

⁵³ See Robert C. Lee, *The Canada Company and the Huron Tract: Personalities, Profits and Politics* (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2004), 15-18.

religious group or just the Church of England was at the heart of the cultural debates that surrounded education and religion in this colonial period. Great efforts were taken by John Strachan and members of the ruling executive to place the Church of England in a position of oversight of the education practices, which would function as the most salient reflection of the Church and State working together in structuring social institutions.

The establishment of the Bible Society in British North America provided another arena in which these debates were inflamed, as John Strachan denounced supporting the BFBS on the grounds that it undermined the Church of England's primacy in the colony. In 1832, Strachan took the opportunity to criticize the work of the Bible Society in a public letter he wrote about the life of Bishop Hobart, a staunch Anglican bishop in the United States who recently passed away. In the letter, Strachan lauded Hobart's disapproval of "different denominations uniting for religious purposes," and his holding "in abhorrence all attempts to separate education from religion." Strachan singled out the Bible Society as an organization that Hobart himself held "in mild but firm opposition." Strachan argued that such opposition was justified because of the threat the Bible Society posed to the primacy of the Anglican Church in Canada. He argued that the BFBS was entirely unnecessary when the same project of Bible distribution could be "much better and more conveniently accomplished by the orthodox Society already belonging to the Church." He also saw the BFBS was "a sort of rival" to which funds that might have otherwise gone to the SPCK were being channeled to the BFBS. Further opposition was rooted in the fact that the BFBS was out of "direction or control of Church people, who, mixed up with many denominations, would become a minority." Ultimately, Strachan pitted the two organizations against each other, arguing that supporting both societies was impossible: "But how can an active and zealous supporter of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge be at the

same time an active and zealous supporter of the Bible Society?”⁵⁴ For Strachan, the religious order was hindered rather than benefitted by a multiplicity of religious organizations operating to the same ends. In addition, cooperation with dissenting Protestants might signify disloyalty towards the British crown, a common accusation leveled at Methodists and dissenting Protestants in an era, after the War of 1812, in which an accusation of disloyalty was a powerful device when many Methodists had ties to the United States.⁵⁵

Another critique leveled at the Bible Society by Strachan and other conservative Anglicans was that it supported the indiscriminate reading of the Bible, and that reading the Bible without the guidance of the Church or the accompaniment of the Book of Common Prayer created opportunities for misinterpretation and false doctrine. This line of thought had been expressed early in the BFBS’s history by the conservative Anglican clergyman Christopher Wordsworth who was chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1810. He criticized the work of the Bible Society as undermining the authority of the Church in matters of interpretation. “To invite peasants to read Scripture themselves, unguided,” V. Kiernan writes in summary of Wordsworth’s critique, “was to overthrow, in the end, all respect for law and order.”⁵⁶ High Church Anglicans were suspicious of the evangelical impulse towards the individual’s reading guided by the Holy Spirit, criticizing the Bible Society’s efforts as threatening order in the Protestant faith.

⁵⁴ John Strachan, “A letter to the Rev. Thomas Chalmers, D.D., professor of divinity in the University of Edinburgh, on the life and character of the Right Reverend Dr. Hobart, bishop of New-York, North-America,” (New York: Swoards, Stamford and Co., 1832).

⁵⁵ David Mills, *Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada, 1784-1850* (McGill-Queen’s Press - MQUP, 1988), 53-56.

⁵⁶ V. Kiernan, “Evangelicalism and the French Revolution” *Past & Present*, 1 (February 1952), 44-56, 53.

The Bible Society was formed with these denominational tensions at the heart of its institutional structure, and had set out limitations in its constitution that would ensure neither Anglicans nor dissenters would dominate the organization. Because of this commitment to transdenominational administration for the greater cause of distributing the Bible, a number of bishops and clergymen from the Church of England were happy to support the initiatives of the Bible Society without any sense of betrayal. On the board of the Upper Canada Bible Society, several Anglicans filled offices, including William Warren Baldwin, Thomas David Morrison, and Peter Paterson. George Okill Stuart, a clergyman in Kingston was supportive of inter-denominational religious organizations, even if, according to Curtis Fahey, his “obsession with his church’s legal privileges” kept him from a completely harmonious relationship with other sects and organizations.⁵⁷ In his study of Protestant culture in nineteenth century Ontario, John Webster Grant demonstrates that the formation of the Upper Canada Bible Society upon cooperative and transdenominational lines opened up avenues for evangelical activism in which Anglicans could be a part. He argues that despite the objections voiced by Strachan and others conservative Anglicans towards transdenominational initiatives, “Anglican evangelicals... figured prominently in transdenominational organizations.”⁵⁸ There certainly were detractors to the Bible Society in Britain, but the Bible Society anticipated these concerns by ensuring that balance would be the mark of its leadership structure. But Strachan was writing from Upper Canada where the colonial enterprise of a civil society was still germinating, and his staunch belief in the establishment of the Church of England as the state-supported religious institution

⁵⁷ See Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854*, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), 103-108.

⁵⁸ John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 113-114.

caused him to view the support of other initiatives as threats to his vision of the Church in Canadian society. Worse, he believed that the Church's important role was being undermined by its own leadership. "Filled with the deepest sorrow, when I saw Bishops [as] officers of Bible Societies. I deem such traitors to their own Church, and promoters of division. A Bishop at a Bible Society, is the object of hostility and hatred to the majority around him, who think it a matter of conscience to thwart his views unless he forgets his vows and acts in accordance with their levelling designs."⁵⁹ Strachan believed that Anglican bishops' support of organizations unfettered by the institutional guidance of the Church of England risked the legitimization of disestablishmentarianism and a leveling of influence and recognition for Protestant sects.

What is remarkable is the transformation of Strachan's views over a period of fifteen years. Strachan wrote a letter to the BFBS in 1817 outlining his support for the Bible Society's work, and he was actively involved in the establishment of the Upper Canada Bible and Tract Society. Strachan included with his letter an undisclosed amount of money that was for a "donation of Bibles and New Testaments to be distributed among the Inhabitants of this province." In this letter, Strachan addressed the potential problem of his desire to distribute the Book of Common Prayer alongside the Bible, "when agreeable," but the letter makes clear Strachan's eagerness to support the BFBS's work and to rely upon the organization for a supply of scriptures.⁶⁰ Sometime in the early 1820s, however, a major shift in Strachan's outlook occurred. At a local meeting of the SPCK in York, Strachan declared "to those who conscientiously differ from us,

⁵⁹ John Strachan, "A letter to the Rev. Thomas Chalmers, D.D., professor of divinity in the University of Edinburgh, on the life and character of the Right Reverend Dr. Hobart, bishop of New-York, North-America," (New York: Swoards, Stamford and Co., 1832).

⁶⁰ British and Foreign Bible Society archives, Cambridge University Library, BSA/X/1 Incoming letter from John Strachan from York, 1817.

the utmost charity is due; but in disseminating Christianity among the young, or in reclaiming the careless, we ought most assuredly to inculcate the form prescribed by our own establishment.”⁶¹ Curtis Fahey demonstrates that John Strachan’s thinking underwent considerable transformation in the 1820s towards High Church thought that went hand-in-hand with a “deeply hostile attitude towards interdenominational organizations.” The shift was a part of an increasing hostility towards dissenting religion and the undermining of Anglican establishment in Upper Canada. As was the case with the Anglican Bishop John Inglis in Nova Scotia, Strachan’s combativeness towards organizations outside of the proprietary reach of the Church of England reflected his concerns about the shifting foundations of church establishment in British North America.

This change revolved around Strachan’s commitment to a belief about the nature of establishment, where the state required a formal connection to the balancing and co-operative. William Westfall suggests that “this world and the intellectual assumptions that had sustained it were no longer tenable. Without an establishment the church could no longer defend itself in the old language of order and social utility.” He continues: “This important cultural shift is illustrated by John Strachan’s sermons, of which over four hundred survive, a rich testimony to a life that... in the first decades of his career the sermons integrate the church and the state so thoroughly that there is almost no distinction between social and religious ideals. In later sermons the church stood on its own and was the channel through which God spoke to the world. Providence was no longer tied to nature and the structure of society and the state, but institutionalized within the church. Not only did the sacred independence of the church become a

⁶¹ John Strachan, quoted in Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854*, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991). 103-104.

major theme in Strachan's sermons, he seemed to preach on little else.”⁶² As the primacy of the Church of England was increasingly under threat, Strachan became more virulently committed to the importance of its central place in society.

The way in which the Bible was obtained in colonial life in Upper Canada was an important part of the debates about establishment, and how voluntary societies related to the province's religious order. This was not the first time that a letter written by Strachan for public reading had provoked strong opposition to his views. In 1826, Strachan wrote a letter MPs in Britain trying to establish the Church of England's exclusive right to the revenue from the clergy reserves, asserting that “the tendency of the population is towards the Church of England, and nothing but the want of moderate support prevents her from spreading over the whole province.” To bolster his argument, he attached an “Ecclesiastical Chart” which understated the influence of teachers and ministers from other denominations. The letter was seen as a hastily written and inaccurate attempt to underhandedly gain an advantage for the Anglicans' pursuit of establishment, and as Gerald Craig argues, the letter “seriously damaged Strachan and his cause for years to come.”⁶³ Strachan was willing to make very public his vision of Canadian society, and publically challenge those individuals and institutions that posed any obstacle in achieving that vision.

The letter written in 1832 condemning Anglican involvement in the Bible Society was met with strong opposition from within the Church of England's ranks. Joseph H. Harris, an Anglican clergyman and the first principal of Upper Canada College, responded to Strachan's

⁶² William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 120.

⁶³ G. M. Craig, “Strachan, John” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed February 24, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/strachan_john_9E.html.

statements through an open letter to the Archbishop John Strachan which he subsequently published, laying out in great detail an argument in favour of Anglican support for the BFBS.⁶⁴ Harris raised each of the objections Strachan posed to the support of the BFBS, and sought to present the case for cooperation in the work of Bible distribution and religious expansion.⁶⁵ Harris pointed to the large number of Anglican leaders who had spoken at previous BFBS Annual Meeting, a figure he set at between ten and fifteen. He argued that disavowing all association with the BFBS would “set all other Christians in united array against us,” and “generate a resentful bitterness, not likely to be confined to one side, disgraceful to the name of Christianity, and affording its enemies a new occasion for triumph and reproach.”⁶⁶ Harris further argued that the limited scope of the BFBS, to merely place bibles in the hands of any who would wish to have them, was a project that ought to be celebrated rather than scolded. “If the mere fact of putting the Scriptures into the hands of any man whatever be a promotion of error, we should be doing good service to religion, could we prevent every one, who was not a churchman, having the Bible at all; for it cannot confirm him less in his error, that the Bible should be given him at the sole cost of a Dissenter, then if the expense were shared by a Churchman.” He went on to argue that the Bible Society was “in fact no more chargeable with promoting dissent, than if it did literally, what it does virtually: place so many copies of the Scriptures in the high way, and say to all who passed, ‘whosoever will let him take freely.’”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ On Harris’s support of the BFBS and the ensuing conflict with Strachan, see J. D. Purdy, “HARRIS, JOSEPH HEMINGTON – Volume XI (1881-1890) – Dictionary of Canadian Biography,” accessed January 26, 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/harris_joseph_hemington_11E.html.

⁶⁵ Joseph Hemington Harris, “A letter to the Hon. & Ven. Archdeacon Strachan: in reply to some passages in his ‘Letter to Dr. Chalmers on the life and character of Bishop Hobart’, respecting the principles and effects of the Bible Society (1833).”

⁶⁶ Ibid, 9.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 11.

Harris highlighted not only the need for supporting and celebrating the different works that were undertaken by Bible Society and the Church of England's own institutions, but also that activities of mutual support and cooperation were already being done through generous donations by the BFBS to the work of the Church of England.

Strachan and Harris had very different views of the world in which the Bible and religious influence would operate. For Strachan, believers in Upper Canada had a limited capacity for financial and institutional support for religious activity, and that dividing it up and distributing it to any organization other than the Church of England undermined its role in the colony. The size of the pie was fixed, and in cutting it up, the bigger the piece given to other religious groups led naturally to the detriment of another. Strachan knew that if the Church of England was to secure establishment in Canada, the resources of its members could not be divided and given to organizations that would undermine its position. For Harris, the resources that were available to be given to religious organizations were subject to exponential gains based on the interest stirred among the people giving the money. If the leaders of the Bible Society could encourage the interest and support for the Bible cause, it would in a sense be creating new sources of revenue and benevolence that would not only benefit the BFBS but also the many denominations which were themselves affiliated with the Bible cause. There was a common wealth built up by the mass dissemination of the books, and the Church of England, the BFBS, the Methodist Missionary Society, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and many others who supported a broad vision of Christian growth stood to gain from its success.

The dispute between Strachan and Harris shows the shifting terrain within British North America's Anglican Communion with regards to the Church of England's place in relation to the state and society. Curtis Fahey argues that the conservative, High Church vision of an Anglican

Upper Canada “rested on old assumptions concerning the unity of church, state, and society, and also on the sincerely held conviction that Upper Canadian society was in a state of flux. Furthermore, this vision had a long life, providing the intellectual underpinnings for Strachan’s plans in the 1820s to strengthen the Church of England’s institutional foundations.”⁶⁸ This was a vision that Strachan and other staunch supporters of Anglican establishment held onto well into the 1830s. As David Mills has noted, “the continued vulnerability of the Church of England in the face of increased opposition to its established position tempered Strachan’s toleration of religious dissent.”⁶⁹ In contrast, Harris and other evangelical Anglicans recognized the importance of transdenominational partnership in the Bible Society, certain that the Church of England could no longer hope for a monopoly on religious order in the colony. This divergence demonstrates the growing influence of evangelicalism within Church of England, and the Anglicans’ contribution to what became a broad evangelical consensus in Protestantism by the middle of the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

The British and Foreign Bible Society’s nineteenth-century distribution enterprise was built upon urban auxiliaries in growing cities throughout British North America. The foundation of these auxiliaries was the professional elite who, alongside a broad range of Protestant ministers, filled the executive offices of the auxiliaries’ boards and committees, coordinating the work of the Bible Society in their respective regions. The success of these lawyers, doctors,

⁶⁸ Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991),

⁶⁹ David Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada, 1784-1850* (Montreal.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988). 56

businessmen, merchants, and financiers in their professions afforded them influence within BFBS auxiliaries. Together, the commitment of BFBS leaders in British North America to the evangelical enterprise of Bible distribution was most powerfully demonstrated in their pursuit of transdenominational cooperation, which afforded the BFBS auxiliaries influence and support that allowed them to rival the authority and control of the governing executive. The formation of a sustained presence of Bible Society in Canada and its growing success in expanding its distribution enterprise through local branches, colportage, and travelling agents was all dependent upon the stable and cooperative leadership of urban auxiliaries. Those leaders were particularly careful to maintain the close connections to London and the participation in a global enterprise of Bible distribution around the world. With a sustained presence in British North American urban centres and the growing presence in smaller communities, the foundations of Bible enterprise were being set that would provide the bedrock for its enormous expansion by the middle of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 3: JAMES THOMSON AND THE EXTENSION OF THE BFBS

ENTERPRISE

In December 1838, an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) named James Thomson travelled from New York to Montreal. He had spent much of the previous six years in the Caribbean, establishing Bible Society auxiliaries and organizing shipments of bibles to local communities. Having come from much warmer climes, Thomson and his wife felt the shock of the cold on their “West India Bodies” that “did not much relish the frost which prevailed during our whole journey.” The final 50-mile leg of the journey was taken on sleigh, “the peculiar winter vehicle of this country.” Despite the cold, Thomson’s hopes for a favourable visit in Canada remained: “The Lord will deal graciously with us, we trust, in this polar region, as he did with us in the burning climes of the Torrid Zone.”¹ His visit lasted for the next several years until the spring of 1842. While in British North America, Thomson was based in Montreal and worked closely with the leaders of the local BFBS auxiliary there to extend its work throughout Lower Canada. Thomson travelled to Upper Canada in the spring and summer of 1839 working his way to York and a number of townships there. He spent the summer and fall of 1840 in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and went back to the Maritime colonies in the summer and fall of 1841. He set off from Montreal to New York in June 1842 to return to Britain.

Thomson had two main goals during these years. He was primarily concerned with the establishment and strengthening of Bible Society auxiliaries and local branches that represented

¹ Letter from James Thomson to Andrew Brandram, Montreal, 20 December 1838, Thomson’s letters are held at the British and Foreign Bible Society archives, Cambridge University Library in the BSA/X folder.

the BFBS. Secondly, he was focused on creating a functioning distribution network and a reliable supply of bibles in Canada. If the auxiliaries were successful in reaching out to their communities to encourage the possession of bibles, they needed to have bibles in their possession to distribute. Thomson set out to ensure that regular shipments were being made from England, that depositories were established in British North American cities, and that the stock of bibles in those depositories was ample for the growing demand. Thomson's tenure in British North America represents a crucial era of Bible Society expansion in the nineteenth century, one in which a consistent supply of bibles became reliable and when the proliferation of branch societies created the local distribution networks upon which most Canadians came to depend for scriptures.

James Thomson is a remarkable figure in the history of the BFBS overseas. Thomson was a Scottish minister who served in a church in Edinburgh before studying educational methods in London and then embarking on a life of extraordinary travel in the Americas and Europe.² He toured as an agent of the BFBS from 1818 until 1849 during which time he worked throughout South America, the Caribbean, British North America, Mexico and Yucatan, and Spain. Before 1830, he travelled extensively in South America and Mexico and made a brief tour of Upper and Lower Canada in 1830 before returning to Britain. After working in the Caribbean from 1832 to 1838, Thomson travelled to Montreal to continue his work. In Latin America he gained important experience in establishing branches and auxiliaries for the Bible Society,

² James Thomson went by the name of Diego for much of his time in South America, but made important connections with British nationals throughout his travels. See Bill Mitchell, "Diego Thomson: A study in Scotland and Latin America," *Bulletin of the Scottish Institute of Missionary Studies* 6-7 (1991): 66-75.

translated biblical texts into indigenous languages, and found British businessmen and colonial leaders to establish a BFBS presence wherever he travelled.

Thomson wrote frequently to Andrew Brandram, the Foreign Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society who oversaw the organization's work outside of Britain. His fascinating letters provide extraordinary insight into the distribution of bibles in Canada in this early period. His letters reveal complex cultural, linguistic and social aspects in British North America and outline the challenges he faced in promoting the work of the Bible Society among Roman Catholic French Canadians. His letters provide a glimpse into the proliferation of Bible Society auxiliaries and the most common types of bibles that Canadians possessed in this period.

This chapter argues that Thomson created a system of local distribution that became the foundation of the predominant supply of bibles and testaments to Canadians for the rest of the nineteenth century. At the heart of this foundation was a network of central auxiliaries and local branches that allowed the BFBS to expand into the most remote regions of Canada. In addition, Thomson's work established domestic Bible depositories that provided ample supply, which fed a growing market for bibles of an increasingly broad array of styles and sizes. The BFBS's network continued to face antagonism by staunch High Church Anglicans whose support was reserved exclusively for the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). Nevertheless, when Thomson completed his work in British North America in 1842, he had provided the infrastructure by which the Bible became so widely available in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Establishing Networks of Local Auxiliaries and Branches

Thomson's visit was highly anticipated by those Canadians involved in the Bible Society. His notes had been published for some time by the BFBS in its annual reports, and he became well-known to those who read of the BFBS's work overseas. He also undertook a considerable tour of Upper and Lower Canada in 1830 surveying the state of local Bible Society auxiliaries and their business that summer in order to furnish the Foreign Secretary Andrew Brandram with a report on the BFBS's progress in the colonies. Thomson was not a stranger when he arrived in Montreal in 1838, and those sympathetic to the Bible Society cause were looking forward to his arrival.

Thomson's experiences in Latin America were characterized by adventure and diversity. While Thomson was working in Latin America, he witnessed extraordinary events during a number of the tumultuous revolutionary episodes in the region. He developed friendships and contacts with South American liberators like Bernardo O'Higgins, Jose de San Martin, Bernardino Rivadavia, Francesco de Paula Santander, and Simon Bolivar. In Mexico, Thomson saw his work for the BFBS disrupted because of uprisings in Vera Cruz and Oaxaca where political unrest became widespread.³ He wrote to Brandram about the limitations on the BFBS's work, "owing to the persons in those places who had the Scriptures on sale having fled and left their affairs in confusion in consequence of the present revolutionary change."⁴ For much of the time he was working in the region, Thomson had to deal with the realities and inconveniences of

³ Thomson to Brandram 18 December 1828

⁴ Thomson to Brandram, 30 January 1829

political upheaval and the impact it had on his mission to establish widespread Bible distribution and the establishment of Lancasterian schools.⁵

Thomson framed his work in the language of the revolutionary movements in Latin America, describing the advancement of missionary activities and the work of the Bible Society in those terms. “There is a great revolution going forward in South America,” he wrote to Brandram. “I speak not of the revolt from under the Spanish yoke, for that in the present day may be said not to be going forward, but accomplished. The revolution I speak of, is a moral one.”⁶ Thomson believed that the availability of the Bible would transform society in Latin America in a way that was similar to that envisioned by revolutionary leaders but rooted in the power of scriptures to affect that change.

Having encountered revolutionary disruption in Latin America, Thomson looked ahead to Canada where rebellions that had begun in 1837 remained a concern. Writing to Brandram with information about his itinerary, Thomson noted that he had stopped in New York for a few days “to make full inquiry about the political state of the Canadas, previous to our setting out for Montreal, according to our original intention; or for Nova Scotia, should the two provinces above named be in such agitation as might hinder Bible Society work.”⁷ Having experienced firsthand the disruption of revolutionary upheaval to his work as a Bible Society agent, Thomson knew that the uprisings in the Canadas might necessitate a move to Nova Scotia to avoid the same.

⁵ For more on Thomson’s work in Latin America both for the BFBS and in establishing Monitorial schools, see Browning, Webster E. 1921. “Joseph Lancaster, James Thomson, and the Lancasterian System of Mutual Instruction, with Special Reference to Hispanic America”. *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Feb.), pp. 49-98 and Caruso, Marcelo and Eugenia Roldán Vera. 2005. “Pluralizing Meanings: The Monitorial System of Education in Latin America in the Early Nineteenth Century.” *Paedagogica Historica*, 41.6: 645-654.

⁶ Thomson to Brandram, 2 December 1822

⁷ Thomson to Brandram, 26 November 1838

Montreal remained in a state of upheaval because of the rebellions that had taken place there, the most recent disruption coming only a month earlier in November, shortly after Lord Durham had travelled back to England. The disallowance by British Parliament of Durham's Ordinance banishing some rebels from Lower Canada resulted in his resignation, and the concerns of continued unrest were confirmed with renewed violence between the third and the ninth of November.⁸ This wave of rebellion was put down, as before, but the sense now was that justice must be done. The prisons that had largely been emptied by Durham were again filled once again, and new gallows were built for rebels that were to be hanged, some within a month of their construction.⁹ In spite of the turmoil, Thomson was satisfied that Montreal was stable enough for him to carry on his work, and he travelled from New York to Montreal as planned.

Upon his arrival in the city on the eleventh of December 1838, Thomson immediately situated himself among evangelicals living there. In doing so, Thomson associated with some of the most powerful and influential leaders in the city. A local Bible Society auxiliary had already been established in Montreal in 1820 and enjoyed considerable support in the city by the time Thomson arrived. At that time, the President of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society (MABS) was Peter McGill, who Robert Sweeny suggests is less important for who he was as an individual than the institutions in which he was active.¹⁰ During the 1840s, McGill held a

⁸ Allan Greer, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 186-188.

⁹ On the unrest of November 1838, see Joseph Schull, *Rebellion: The Rising in French Canada, 1837* (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1971), 144-149, 178-182. See also F. Murray Greenwood, "The General Court Martial at Montreal, 1838-9: Operation and the Irish Comparison," in F. Murray Greenwood & Barry Wright, eds., *Canadian State Trials: Rebellion and Invasion in the Canadas, 1837-38* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 279-324.

¹⁰ Robert Sweeny, "McGILL, PETER," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, accessed November 21, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcgill_peter_8E.html.

number of important roles in Montreal's benevolent and commercial organizations. In addition to his presidency of the MABS and his position as an elected elder of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, he was mayor of Montreal from 1840 to 1842, and was at various times president of the Bank of Montreal from 1834, the Lay Association of Montreal, the St. Andrew's Society, and the Montreal Board of Trade.¹¹ In relation to Thomson and the BFBS auxiliary in Montreal, perhaps the most important feature of McGill's business activities was his expertise in importing British goods, in shipping, and in managing short-term credit. Though McGill entered the shipping business with immense resources thanks to the wealth inherited from his uncle John, he was able to use this advantage to maintain long-term success as a merchant.¹² The connections McGill developed in international trade and shipping will have certainly helped the BFBS auxiliary to obtain its bibles and literature from London, and to move them on to its branches using already established local trade networks.

Another powerful businessman and director of the Bank of Montreal who was attached to the Bible Society was John Redpath, a sugar manufacturer and industrialist who, alongside McGill and other Anglo-Protestant businessmen, was involved in a number of benevolent societies and commercial enterprises in Montreal.¹³ William Lunn, another director of the Bank of Montreal, was an honorary governor for life of the MABS, and Lebbeus Ward, who took

¹¹ Robert Sweeny, "McGILL, PETER," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 21, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcgill_peter_8E.html.

¹² Brian Slack, "The Evolution of Montreal's Port Service Industry," *The Canadian Geographer* 32 no. 2 (July 1988), 125.

¹³ See Richard Feltoe, *A Gentleman of Substance: The Life and Legacy of John Redpath: 1796-1869* (Toronto, Dundurn Group, 2004), 62. See also Gerald Tulchinsky, "Redpath, John," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 22, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/redpath_john_9E.html.

charge of a prominent foundry and steamship engine building business with his brother in 1832, was himself a supporter of the MABS.¹⁴ David Davidson, a Montreal businessman who invested in the development of the Carrillon and Grenville Railway Company in 1847, served for some time as the Treasurer to the MABS.¹⁵ When Thomson arrived in Montreal to work with the BFBS's auxiliary there, some of the most powerful men in business and political circles were involved in its leadership.

The Bible Society was also supported by Protestant clergymen in Montreal, and Thomson worked closely with several during his work in Canada. Henry Wilkes was a Congregational minister whose career in that city began only a few years before Thomson's arrival and spanned more than half of the nineteenth century into the 1880s.¹⁶ Wilkes was a staunch advocate of the Bible Society's work in Lower Canada and was a supporter of numerous benevolent and religious societies in the province. Another Protestant minister Rev. W. F. Curry was an agent of the Canada Education and Home Missionary Society, who was described as having been "extensively known as a clergyman of excellent character, whose Protestantism, piety, and veracity, no responsible person has dared to question."¹⁷ It was these two "valuable and esteemed friends" with whom Thomson associated most closely and toured a number of

¹⁴ Margaret Gillett, "Lunn, William," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 22, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lunn_william_11E.html; . See also Gerald J. J. Tulchinsky, *The River Barons: Montreal Businessmen and the Growth of Industry and Transportation, 1837-53* (University of Toronto Press, 1977), 215-16.

¹⁵ Tulchinsky, *The River Barons*, 173-4.

¹⁶ See John Wood, *Memoir of Henry Wilkes, D.D. L.L.D. His Life and Times* (Montreal: F.E. Grafton & Sons, 1887).

¹⁷ The description of Curry was written by John England, From "Maria Monk's 'Awful Disclosures' appendix documents in *The works of the Right Rev. John England*" For more on Maria Monks Awful Disclosures see Ray Allan Billington, "Maria Monk and Her Influence" *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Oct., 1936), 283-296.

communities surrounding Montreal with a view of making connections with local ministers and establishing local Bible Society branches.

Although Thomson found it suitable to settle in Montreal because of his contacts there, considerable upheaval remained in Lower Canada where he encountered a number of the rebellion's effects. Burned down villages and sentry posts were not uncommon and at one point a rather excitable soldier stopped him and his companions, and insisted they explain their travels to his commanding officer:

At 21 miles from Montreal we reached the town of Eustache, where we saw the effects of war and rebellion in burnt down houses, and here we perceived also proofs of the commotion state of this country at the present time, in observing the bands of soldiers stationed here, and in full military vigilance. We passed the sentinels and barracks, and nobody said anything to us; but lo and behold, when we had got 3 miles beyond, a sleigh flew past us like an arrow, and then stood right across our path, out of which issued a soldier gun bayonet and all, and ordered us to stop and return to the village. We thought this hard, and endeavored to show the soldier that we were loyal men and no spies nor rebels; and what is the matter, said we, and what have we done? The soldier nobly replied, "I know nothing of your matter, I am only a private, and have orders to bring you back."¹⁸

The episode made clear to the travellers that the rebellion was still being felt. The movement of people and goods were still checked, and for Thomson, whose work depended on his travel to outlying towns, this at times impeded his movement in the province.

The difficulties faced because of the militarism in Lower Canada not only affected his travel but also local Bible Society meetings. At Odelltown, Bible meetings were cancelled because of the tension surrounding the popular uprisings there. "I found the resident Wesleyan missionary of the place absent on my arrival there, and this with the military state of things, and

¹⁸ Thomson to Brandram 77, 6 January 1839. For an account of the fighting at St. Eustache in 1837, see Schull, *Rebellion*, 103-122.

some other hindrances at that precise time induced me to coincide with the advice of some friends that met with, to defer the Bible meeting I had contemplated until some other more favourable time.”¹⁹ In spite of the concerns about militarism and unrest because of the rebellion, Thomson continued to tour the Canadas to gauge the need for bibles in the colonies and expand the Bible Society’s reach. Critical to his work was establishing branch societies throughout British North America that would provide a sustained presence for the organization.

Thomson had repeated success in establishing local Bible Society branches wherever he travelled. The formation of the Society at Cornwall offers a glimpse into the process by which an auxiliary was established on 3 January 1839. Thomson travelled to Cornwall with a resident who introduced him to local ministers. He made explicit mention in his letters to Brandram of the local clergymen, both the Scotch minister as well as the Anglican clergyman, as necessary to forming a local branch. The support of local churches appears to have been a pre-requisite for any attempt at establishing a branch in a particular location. Also necessary was the support of other local leaders “who might be of service in our Bible cause.”²⁰ In the case of Cornwall, the Colonel George Philpotts was singled out as an important figure to the establishment of a local branch. Philpotts was a local engineer in Cornwall at the time who had received instructions from Lord Durham to survey the St. Lawrence waterways with a view to improving navigation, and he eventually recommended an extensive network of canals be built to improve military communication and commercial trade.²¹ He was already involved in the work of the Bible

¹⁹ Thomson to Brandram no 78, 31 January 1839

²⁰ Thomson to Brandram no 78, 31 January 1839

²¹ Gilbert Norman Tucker, *The Canadian Commercial Revolution, 1845-1851* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), 29. See also *Appendix to Journal of the House of Assembly of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Upper Canada House of Assembly, 1838), 75-82

Society, serving as a Vice-President of the Toronto Bible Society before Thomson worked with him to establish the branch at Cornwall. Although his brother Henry was a rather prominent figure in the Church of England as Bishop of Exeter, this connection likely did little for his association with the BFBS, as Henry was a deeply conservative and controversial bishop in Britain who was much more aligned with Britain's High Churchmen than evangelicals.²² Nonetheless, Colonel Phillpotts was a prominent citizen whose involvement in the branch at Cornwall would help garner support for its work there.

The Cornwall branch was unique in its origins because of its close proximity to the military tension that arose from the rebellion. Thomson wrote to Brandram that, "the whole of this country at present is in a military attitude, and drilling bodies and posted sentinels are to be seen here and there in all directions. But Cornwall and other frontier spots are filled with military men and things. The state of matters was of course unfavourable to the establishment of a Bible Society," no doubt because of the tensions and the accompanying suspicion of any gatherings of people. Nonetheless, the meeting was held "in a private way," and three of four local colonels became office-bearers in the local auxiliary. The fourth colonel led the Glengarry regiment, was a practicing Catholic and not among those meeting to establish the branch.²³ Allan Greer has observed that "rural patriots in the District of Montreal began to regard as an enemy any JP or militia officer who kept a commission from the government, and... this attitude eventually led to a major upheaval in governance."²⁴ Where these types of meetings might have been widely advertised in other communities, the sense of rebellion and political unrest led to more cautious

²² Trevor Beeson, *The Bishops* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 211-212.

²³ Thomson to Brandram, 31 January 1839.

²⁴ Allan Greer, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 151.

and secretive meetings at times, especially because of the common involvement of British military men in the proceedings.

As a contrast to quiet and almost secretive nature of the Cornwall branch's formation, the creation of the First Nations branch at River Credit saw the entire community attend a meeting at which a speech delivered by Thomson was translated during by a local indigenous leader, the Reverend Peter Jones, who had gained earlier fame for translating the bible into the Chippeway language.²⁵ The speech underscored the importance of the wide distribution of bibles in the world, and laid out the Bible Society's plan to accomplish that end. Thomson made comparisons to indigenous peoples that he met in the West Indies before coming to Canada, in order that the community might have some sense of their connection to the broader global initiative that he represented. Thomson remarked that the Chippeway's Bible Society at the Credit Mission represented what he presumed to be the first Bible Society formed among the aborigines of North America. He recorded the names of the office bearers and subscribers along with the amounts that were given to the Bible Cause. He took special care to record the Chippewayan name alongside the English alias that some of the aboriginal leaders used, which was both a matter of respect and an effort to recognize their dignity. The lists of subscribers published in the Bible Society annual reports would be read by those subscribers in the future, and Thomson recognized the honour that seeing their names in the reports would afford these leaders and urged the Society in London to make that gesture. There may have also been an advantage to the Bible

²⁵ For the role of Peter Jones in the River Credit mission, see Donald B. Smith, *Sacred Feathers: the Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

Society in London publishing them to use the foreign and exotic nature of the names to advance the perception of its work as being international and operating in foreign lands.²⁶

The formation of local Bible societies, and indeed the participation in them by community members, was often shaped by the seasons and the times in which such meetings were planned. In the warmer months of late spring through to the autumn, Thomson encountered numerous scenarios where Bible meetings were conflicting with the work in the fields, owing to the long days and to the demands of planting or harvesting. At a place called Gay's River, Thomson found that "we had but a very small assembly. The reason was obvious, the people were busy in a more than common degree in their fields with the hay crop. This same full occupation of the Farmers at the period I found to interfere with our Bible operations a good deal in other places as I moved along."²⁷ Thomson recognized that the seasons would have a large impact on the people's availability to attend meetings, but remained committed to continue his travelling and visitations "both in season and out of season."²⁸

Often at the formation of Bible Society auxiliaries, the leading figures in government presided over official meetings and expressed their support for the BFBS work. At Charlottetown on Prince Edward Island, the Governor Sir Charles Fitzroy presided over the meeting of the Bible Society auxiliary. On the island there was also a Ladies' Bible Society of which the Governor's wife Lady Mary Fitzroy was Patroness, and actively involved in the work of the Society itself.²⁹ The convention for elite members of colonial society was common throughout the nineteenth century in British North America. It lent prestige to the local Society and

²⁶ Thomson to Brandram, Chippeway Mission, River Credit, Upper Canada, 10th May 1839

²⁷ Thomson to Brandram, 97 29 September 1840

²⁸ Thomson to Brandram, 29 September 1840

²⁹ Thomson to Brandram, 29 September 1840

reaffirmed the authority with which the Bible Society sought to encourage its mission. This created a connection between colonial settlement and the benevolent societies that expanded alongside it, and affirms the role that benevolent societies played in Britain's colonialism.³⁰

Establishing a Distribution Network Through Depositories

With the roots of Bible distribution and translation firmly planted by way of local auxiliaries, the committees of the new societies came to understand the full weight and scope of mass distribution. In the shadow of such a mountainous task, cooperation between the leaders of local branches and the agents working for them was paramount, as was the expansion of the Bible Society's reach in British North America. To that end, Thomson established what would become the bedrock of Canada's Bible enterprise for the rest of the nineteenth century, the supply of bibles and the distribution networks that carried them. Recognizing the opportunities for expansion of the Bible Society's work in British North America, Thomson undertook extensive travels to promote cooperation between auxiliaries that had established themselves, independent of each other, directly under the oversight of the Parent Society in London. Seeing the need for continuity amongst the branches, consistency in policies, and coordination of Bible distribution, Thomson encouraged the practice of having new branches become directly associated with an urban auxiliary. The clearest case of this was in the autumn of 1839 when Thomson visited the Bible Society auxiliary in Toronto. At a meeting of the auxiliary's

³⁰ For cases in which colonization and religion are discussed together, see Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Apollos, 1990) and John Darwin *The Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 2012). Darwin is especially concerned with the contested elements of a colonial spirit and the local contingencies that shaped colonial expansion and its religious motivations.

Committee on 21 September, Thomson urged the leaders to shift their focus to the broader field of Upper Canada, and he wrote to Brandram that, “our friends finally fixed and arranged regarding the new name and a new extent of their Society. It is to be, and now is, the Upper Canada Bible Society, and embraces all the Province, except some portions lying on the Eastern boundaries, and which may be more advantageously joined to the Montreal Society.”³¹ Thomson urged the auxiliary to oversee the work in the entire province in order that they might have a much broader and more ambitious scope to their work. By coordinating under a central auxiliary, the BFBS’s work in Upper Canada could be expanded more rapidly.

Once the Upper Canada Bible Society was established, there was a new sense of opportunity at what could be accomplished by the Society. The Committee set about to hire a travelling agent whose task would be to call upon all of the local branches which were associated under the leadership of the newly formed UCBS, ensuring that the necessary bibles were being supplied and that the work of the Society was being carried on in each of these locals. The Committee called on the Reverend James Richardson to serve as travelling agent, setting a salary of £150 for his work.³² Richardson was a staunch evangelical Methodist who in 1833 joined a number of his fellow churchmen in remaining separate from a union with English Wesleyan Methodist.³³ His concerns about the conservatism of the Wesleyan Methodists, the decision to accept government funding, and their connections with the Church of England encouraged him to join the Episcopal Methodists who after 1833 remained independent from the Wesleyans. He

³¹ Thomson to Brandram, 8 Montreal 15 November 1839.

³² Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1.

³³ See G. S. French, “RICHARDSON, JAMES (1791-1875),” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/richardson_james_1791_1875_10E.html.

eventually served as bishop from 1858 until 1875.³⁴ Richardson was well suited to his role as a travelling agent for the BFBS auxiliary in Upper Canada, a role that fit his evangelical zeal and his commitment to voluntarism.³⁵ In spite of these differences within Methodism, there was not the resistance towards the Bible Society that had been exhibited by leaders of the Anglican communion who sought to protect their Church's institutional influence in Canada.

Having spurred local elite's enthusiasm to participate in the BFBS's work and encouraged the expansion of auxiliaries and their branches, Thomson sensed a growing assurance in the progress and success of the BFBS's enterprise. Thomson heard at the meeting of the Bible Society at Sandwich of the desire to place a bible in every house in the province. This echoed the famed ambitions that were stated some years earlier by the American Bible Society (ABS). Paul Gutjahr outlines the efforts undertaken by the ABS's Board of Managers in 1829 to "provide a bible into every household in the United States within two years." He cites the Society's Annual Report, which declared "A Bible to every household, a Bible to every household – must be the motto of each [auxiliary] Society, and must be sounded through all our borders, until every soul in the whole land has access to this fountain of life. And this supply of the Bible is not to be furnished for this year only, but continually."³⁶ This became known as the

³⁴ Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996). For more on the Methodist Union in 1833, see Todd Webb, *Transatlantic Methodists: British Wesleyanism and the Formation of an Evangelical Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ontario and Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 61-68. On Richardson's disagreement with Egerton Ryerson regarding the Methodist Union, see Goldwin French, *Parsons and Politics: The role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780-1855* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962), 151-153.

³⁵ G. S. French, "Richardson, James (1791-1875)," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, accessed November 24, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/richardson_james_1791_1875_10E.html.

³⁶ Paul Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 19.

“General Supply” in the United States, and it fuelled the fervor for bible distribution there in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In Canada, this rhetoric of a “General Supply” was already in use when Thomson first arrived there. In his travels in 1830, Thomson relayed an account of a Montreal meeting at which a family had recounted its commitment to distribute a bible to each family within their district in that coming year, a pledge it lived up to and set out to accomplish in an adjacent district in the following year. Its explicit goal of placing a bible in every home in Quebec gave the MABS a defined goal but also represented the extraordinary zeal and ambition of the bible enterprise there. Thomson was excited at this prospect and was glad to see the ambitions growing towards such progress in Canada.

Thomson immediately recognized the need for bibles in Canada. In his first letter to Brandram upon his arrival in Montreal, Thomson outlined his concerns with the supply of bibles in British North America and the challenges that were faced by importing the books. Thomson commented that, “I understand this society has suffered a lack of Bibles on the spot where they were immediately wanted.” He noticed that to fulfill the demand for bibles, local leaders had applied to the American Bible Society for shipments to bibles because it was “near at hand.” The American Bible Society demonstrated its willingness to fill these orders. Thomson learned that Canadians looked to New York for help not only because there was a ready supply close by, but also “from a fear of being burdensome to you through requesting supplies which they could not well pay, and which they were loath to ask you to put down as grants.”³⁷ There was a concern

³⁷ Thomson to Brandram, 20 December 1838

that somehow the burden would be greater on the London Society than on that in New York City.

The ever-present concern for Thomson in his efforts to expand the Bible enterprise in Canada was the lack of supply. In his first reflections on the state of Bible distribution in Canada in 1830, he stated that "Bibles and Testaments will be greatly wanted for the schools, and hence heavy demands will be made on your auxiliaries in Quebec and Montreal, and I would suggest the propriety of your meeting these demands by placing more than common supplies of this class of Bibles and Testaments within their reach.... It were a pity notwithstanding that members should return from the depository unsupplied and with heavy hearts, having no other place to look to. Such discouragements are feared and I am sure you will readily interpose to prevent them. What I have said of Quebec and Montreal, applies also to Upper Canada of which your two auxiliaries are York and Kingston."³⁸ Thomson knew that Bible Society branches would struggle to continue their work if there was a sustained shortage of scriptures. The threat of a lack of scriptures undermined the entire enterprise. The ideological support for Bible distribution would not last long if there was a persistent lack of scriptures to make that vision a reality. Structural foundations had to be put into place in order to sustain the enthusiasm and fervour that characterized the committees and the members of local bible auxiliaries in British North America.

Perhaps the most significant decision that Thomson made regarding Canadian Bible distribution was to establish two major hubs, one at Montreal and one at York. Thomson recognized the strategic importance of Montreal as both a shipping port that provided regular

³⁸ Thomson to Brandram, 31 August 1830

access to London but also a place from which many branch societies could order their own supply of bibles with some assurance of delivery. Montreal became the best option for a central depository, but it was in no way perfect. The seasonal challenges posed by Canadian winters certainly did not privilege Montreal over any other port city, and the winter ice on the St. Lawrence required the timely and efficient shipment of books. Although a long winter waiting at the port would not lead to bibles perishing or spoiling like other more sensitive goods, there was still a sense of urgency because of the importance infused in the making of a ready supply of the books year round. "You will also oblige by urging on our friends at home the great importance of an early shipment, as it saves us considerable expense. Twice before they have been too late: once the books had to remain all winter at Montreal; and another time, they had to be got here by sleighs from Kingston."³⁹ By 1839, a robust shipping operation had been established between Montreal and Kingston making regular journeys between the two settlements.

Although the harsh realities of winter made the shipment of books to major ports impossible, the cold also brought some relief in the movement of goods overland. Thomson travelled throughout British North America in every season, and concluded that the frozen conditions actually made the winter the best month in which to travel. "The wintertime is the most advantageous and the favorite season for travelling here. It is then that the frost paves the otherwise bad roads, and the snow coming afterwards smooths them into a kind of railway."

Winter shipping was so much better for moving goods that some hauling was deliberately

³⁹ Thomson to Brandram no. 76, 20 December 1838. For the development of shipping on the St. Lawrence and overland travel from the river to more remote locations, see Tulchinsky, *The River Barons*, 40.

delayed until roads were frozen, which made the arrival of bibles before the closing of the St. Lawrence all the more important to facilitate overland distribution.⁴⁰

In response to the lack of bibles and the problems faced in shipping from Britain, Thomson proposed that, “there should be a depot of Bibles in this city, sufficiently ample to prevent a lack at any time.”⁴¹ To stock the depository, Thomson listed in detail the quantity of each style and edition to be sent directly to Montreal by the Bible Society in London. Thomson listed the language of the book, the size of type, the size of the book, and the binding to be used on each book. In total, Thomson ordered “1800 English Bibles, 350 French Bibles, 100 Gaelic, 50 German Bibles, all full Bibles.” Books containing only the New Testament numbered 650 in English, 300 French, 50 English and French in parallel columns, 150 Gaelic, 50 German. Finally Thomson requested five “Scriptures for the Blind.”⁴² Thomson recognized the dangers associated with shipping goods across the Atlantic and requested that the books be divided into two separate cases to be shipped on two different ships. “Should the whole be sent out in one vessel,” he explained, “and that vessel be lost, we should lose a good part of the season before we could replace them.”⁴³ Although the financial loss in such an event would have been significant, Thomson cites the amount of time necessary to replace them as the factor that required such diligence, reflecting the urgency with which he desired to establish and maintain a steady supply of bibles in the province.

⁴⁰ For the development of roads in Upper and Lower Canada, see G. P. deT. Glazebrook, *A History of Transportation in Canada*, Volume I, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1938), 118-120, 131-33.

⁴¹ Thomson to Brandram no. 76, 20 December 1838

⁴² Thomson to Brandram no. 76, 20 December 1838

⁴³ Thomson to Brandram no. 76, 20 December 1838

Shipping was a critical aspect of general commerce in British North America and important to Bible distribution as well. The ability for the Bible Society to rely upon a steady supply of scriptures was essential to the success of its enterprise. It is in the area of shipping and logistics that the Bible Society's use of existing trade networks set itself apart from other missionary and religious organizations in the distribution of religious literature. The Bible Society's leadership consisted of leading merchants, businessmen, and entrepreneurs who had made their fortunes in trading goods. Their experiences with the complexities of shipping routes, the unaccommodating seasonal barriers of shipping, and the knowledge of methods allowed the Society to move bibles throughout British North America with efficiency and whatever reliability could be had in this time. In this period, there was still no established postal or shipping service, and the movement of goods often relied on private businesses to take the goods with them.⁴⁴ The close proximity of the Bible Society's leaders to well-established business and trade networks provided them an advantage in their enterprise.

The shipment of bibles was no certainty, and orders could be lost or shipwrecked. Some years earlier, a donation of bibles made to the Port Hope Branch Society "never reached its destination but has been lost... it was unanimously resolved by the Committee that another similar donation be forthwith supplied from the depository of the York Society to the Port Hope Branch."⁴⁵ There was, therefore, a precedent for Thomson's cautions about shipping bibles and ensuring that inventory would be moved with precautionary measures and that bibles would be kept with some form of insurance. Costs associated with the movement of books would have had

⁴⁴ Douglass McCalla describes a "postal revolution" beginning in 1851 that transformed the movement of goods, before which time services were limited and expensive. See McCalla, *Consumers in the Bush: Shopping in Rural Upper Canada* (McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2015), 126.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1.

to assume the very real risks that came with shipments, and factored into the business of the Bible trade.

In spite of his best efforts, Thomson consistently struggled to ensure the timely and accurate delivery of books to North America from the London Committee. In a letter dated 23 December 1839, Thomson argued that Brandram had overlooked his order and had caused the Montreal auxiliary to spend the winter without the shipment of books on hand. He had previously emphasized the need for the Bible Society's promptness given the way that the "St. Lawrence navigation closes for the season," but to no avail: "The St. Lawrence [is] shut up; nor will it break up its ice for any of us, not even for the Bible."⁴⁶ Until the depositories were well established and comprised a substantial inventory, the auxiliaries and branches were dependent upon the timely shipping of bibles from Britain.

Shipping bibles overseas was not the only task required in obtaining the books, and Thomson knew first-hand the troubles of moving goods overland to smaller communities. During his travels throughout British North America, he wrote often of the shaking that occurred in the carriages that took him from place to place. After the long winter freeze, the roads that had hardened into, in the summer heat, ebbs and flows amidst the rotting stumps and unrelenting roots that shook its rider to the core. In spite of this, the only mention of the poor roads was to reflect on his own discomfort, one that he accepted as a sacrifice for the sake of the bible enterprise. Thomson never saw the poor roads as something that might prohibit the movement of bibles. Instead, the seasons had their rhythm and the traders and businessmen of British North America negotiated them as best they could as part of their business. Thomson's insistence to

⁴⁶ Thomson to Brandram, 23 December 1839.

London was not that it supported a road-building campaign, but he urged the committee to operate from London with the seasonal constraints in mind. Thus, the shipments of bibles would be able to be distributed if they were able to navigate the St. Lawrence before the annual cessation caused by ice.

Further complicating the shipment of bibles to Canada from Britain was the practice of sending correspondence and goods through New York, a route that, at times, assured the quickest and most reliable delivery. There was a long-standing concern about duties paid on bibles coming into the British colonies through the United States. Thomson outlines that the duty to be paid on bibles from New York was thirty percent.⁴⁷ Some time before Thomson's arrival in North America, a shipment was held up at Montreal until duty was paid. Various heads of government and officers were petitioned in order to see if the duties could be dismissed and the shipment released. The records of the Bible Society in Toronto reveal that the final decision by the American authorities was that no relief was to be given and that the duty must be paid. This effectively closed off the trade route between Britain and Upper Canada through New York.⁴⁸

Thomson was aware of the booming market for bibles and religious literature in the United States, and used examples of particular bibles published in New York by the American Bible Society to explain what bibles were desired in British North America. Thomson wrote requesting bibles with pages for family records “after the American fashion,” and that “you will see how this is done in the large American Bibles in your library, for I suppose you have copies of these, as well as all of the American editions of the scriptures.”⁴⁹ The border with the United

⁴⁷ Thomson to Brandram, 20 December 1838

⁴⁸ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) MG17F1 vol. 1.

⁴⁹ Thomson to Brandram, 20 December 1838.

States had always been porous to print materials, and the presence of American books north of the border was common. For most Canadians, however, there was no reliable and consistent supply of bibles from the United States. Scott McLaren has examined the movement of books from the Methodist Book Concern in New York City to Upper Canada, and finds that bibles were often a part of the shipments made to Toronto.⁵⁰ These shipments, however, did not constitute a regular supply of bibles that could be relied upon to supply the needs of all Christian homes in the province. Legal restrictions on reprints of the Authorized Version printed in the United States played a major role in restricting this channel for bibles, as the copyright for the version in Canada remained under the control of the Crown, and bibles in British North America were subject to these restrictions.

Thomson not only wanted an ample supply of bibles, but a supply of inexpensive bibles, and he wrote repeatedly to Brandram urging the Bible Society executive to publish cheaper editions. Although some cheaper editions had been issued, the reductions that had been implemented in the price did not satisfy Thomson. Having written in letters, in December 1838 and in February 1839, about the wide demand for a lower-priced Bible in the Canadas, Thomson wrote again in December 1839 acknowledging that prices had been lowered by the Committee, but that further reductions could be made. Thomson laid those reductions out explicitly: “What is wanted is a Nonpareil Bible say on 3rd or 4th class paper, or 5th or 6th. Is there are such numbers of tolerable paper, so that its original price may be a great deal lower still than your lowest? There might also be a Bible of another size or two on paper of the same sort. I humbly think you

⁵⁰ Scott McLaren, “Books for the Instruction of the Nations: Shared Methodist Print Culture in Upper Canada and the Mid-Atlantic States, 1789-1851,” unpublished dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011.

should reconsider this subject, and hope you will do so, and come down at once as low as you possibly, with any propriety, can, in the price of at least one of your Bibles, and one of your Testaments.”⁵¹ Thomson remained convinced that in order for the BFBS to fulfil its role in the best manner possible, it would have to supply bibles as cheaply as possible.

Part of the problem in obtaining the cheapest bibles was the reality that the British and Foreign Bible Society was not a patented printer for the Authorized Version, and thus had to obtain the printed sheets of its bibles from one of the university presses at Oxford or Cambridge or the King’s Printer. In March 1841, Thomson laid this problem out in a letter to Brandram urging the Bible Society to consider an application to parliament for the privilege of printing the Authorized Version. “But, what is to be done, you will say. The right is in the hands of the three printers, and they cannot lawfully be deprived of it. No certainly: but the door is not shut for all that. The right might be bought up by the Government, and this would be a fine opportunity, for the Parliament say, to give a noble contribution to the Bible Society: and as the measure, if introduced into Parliament, would most probably be popular, I have little doubt that it would be accorded.” Thomson called on the BFBS to seek out a place among the Patentees as a fourth printer with the sole purpose of printing cheap and simple editions of the King James Version. Thomson encouraged the Bible Society leaders to apply to the Crown on the subject of extending privilege to the BFBS as a fourth printer. He was aware of the possibility that his suggestions might upset the Bible market and that the three other printers might feel threatened by the additional competition from another printer. He believed, however, that if the BFBS limited its printing bibles “only on inferior papers and with issuing it only in plain bindings... the three

⁵¹ Thomson to Brandram, 21 December 1839.

Patentees would probably be satisfied.” Thomson made the appeal in the conviction that the need for bibles among settlers in British North America would be recognized by the Crown and the limitations upon its printing be found acceptable by the three Patentees.

But the premise on which Thomson made the claim for BFBS privilege was drastic and would have presented a major conundrum for the BFBS at the time of Thomson's writing. Thomson recognized that in order to make the appeal as a fourth privileged printer, the BFBS would have to eschew much of the Bible market that was already showing, in its variety of styles, a response to consumer tastes. His appeal to the task of only distributing cheap bibles might be deliberately naïve here, presenting the idealism of making the bible universally available through cheap and affordable distribution as a morally superior one to the distribution of nicer bibles. He appealed to the very moral identification that the BFBS made for itself in pursuing the distribution of cheap bibles. The BFBS was faced with a conundrum as a result: abandon the more expensive but more lucrative market of stylish and fashionable bibles in order to exclusively focus on making the bible the cheapest possible. Questions must have been raised about the integrity of the Book, the minimum standards that should be maintained by any printer and the dangers of becoming so exclusive in their audience or market. But questions must have also been asked about the place that ornate bibles had in their own catalogue and in their mission of universal Bible availability. No answer is recorded from the Bible Society, and Thomson made no further mention of the issue. Thomson's suggestion to apply as a patent-holder may have been legally or practically impossible, or one that the Bible Society was unwilling to consider because of the restrictions it would impose. Nonetheless, Thomson's appeal demonstrates his commitment to providing cheap bibles in British North America and his sense of the purpose and mandate of the British and Foreign Bible Society itself.

The BFBS's domestic ambition for placing bibles in every home was accompanied by a zeal for its worldwide cause of Bible distribution. The subscriptions and donations obtained ensured that the growth of the Bible Society in Canada was sustainable. Thomson wrote of a meeting of the Upper Canada Bible Society of its Committee's plans to ensure "the employment of an agent who should be constantly occupied in visiting all the branch societies within their sphere, in forming new ones, and in making sure that the word of God did come into every home on the one hand, and that on the other something should be got from every house towards the grand general purpose of sending the Bible to all nations and tongues over the world."⁵² The Bible enterprise that emerged during Thomson's tenure in British North America became a powerful force in Canadian society in part because of its model of selling bibles and soliciting donations to ensure the viability of its expansion.

The connection between local societies and the global project of bible distribution added an altruistic note to the appeals of the Bible Society. Although the development of a strong domestic bible enterprise was crucial, the appeals for subscriptions to support it and to participate in it were often made with an emphasis on the efforts being undertaken globally to distribute scriptures. By appealing to the global efforts of "sending the Bible to all nations and tongues over the world," the discourse of missions emphasized the benevolence of the enterprise rather than its business operations. If there was suspicion that the bible enterprise was self-serving by focusing on the needs of Canadians at home, the ability to display the vast work of the BFBS Society overseas added another dimension to the BFBS Society's appeal.⁵³

⁵² Thomson to Brandram, 15 November 1839.

⁵³ For examples of the global impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the organization's annual reports compiled anecdotes of the work from around the world, portraying the BFBSs significance in the global missions.

For an agent of the Bible Society, the development of schools was an important aspect to be considered because of the association to literacy and the demand for bibles. Thomson wrote to London that more than 500 schools had been developed in a year, and that “Bibles and Testaments will be greatly wanted for the schools, and hence heavy demands will be made on your auxiliaries in Quebec and Montreal, and I would suggest the propriety of your meeting these demands by placing more than common supplies of this class of Bibles and Testaments within their reach.”⁵⁴ Thomson encouraged the London Society to meet the needs of these schools because of its noble aim, evoking the image associated with the Bible Society’s legend about Mary Jones being turned away empty-handed after hiking for miles over Welsh mountains to obtain a bible. He wrote that “it were a pity notwithstanding that members should return from the depository unsupplied and with heavy hearts, having no other place to look. Such discouragements are feared and I am sure you will readily interpose to prevent them.”⁵⁵

Because of the extent of the BFBS’s growth in smaller settlements and rural regions, the BFBS bibles were among the most common types of bibles to be read in Canada. The strict policies of including “no note or comment” within the BFBS’s bibles meant that most scriptures obtained in British North America in the middle of the nineteenth century were simply the Authorized Version without any commentary included within the binding. Other bibles could be obtained in British North America whether it was through the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), through small local booksellers, through the gifting by missionaries or others who had brought bibles with them on their travels into the colonies. None

For examples, see *The Thirty-Fourth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1838).

⁵⁴ Thomson to Brandram 31 August 1830.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

of these sources in this era rivalled the coordination of distribution nor anything close to the volume that the Bible Society accomplished by the middle of the century.

Despite the very small variety in the types of bibles that could be obtained, there was already a sense of taste and demand for particular types of bibles by the early 1840s. Thomson wrote to Brandram outlining Montreal Bible Society's desire for particular styles and types of bibles, requesting that the Bible Society in London publish them with "a few blank leaves of good writing paper between the Bible and Testament in the English 4^{to} bibles for "family record" with these two words printed at top." Thomson cited the American bibles in the BFBS library as an example of the style desired. "There can be no objection to the doing of this I think, and it would make the book more valued."⁵⁶ The ability for families to have such pages bound into their bibles had found a favourable reception already from those in Montreal who wished that such a provision would be made by the Bible Society in its bibles.

In spite of his belief otherwise, the Committee refused to include such pages. This was a particularly strict reading of the BFBS's Constitutional limitations on the inclusion of any "note or comment." A little over three years later, Thomson attempted once again to have such pages bound in the BFBS bibles, but this time accepting that if no text could be printed on those pages, that they could remain blank, but fulfil the same purpose. "I have often also received another petition to be mentioned to you, namely, that you would bind a few Blank Leaves in all your Quarto Bibles, between the Old and New Testaments. These Leaves would enhance the value of this Family Bible to every family. This subject was noticed to you some two or three years ago, requesting that the words "Family Register" might be printed at the head of each page. You

⁵⁶ Thomson to Brandram, 20 December 1838.

objected to this. The present Petition has reference on to [sic] Blank Leaves without any printing.”⁵⁷ This too was rejected, to Thomson’s dismay: “The Blank Leaves I see you cannot give us through the hindrance of your peculiar position.”⁵⁸ Although there was a desire for more variety in the types of bibles in Canada, the BFBS was remarkably strict in upholding its policy of adding no material whatsoever within the bound copies it published.

These strict regulations provide some insight into the nature of the Bible trade in British North America at this point. Although the Authorized Version was the same text that was read in the United Kingdom, the United States and elsewhere, the limited access in British North America to other varieties of bibles, those with notes and comments, or those that were bound in ways that were not distributed by the Bible Society, was a rarity.⁵⁹ This was a unique context in the North American colonies that continued after Confederation, when Canadians continued to obtain their bibles mostly from Britain and still mostly from the Bible Society. Although the catalogue expanded over time and the growth of other retailers began to diminish its dominant position, the Bible Society remained the single largest distributor of bibles into the twentieth century.

The material that was included in bibles was of a concern to the BFBS, but the rules were also extended to bibles translated into other languages that also could not have any notes or commentary inserted if they were to be distributed by the Bible Society. Bibles in foreign

⁵⁷ Thomson to Brandram, 19 February 1842

⁵⁸ Thomson to Brandram, 27 May 1842

⁵⁹ Comparisons with other colonies would be fruitful, and Australia stands out as a prime candidate, but little has been done on the history of bibles and Bible distribution in Australia. A few mentions of the British and Foreign Bible Society’s work in its own institutional histories exist, but no full length study of its own. See George Brown, *The history of the British and foreign Bible society, from 1804 to 1854*, Volume 1, London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1859, 261.

languages were in popular demand in British North America, and Thomson sought to ensure that bibles in many European languages were made available. When Thomson visited West Glengarry, he encountered the predominant use of the Gaelic language of Scottish immigrants. “Both in these Indian Lands, and in all the county of Glengarry, as well as in many other places in this neighborhood, the Gaelic language is extensively spoken. Of those using this tongue a good many are Catholics, and they too much resemble Catholics who are the Romans elsewhere. We hope however to get the Bible more or less introduced among them, and our local societies, as I said before, will most likely be greatly useful in this way. It was the West Glengarry Bible Society that we met on this occasion; and we endeavored to animate it to new exertions.”⁶⁰ Thomson often encountered groups whose first language was not English and sought to ensure that bibles in their native tongues were made available to them.

Thomson recognized the need for expanding the reach of the Bible Society and improving on its ability to distribute bibles widely. He wrote that the civil commotions of the rebellions were awakening the attention of French Catholics and “opening their minds in some degree to inquiry.” In light of these changes, he called for the BFBS Committee in London to provide two colporteurs, or in his terms “gens d’armes, or rather gens de paix,” to distribute bibles among the French population in Lower Canada.⁶¹ Colportage became an important way for the Bible Society to obtain donations and to distribute Bibles, and often the “Parent Society” in London funded the employment of colporteurs.⁶²

⁶⁰ Thomson to Brandram,, 6 January 1839

⁶¹ Thomson to Brandram, 31 January 1839.

⁶² The BFBS often funded colporteurs and Biblewomen from its own funds designated for colportage around the world. Although colportage were often selected by local auxiliaries, the BFBS executive in London held the purse-strings and could determine which endeavours should be financed and for how long. See Thomson’s letter to

Debates about whether or not bibles ought to be distributed without any note or comment were behind some of the strife between the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and the BFBS. Another was the concern that some Anglicans had about supporting the BFBS to the detriment of the Society of the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. These concerns were salient as Thomson toured British North America and recognized the tension between Protestant denominations. In Nova Scotia, Thomson saw the division first-hand. The Church of England ministers were “all of them friendly to us,” he wrote, “but only a few of them gave us their active assistance, the major portion of them adhere closely to the Christian Knowledge Society, and see it to be their duty to give all the means they can afford, and all their active labours to that institution.”⁶³ Concerns about impinging upon the Church of England’s work through the SPCK had driven John Strachan to denounce the BFBS in 1832 in Upper Canada, and these issues remained contentious for Thomson.

After a separate but similar encounter, Thomson relayed thinly veiled frustration to Brandram at the continued unwillingness of the Anglican Church to support the work of the Bible Society in its mission. Although many ministers from numerous denominations supported the BFBS, Thomson remarked that “there were only two representatives wanting. One of these from the body that honours the Scriptures the least, or rather tramples upon them, and the other from that which honours them the most.” Referring to the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England respectively, Thomson was deeply frustrated with the Anglicans’ lack of support. “[T]here was little wonder that the absence of the former of these bodies, but it is most

Brandram numbered 76 from Montreal, sent on 20 December 1838 for a description of Thomson’s request for colporteurs from Europe. More information on colportage and Biblewomen is found in chapter 5 of this dissertation.
⁶³ Thomson to Brandram, 3 August 1840.

wonderful, and I may say most inconsistent, that a Bible Meeting should not have a ministerial representative from a church in which the Scriptures are more read in public than in any other in all Christendom. I hope both these churches noticed will be converted to the right way in due time.⁶⁴ Thomson wrote to Brandram from Halifax in the summer of 1840 affirming this opinion, stating that “the Church of England which honours the Scriptures so much in the public reading of them should always be the most prominent in the Bible cause.”⁶⁵ He was referring to what he felt were two inconsistent practices: one of publically reading scriptures in services, but another refusing to support the distribution of bibles by the BFBS, a practice he found inconsistent and damaging to the Bible Society’s work. Richard Vaudry describes a number of Anglican bishops, including Jacob Mountain, who “shared an antipathy towards evangelicalism,” the voluntary associations of which represented “a hydra head that threatens us.” Among them was the Bible Society, which “will create a very extensive influence for the Dissenters.”⁶⁶ Well into the 1840s, Anglican leaders in Canada continued to view the BFBS with antagonism, undermining to some degree the breadth of the consensus support for its distribution enterprise.

Conclusion

Thomson’s experience highlights the differences within Protestantism that remained in this period. In spite of the growing support for the Bible Society’s distribution enterprise and the formation of new branches throughout British North America, Anglican leaders continued to feel that the Bible Society and the evangelicalism which fuelled it was a threat to its work of social

⁶⁴ Thomson to Brandram, 16 February 1839

⁶⁵ Thomson to Brandram, 3 July 1840

⁶⁶ Richard W. Vaudry, *Anglicans and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003) 86.

redemption through the Church and its programs, liturgy, and its clergymen. Almost ten years after John Strachan had issued his withering attack on Anglicans' support of the Bible Society, decrying the betrayal of the Church of England's own proprietary organizations in disseminating bibles, Thomson encountered similar issues during his agency. Far from a monolithic consensus, English-Canadian Protestantism retained fissures, exemplified by the separation that remained between Methodists over issues of voluntarism and connections with the Church of England. Egerton Ryerson and Wesleyan Methodists had united around a more conservative vision of Methodism, while James Richardson and others remained separate as the Episcopal Methodists who championed the voluntarism and evangelical fervour. In addition, the divisions between Dissenters and Anglicans too showed competing visions among Protestant groups. James Thomson's efforts to include all Protestants in his efforts to expand the BFBS's work in British North America demonstrates the principle that all Protestants should act on their belief in the Bible's importance and participate in the BFBS's efforts to distribute it both within Britain's North American colonies and around the world. In doing so himself, Thomson had an enormous impact on the establishment of a regular Bible distribution enterprise in Canada in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 4: AGENTS AND AUXILIARIES

The BFBS's London Committee demonstrated considerable oversight in establishing the permanent presence of a Bible distribution network, a result of their deploying both John West for a tour of North America's Bible societies and James Thomson as a more permanent agent. In each case, these men were employed by the BFBS in London and acted as their representatives in North America. By the late 1830s, while Thomson was still in North America, Canadian auxiliaries began to employ their own agents to extend the reach of their domestic operations. One such agent was the Reverend James Richardson, who reflected on his service as the Upper Canada Bible Society's agent in his 1853 report: "Who can say exactly as to what has been effected, or what might have been done by other means? Or with the same means applied with more attention, zeal, and labour?" Richardson wrote of the number of Bible meetings held, the numbers of bibles issued, and the amount of money collected, and "the interest for the cause as evinced more or less by the people of the several localities which I visited, and the prospects in regard to them." He outlined the places where he held these meetings and his efforts in promoting the work of the UCBS's branches in distributing bibles and raising funds to support the BFBS in London. His encounters with local branch committees eager to support the BFBS's work and provide bibles in their communities reveal both the zeal for Bible distribution across the province but also the persistent desire to make the Bible available to anyone who wished to receive it. Richardson encapsulated in his report the significance of the more than 2500 miles and the 77 public Bible meetings he held that year: "It has been my endeavour all along, to show that Bible Societies were required here and elsewhere, not so much with the view of supplying the wants of any particular locality, but as the means of equalising the distribution of the Word of

God among all people; and that the singleness of the object with the simplicity of means used, commends it to all christians[sic]. All who believe the Bible to be the Word of the Lord, and that it is the duty and privilege of all to ‘read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it;’ may and should unite in promoting its diffusion both at home and abroad.”¹

Agents like Richardson worked on behalf of BFBS auxiliaries across British North America to expand the Bible Society’s reach by establishing new branches, strengthening existing ones, and preaching in churches throughout the country in order to raise the profile of the BFBS and its enterprise. These auxiliaries oversaw a vast network of branches made up of local committees and members who participated in efforts to distribute bibles and raise subscriptions on behalf of the BFBS. Auxiliaries and the branches under them provided the institutional framework by which the organization was represented in more than a thousand Canadian communities by 1900. The auxiliaries’ reports and the accounts of their traveling agents reveal the way in which the BFBS’s expansion in North America mirrored Britain’s colonial expansion over the continent in the nineteenth century. The BFBS auxiliaries sought to contribute to the moral fabric of new and growing communities by distributing bibles locally and by connecting people to the BFBS’s broader enterprise of global Bible translation and distribution. Specific examples of auxiliaries and their agents reveal the ideals and priorities that underpinned the BFBS’s work in North America in the nineteenth century. Their agents reflected Bible Society leaders’ emphasis on, and self-characterization of, hard work, efficiency, and deft management. The expansion of auxiliaries through their agents reflected broader Canadian colonization. As English-speaking Canadians expanded their settlement in new territories, Bible

¹ *The Eleventh Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1851), 47.

Society leaders asserted their self-proclaimed right to assert the moral standards that they pursued through Bible distribution. The work of agents and the direction of auxiliaries were deeply gendered, where men exclusively filled auxiliaries' leadership roles and agencies. The exception of the Miramichi Auxiliary demonstrates that gendered differences posed no material hindrance to the Bible Society's enterprise, and were the construction of normative expectations placed on public offices.

Auxiliaries and their Agents

Auxiliaries were key to the administrative structure of the British and Foreign Bible Society. They were established throughout England in the early expansion of its work there in the early 1800s. Auxiliaries were the domestic expression of the BFBS's enterprise in Britain, in contrast to the great project of distributing bibles to the world. Leslie Howsam demonstrates that "people in local Bible Auxiliaries found that the international project motivated them to domestic distribution. Many middle-class people seized upon the idea of reaching out to their poor neighbours with printed copies of the scriptures, while simultaneously contributing to the salvation of the heathen, pagan and Roman Catholic souls abroad. They did not ignore the foreign field, but their mission was to save souls among the heathen by indirection, by first 'biblicizing' the British poor."² Auxiliaries formed by well-meaning middle class citizens drove domestic Bible distribution as Britons sought to improve their cities and towns by their efforts.

² Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 35.

Because there was no operation by which the Bible was printed or published in British North America, the BFBS's work there was not a replica of its operations in London, which acted as a Bible wholesaler and publisher. Instead, it was an extension of its network of auxiliaries, so that North American cities and settlements established committees that oversaw local distribution. By 1842, when James Thomson completed his agency in British North America and returned to England, there were seventeen auxiliaries listed in the British and Foreign Bible Society's Annual Report, including one in Newfoundland.³ The auxiliaries generally followed the lines of colonial boundaries of the colony in which its headquarters were located. In New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Upper Canada, the town holding the colony's seat of government determined the auxiliary's name, while Lower Canada had both the Montreal and Quebec auxiliaries.

The establishment of auxiliaries created questions of regional boundaries and jurisdictions, as the lines of an auxiliary's work did not always follow the lines of provincial boundaries. Reflecting on questions of jurisdiction that were raised at the 1904 conference to confederate Canada's auxiliaries into a single Canadian Bible Society, the BFBS's Foreign Secretary John Ritson recalled the case in 1855 in which the Ottawa branch of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society went on its own as an auxiliary. In 1869, the Montreal Auxiliary turned over some of its own branches to the Ottawa Auxiliary in order that those branches might be overseen by a closer auxiliary. Another case was recalled of the London branch beginning as a new auxiliary after carving itself out of the Upper Canada Bible Society.⁴ The historical

³ *The Thirty-Eighth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1842), 36-42.

⁴ Conference Proceedings of the Canadian Bible Society, Cambridge University Library, British and Foreign Bible Society archives, BSA/D2/14/48, 49.

formation of auxiliaries and branches determined the scope of the work done by an auxiliary's agent. In some cases, branches established by the Quebec Auxiliary and the Montreal Auxiliary were in territories that were not clear-cut, and the working of particular geographical regions was a point of negotiation between auxiliaries.

Auxiliaries had an incentive in keeping branches under their administration, because branches' contributions bolstered the numbers auxiliaries reported annually to the BFBS of money raised to be sent to London each year as a remittance. Maintaining the image of progress and growth in the number of branches and in the amount of money contributed was important to the auxiliaries and their committees. The tradition of publishing figures for each auxiliary's performance each year in the BFBS's Annual Reports added a level of competition and rivalry to the funds. Each year, auxiliaries would report some combination of the number of bibles sold, the number ordered from London, the amount of money remitted to the Parent Society, and the number of agents or colporteurs employed that year.⁵ In the second half of the nineteenth century, the BFBS Annual Reports highlighted the Upper Canada Bible Society's success in comparison with other auxiliaries. The description in 1892 read that, "the Upper Canada Auxiliary fairly claims the premier place among the Society's Auxiliaries. Its large contribution is again gladly acknowledged and its fully organized and developing work make it not only an invaluable ally to the Parent Society but a centre of Christian influence in the Dominion."⁶ The enormous number of branches under the UCBS's administration was the key factor in determining its success.

⁵ For an example, see *The Thirty-Ninth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1843), cl-cliii.

⁶ *The Eighty-Eighth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1892), 307.

The system by which branches were established in most Canadian towns and villages became the bedrock of the Bible Society's distribution enterprise, and it allowed the BFBS to become the most dominant seller of bibles in Canada. Committee members and secretaries at each of the North American auxiliaries dealt directly with the BFBS committee in London, ordering bibles, listing requests for particular types of bibles, and providing financial remittances of the money received from Canadian donors. In turn, branches placed their orders for bibles with the central auxiliary in North American cities rather than London, and sent to those auxiliaries the money they received for both the purchase of bibles and any additional funds raised to support the BFBS's work. This system provided regional consistency in BFBS operations within the territory each auxiliary governed, and it also ensured that by maintaining excess stock, auxiliaries could avoid shortages of bibles by filling branches' orders.

Most of the auxiliaries established branches in towns by which their distribution and subscriptions could grow. In order to increase their reach, these auxiliaries employed agents as their travelling representatives. These agents were paid by the auxiliaries to visit towns in surrounding regions. In towns where branches already existed, these agents ensured that their needs were being met and that they were encouraged to continue in their work. Where no branch existed, agents sought out supportive clergymen and laypeople who might form a committee and represent the auxiliary's operations there.

The Upper Canada Bible Society hired James Smart as its first travelling agent in 1836, and Smart continued in that role until the end of 1838. The BFBS's Annual Report stated that in his last year as the auxiliary's agent, he "succeeded in establishing eighteen or twenty new Auxiliaries, Branches, or Associations. Many of these embracing a wide extent of country, with a

thinly scattered population, are not conducted without much personal toil and self-denial.”⁷

James Richardson succeeded Smart as the UCBS’s travelling agent and his salary was made possible by a grant of £100 from the BFBS committee in London. The UCBS report for 1842 stated that its branch societies agreed that “the employment of a Travelling Agent [w]as the most effectual means of carrying into effect the grand object of the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures; in which opinion your Committee fully concur.”⁸

Richardson travelled extensively as the agent for the UCBS. Unlike colporteurs who travelled to sell bibles, Richardson and other agents employed by auxiliaries primarily visited the committees of local branches in order to organize BFBS work in a particular region, rather than visiting individual homes with the intention of selling bibles to those who did not have them. The Upper Canada Bible Society’s annual reports contained Richardson’s published reports in each year. His report for 1848 gives considerable detail about his travels and the work he set out to accomplish in the towns in what would become Ontario, covering more than a dozen pages which listed each place he stopped and a brief description of his encounters there. Typically, in towns with existing BFBS branches, Richardson sought out the leaders of that town and got some update on how the work was going for them. At meetings which local branches organized, he provided Bible Society members a glimpse into what the UCBS was doing in North America and what the BFBS was doing around the world. He collected any sums the local branch made by selling bibles and received money raised by subscription from those who became BFBS members at the meeting.

⁷ *The Thirty-Fourth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1838), xciv.

⁸ *The Second Report of the Upper Upper Canada Bible Society*, (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1842), 17. Library and Archives Canada MG 17F3 vol III.

One of Richardson's chief concerns in evaluating the various branches he visited was the prospect of growth and advancement in the interest of the BFBS. Attendance at Bible meetings, the money received, and any individuals' demonstrable efforts in support of the BFBS were all indicators of the health of a branch. Meetings called by local leaders were at times well attended and the response enthusiastic, but Richardson also noted meetings where the turnout and the response were disappointing. A poorly attended meeting could still be seen in a positive light if those present showed an enthusiastic response, like the meeting held at Woodstock during Richardson's 1852 tour there. That meeting was "pleasant though not numerous ... Should they continue to progress in this manner, which is devoutly to be desired, a blessed influence will be exerted on the adjacent country."⁹ As long as a branch was going in the right direction according to his estimation, Richardson remarked on it positively.

In a reflection on Richardson's life written in 1876 by Albert Carman, the superintendent of the Methodist Church of Canada noted Richardson's hard work and efficiency as a Bible Society agent. Richardson first met Carman during a visit to Grafton in Canada West, with the purpose of establishing a branch of the UCBS there. He wrote that Richardson was "at the time the sole agent of the Upper Canada Bible Society, and his duties required hard work and self-denying toil."¹⁰ The *Bible Society Recorder* measured the impact of Richardson's agency by comparing the success of his work – In 1840, there were 55 branches and by 1852 when Richardson's agency was completed, there were 104 branches. The bibles and testaments issued in that period had increased from 2819 to 13,063.¹¹ Richardson played an enormous role in

⁹ *Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1874).

¹⁰ Albert Carman, *Life of Rev. James Richardson : a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada* (Toronto: J.B. Magurn, 1876).

¹¹ Albert Carman, *Life of Rev. James Richardson : a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada*

expanding the scope of the UCBS in Ontario, but he also reflected the ideals that the BFBS wished to imbibe in its entire distribution and translation work. The virtues of hard work, efficiency, physical endurance and self-denial were all characteristics ascribed to Richardson as a UCBS agent.

At the time of Richardson's employment as the UCBS's agent, other auxiliaries also employed agents to expand their reach. It became customary by the late 1840s for North American auxiliaries to receive £100 from the BFBS Committee in London for a traveling agent's salary to support outlying branches and create new ones on their behalf. In 1848, the Nova Scotia Auxiliary "resolved on the employment of a travelling Agent, in which they have been encouraged by the promise of aid from your Committee [in London], to the extent of 100£ the measure is about being carried into execution; in the mean time, a colporteur has been engaged, who has entered on his work with a promising prospect of success: in five weeks he sold 518 copies."¹² The Montreal Bible Society employed its first full time agent in 1838. This was spurred by its proclaimed goal to "supply, by sale or gift, every destitute family in the Province, willing to receive the boon, with a copy of the Scriptures." The resulting work necessitated a general agent to "manage the increasing business of the Society, to visit and form Auxiliaries and Depositories in the country, and organize and maintain a system of operations on an extended scale."¹³

A general Agent became necessary to manage the increasing business of the Society, to visit and form Auxiliaries and Depositories in the country, and organize and maintain a system of operations on an extended scale. Several

166. <https://archive.org/stream/lifeofrevjamesri00websrich#page/166/mode/2up>

¹² *The Forty-Fourth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1848), cxlii.

¹³ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1848, cxli).

large districts of Western Canada, one after another, craved to place themselves under the charge of this Society, so that its field of effort and superintendence embraced at length the whole of Eastern Canada, except the districts of Quebec and Gaspé, and a large and populous eastern section of Western Canada, as far as Brockville, on the St. Lawrence, and the distant settlements in the rear, as a line would strike the Rideau Canal, and then the Ottawa River. Over this extended territory the Society has 88 Branches and Depositories, and its general Agent travels every year. Thus it is doing the work of a national society within these limits.¹⁴

Not all Bible Society members praised the system of employing travelling agents, however. As the number of branches grew, agents were unable to visit them all, and some branches voiced their frustrations to their auxiliary's committee. In February 1870, the UCBS committee received a letter of complaint from the Galt branch protesting the use of travelling agents, and another letter from the branch at Dumbarton was received at the roughly the same time recommending the employment of local agents instead of travelling agents.¹⁵ These branches were frustrated at the agents' infrequent visits and felt they would be better served if a greater number of agents stayed in more restricted areas. In response to these concerns, the UCBS committee wrote to the committee at Galt acknowledging their complaints. The committee also requested that agents report their visitations and the reasons behind their inability to visit some branches. The members of the committee were asked to personally pay visits, wherever possible, to branches surrounding Toronto in order that they might help visit more branches.¹⁶

After James Richardson completed his work as the UCBS's agent in 1852, the auxiliary hired more than one agent concurrently, and divided the territory so that agents could visit as many of the branches as possible. The auxiliaries' agents were subject to high expectations in

¹⁴ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1848, cxli).

¹⁵ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 8 February 1870 LAC MG17F1vol I, 378

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 378.

their behaviour and conduct, reflecting the fact that agents represented the auxiliaries themselves. Auxiliaries dealt seriously with any complaints of impropriety or immoral behaviour, though such cases were extraordinarily rare. In one case that was raised in the spring of 1870, an agent named William Brookman was subject to a considerable investigation on two accounts. The first was because he had raised particular theological issues and expressed his own personal beliefs, that some of the “friends of the Bible Society” later wrote to the UCBS to say that found them “distasteful.” The opinions he raised were not recorded in the UCBS minutes, but they remained a point of contention throughout the investigation, and likely concerned a theological position held by Brookman that contravened the Bible Society’s strict regulations against endorsing any denominational positions in theological debates. The other issue concerned Brookman’s practice of leading services in a pastoral charge at the Petrolia mission on the Sabbath. Complainants argued that leading Sabbath services was undermining his work as the auxiliary’s agent because a primary responsibility of an agent was to travel to churches to preach on the Sabbath in order to promote the work of the BFBS. Reflecting the severity of the charges made against Brookman, a committee was formed to investigate his actions and ascertain whether sanctions should be leveled against him, an investigation that lasted for several weeks.¹⁷ Questions were put to Brookman about his conduct and whether it caused any injury to the UCBS. Brookman confirmed that he did indeed attend the service because he was told that his preaching on the Sabbath was considered optional. He argued that his attendance at Sabbath services at Petrolia was of “positive benefit to the Bible Society,” citing the large sums of money subscribed to the

¹⁷ See the “Report of Committee on Rev. Mr. Brookman,” in Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 20 April 1870, LAC MG17F1 vol II, 9ff

Bible Society from Petrolia, especially from one leading citizen in particular.¹⁸ He also cited the large number of bibles purchased from the Bible Society's list, and that the BFBS was benefitting from his ministry there.¹⁹

The UCBS committee appointed to deal with the case was critical of his conduct, stating that his “attendance at, and ministrations to the congregation at Petrolia and Wyoming have materially interfered with the faithful performance of his duties as an Agent of the Upper Canada Bible Society, and that in no case can it be allowed for him, or for any other Agent, to have any pastoral charge.” The committee stated that Brookman had been raising issues at Bible Society meetings that did not relate to the BFBS’s work, and as a result, a prejudice had been created against him in Western section of the auxiliary’s work. They decided that Brookman should be moved to the eastern section of the UCBS’s territory, and that he was expected in the future to “refrain from the introduction, into his addresses of those subjects which heretofore, in some of his public speeches on behalf of the Bible Society, have in the judgment of this Board, proved inimical to its prosperity and progress.”²⁰ The Committee’s high regard for Brookman’s genuine spirit and cooperation compelled them to have him continue as a UCBS agent, but in another district.

Some members of the UCBS executive strongly opposed that conciliatory solution. The charges against Brookman appear to have been spearheaded by the Baptist layman William

¹⁸ Christina Burr highlights the wealth and prosperity of the oil business in Petrolia and the ways in which wealthy businessmen supported voluntary societies in order to transform the town from a “rough frontier mining community into a model of civic virtue.” See *Canada’s Victorian Oil Town: The Transformation of Petrolia from a Resource Town into a Victorian Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 123-26.

¹⁹ The questions put to Brookman are listed in the Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 31 March 1870, LAC MG17F1 vol II, 12. Much of the discussion surrounding the Brookman case is found in the minute book from page 9 to 44.

²⁰ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 31 March 1870, LAC MG17F1 vol II, 16.

McMaster, who was appointed to Canada's first Senate and who founded the Toronto Baptist College that would become McMaster University. He served for some time as the treasurer of the UCBS and maintained close association with the organization during his tenure as a politician.²¹ After the UCBS's investigative committee submitted its report, McMaster wrote to the UCBS Secretary John Hodgins to contest their conclusion. In contrast to the committee's recommendations, he argued that Brookman's actions were injurious to the UCBS cause, and that Brookman had done such a disservice to the BFBS's work in that district that he should not be transferred, but instead have his employment terminated. McMaster argued that because of his duties as a clergyman he had failed to attend Bible Society meetings.²² He remained unequivocal in his condemnation of Brookman's behaviour and expressed his belief in Brookman's inability to act as a UCBS's agent.

Denominational tensions may have contributed to McMaster's strong opposition to Brookman's role as agent. As a staunch Baptist, McMaster may have seized upon this issue because of apparent policies recently created by the Anglican Bishop of Huron Benjamin Cronyn. According to Brookman's testimony, the Diocese had recently passed a canon prohibiting its clergy from preaching in any Church other than its own. This would have created serious problems for the Upper Canada Bible Society, whose agents were required to preach in every church they could to promote the BFBS's work. Brookman had written in his statement to the UCBS committee that as an Anglican minister, "I cannot preach in churches of other

²¹ For more on William Brookman's temperament and religiosity, see In collaboration, "McMASTER, WILLIAM," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 4, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcmaster_william_11E.html.

²² William Brookman to John George Hodgins, 29 March 1870, reprinted in the minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, LAC MG17F1 vol. 1, 37-40.

denominations, unless I use the services of the Church of England. A canon to that effect exists in our Diocese and I render myself liable to trial and loss of license should I so act.”²³ This canon would have effectively closed off the position of agent to Anglican clergymen. In a letter to Bishop Cronyn, John Hodgins articulated the problem: “owing to the very peculiar circumstances of this country, and the cordial and intimate relations which exist between the Bible Society and all the evangelical denominations – the canon will have the effect, practically, of excluding, by the act of the Church itself, any of its clergy from being an Agent of the Bible Society in this province.”²⁴ Bishop Cronyn responded immediately and stated that Brookman’s statement was false, and that no such canon had been passed. “Such a canon was proposed but at once objected to by me, and I stated that I was opposed to passing any canon which might even appear to interfere with the work of the Bible Society in the Diocese.”²⁵ Brookman’s reasons for being unable to preach in many churches on Sundays had been an important part of his justification for maintaining a pastoral charge, but the canon had never been passed.

Whether the UCBS Board forced Brookman to resign or whether he offered his resignation voluntarily is not recorded in the board’s minutes, but his employment as an agent for the UCBS ceased shortly after the investigation. After the incident, the UCBS shifted its policy toward travelling agents, employing more agents, each responsible for a smaller region. The

²³ William Brookman, Statement to UCBS committee, 31 March 1870, reprinted in the minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, LAC MG17F1 vol. 1, 26.

²⁴ John George Hodgins to the Reverend Benjamin Cronyn, Bishop of Huron, 6 April 1870, reprinted in the minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, LAC MG17F1 vol. 1, 40-42.

²⁵ Reverend Benjamin Cronyn to John George Hodgins, 9 April 1870, reprinted in the minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, LAC MG17F1 vol. 1, 44. James Talman demonstrates that Cronyn had strong evangelical views that put him at odds with other leaders of the Anglican Church in the province, including John Strachan. See James J. Talman, “CRONYN, BENJAMIN,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 10, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cronyn_benjamin_10E.html.

BFBS's Annual Report stated that in that year that the "UCBS Committee have adopted a different course of action, and have appointed provisional Agents to whom a limited district is assigned, for the supervision of which they are responsible. Nine of those are now scattered over this extended field, and great hopes are entertained that further financial and other benefits will accrue to the Society as a result of their labours."²⁶ Brookman's case demonstrates the important role that traveling agents played in the expansion of BFBS auxiliaries in North America by maintaining relationships between an auxiliary and its branches. Brookman's behaviour and the tensions between him and his auxiliary's leadership reveal the importance of the travelling agent's role as an ambassador and representative of the auxiliary. Although the Anglican canon was never passed, the case also reveals that the transdenominational nature of the Bible Society's enterprise could be delicate when denominations acted in ways that threatened the unity and cooperation of those involved in it. Finally, Brookman's investigation reveals the power of personalities within auxiliaries' committees. William McMaster seemed to have considerable influence in bringing charges against Brookman, and it is likely that strong personalities on Bible Society committees could shape the ease with which an auxiliary's business was accomplished.

Lachlin Taylor and the Colonial Expansion of the BFBS Auxiliaries

The Reverend Lachlin Taylor was one of the agents to succeed James Richardson as the agent for the UCBS and his travels were the most extensive undertaken by any agent employed by a North American BFBS auxiliary. He was the son of John Taylor, a schoolteacher and a Scottish

²⁶ *The Sixty-Eighth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1872), 307.

immigrant, and his wife Anna. Lachlin's daughter Anne married Adam Burwash, whose son was the prominent Methodist minister Nathanael Burwash. Marguerite van Die has described Lachlin Taylor as having gained "considerable prominence, first as agent of the Upper Canada Bible Society and later as secretary for the British and Foreign Bible Society. In that capacity the extensive knowledge he acquired of Manitoba and the northwest led to a request by the Canadian government to act as an immigration recruitment agent in Great Britain."²⁷ Lachlin Taylor was a minister of the Adelaide Street Methodist Church in Toronto in the 1840s, and went on to hold various positions within the Methodist Church in Canada.²⁸ He began his employment for the Upper Canada Bible Society in 1852, and worked with the UCBS and the BFBS over the next decade. Taylor travelled extensively on behalf of the UCBS and was the most important figure in extending the reach of that auxiliary into Western Canada, especially in British Columbia.

In 1859, Taylor toured the Middle East, travelling "through the Desert by El Arish [and] Gaza to Jerusalem with a continuation through Palestine and Syria." Taylor recorded the details of his journal, describing his encounters with various people and his visits to particularly important biblical places. The journal provides a fascinating travel narrative of the region.²⁹ It is on this journey that Taylor presumably acquired the collection of Egyptian artefacts that he later

²⁷ Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 18.

²⁸ William Pearson writes that Taylor and Alexander McNabb succeeded Egerton Ryerson as ministers in charge of the Adelaide Street Church in 1842. See William H. Pearson, *Recollections and records of Toronto of old: with references to Brantford, Kingston and other Canadian towns* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1914), 285.

²⁹ The journal is part of the Lachlin Taylor Fonds held at the United Church of Canada archive, 86.189C 2-6. For other examples of the genre and its depictions of the Middle East, see Brian Yothers, *The Romance of the Holy Land in American Travel Writing, 1790-1876* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007) and Stephanie Stidham Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land: American Protestant Pilgrimage to Palestine, 1865-1941* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2011).

contributed to Victoria College in Cobourg, for which he is still acknowledged.³⁰ From the Middle East, Taylor returned to Britain and undertook work on behalf of the BFBS, preaching in churches in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. From Britain, he returned to North America in where he landed in 1859. In the 1850s and 1860s, during his tenure as agent for the UCBS, Lachlin Taylor visited many branches in what became the province of Ontario, some that were succeeding in distributing bibles and collecting funds for the BFBS, and others that were struggling to maintain the work. Taylor provided extensive reports of his travels that, like Richardson's, were published in the UCBS's Annual Reports. These reports gave chronological accounts of his journeys with a brief summary of each of his encounters in various towns. Much of the detail in these reports consists of a brief note on the state of a branch in the town or settlement he visited, along with any extraordinary or noteworthy occurrences.

During his travels in 1852, Taylor found that a branch at Holland Landing was "languishing and inactive," and it was suggested that the branch be divided into "two distinct societies, as each village was more likely to cultivate its own part of the field to better advantage, in a separate than in a united capacity."³¹ After preaching a sermon in Bradford, where the other society was to be created, Taylor held a meeting in order to form a new committee. Twenty-six new members were added to the existing number, and the new society was formed. The meeting

³⁰ Taylor used to carry the mummy with him as he "travelled the countryside lecturing" on his time in the Middle East. See Birgitte Nielsen Worrall, "Lions, A Mummy, and a Mystery: Tales from our Cobourg Years," *Victoria College Report* Winter 1995/96 (Cobourg: Victoria College), 9.

³¹ *The Thirteenth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1853), 51. For more on the historical background of religion in Penetanguishene, see Timothy McCauley, "Family, Religion and Social Change: A Case Study of Penetanguishene" (Ph.D., York University (Canada), 1991), 112-118.

required the use of Gaelic, which Taylor called his “vernacular language,” as there was “at least one person present who could not understand a word of any other language.”³²

Not every part of his reports was triumphant, however, and Taylor also portrayed the visits that did not lead to a new branch being formed. He visited Penetanguishene “with the hope of organizing a Branch, but found that but little could be accomplished there for the present.”³³ Taylor does not mention the circumstances behind this conclusion. He may have found that there was not enough interest from local clergymen and lay people to form a committee, or he might have seen little concern for the project expressed in conversations he had in the town. Nonetheless, a man was willing to open a small depository there, and Taylor ordered a number of bibles and testaments to be sent to him to sell in the town. In his report, he summed up the year’s work by stating that he had “performed eight tours and three shorter journeys [sic] on behalf of the Society; travelled upwards of 2600 miles; delivered ninety-four addresses, exclusive of sermons; formed fourteen new Branches; and collected £776 1s. 11d. for the Upper Canada and British and Foreign Bible Societies.”³⁴ Taylor’s reports provide an important lens into the work done by agents on behalf of the North America BFBS auxiliaries.

Taylor and other agents travelling on behalf of North American auxiliaries embodied the ideals of the BFBS and its enterprise. Their efficiency, thrift, and hard work in raising awareness and subscriptions for the Bible Society’s cause were touted as an expression of the broader values that were reflected in all of the BFBS’s work. Their reports highlighted the moral imperative in their work, and the importance of the BFBS’s enterprise in providing the Bible as a

³² *The Thirteenth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1853), 51.

³³ *The Thirteenth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1853), 59.

³⁴ *The Thirteenth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1853), 59.

foundation of society. Much of these agents' effort was spent encouraging local branch committees to maintain its interest in the Bible enterprise in North America and around the world. These local branches supplied important donations and subscriptions to the BFBS, extending the distribution network by which the BFBS auxiliaries were able to supply the hundreds of thousands of bibles they did in the nineteenth century.

The establishment of the BFBS's work in British Columbia provides an important picture of how auxiliaries and branches expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century. The BFBS's formal operations began 1863, as Lachlin Taylor sailed to the colonial towns of Victoria and New Westminster that autumn on behalf of the BFBS's London Committee. The BFBS's Annual Report describes the impetus behind the effort in British Columbia:

The Christian policy of the Bible Society is to plant its organization in every part of the world accessible to its labours. When new lands are opened, by the passing away of prejudice and hostility, or by the gathering together of representatives of various nations to explore territory hitherto unoccupied, there the Society must claim its rightful position, opening its stores of divine merchandise, and by its Agency seeking to foster in men's minds the conviction, that the principles of the Divine Word are the only sure and certain basis of national prosperity and stability. British Christians have a special responsibility in relation to British colonies; and while every endeavour should be made to send forth the minister of the Gospel to publish with the living voice the message of salvation, it should be equally felt that to provide for the free dissemination of the Scriptures is an indispensable Christian duty. Under these convictions, the Committee have recently sanctioned the visit of an Agent to Vancouver's Island and British Columbia, - a colony of vast extent and inexhaustible resources, whose treasures of hidden gold are attracting thousands to its soil.³⁵

³⁵ *The Fifty-Ninth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1863), 263ff.

The expansion of the Bible Society closely mirrored Britain's colonial expansion around the world, and this was also true in British North America as English-Canadians pushed further west on the continent to claim lands for settlement. The BFBS's "rightful position" to provide the "divine merchandise" of bibles and testaments was predicated on the moral superiority of the Christian faith, and its profound necessity to "national prosperity and stability." This moral imperative was one factor that propelled the extraordinary expansion of the BFBS's branches throughout Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Grants of bibles had previously been made to Protestant ministers in British Columbia, but no permanent auxiliary had yet been established by 1863. The BFBS Annual Report stated that, "as the tide of emigration is rapidly flowing to those distant shores, and large centres of population are growing up, the time has come when some systematic plans may be attempted for laying, at least, the foundation of future permanent operations."³⁶ In order to accomplish this work, the BFBS committee in London proposed to the UCBS that the auxiliary release its agent Lachlin Taylor. The UCBS responded positively, offering to "undertake the arrangement necessary for the visit, and consented to set apart their own valuable officer, the Rev. L. Taylor, for a limited period, provided the Parent Society would accept the pecuniary responsibility for the effort."³⁷ Having recently visited the BFBS headquarters in London after his trip in the Middle East, Taylor may have suggested at that time his willingness to consider such a tour on their behalf. The London committee set aside £500 for the tour and Taylor's salary, and stated his objectives in its Annual Report, to "gather information as to the extent of Scripture

³⁶ *The Fifty-Ninth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1863), 264.

³⁷ *The Fifty-Ninth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1863), 265.

destitution in different parts of the colony; when practicable, to form auxiliaries in direct connection with the Parent Society, and so to arrange for the local supply of Scriptures; or, where population is too diffused to admit of formal organization, to enlist the co-operation of individual Christians in aid of the work, and by the employment of Colporteurs endeavour to reach those who may be toiling in remote locations for the bread that perisheth, but far from all the elevating influences which the public means of grace and an open Bible cannot fail to inspire.”³⁸ The Report was quick to state that the plan was supported locally by the Reverend Dr. Evans in Victoria, who had previously undertaken work on behalf of the BFBS and had provided a remittance of £7 for Bible distribution in the colony.³⁹

Taylor sailed from New York on the steamer *Northern Light* on the 11th of April, 1863, and arrived at the Harbour of Panama on the 22nd of April, which he described as “beautifully romantic, sheltered [and] shut in by beautiful islands all volcanic formation, as if they shot up in some mighty upheaval; and at the bidding of the mighty that of Him whose Power upheaved them they stood fast; and are now clothed with tropical foliage and fruit; adorned with matchless beauty.”⁴⁰ Like his journal entries of the Levant some years earlier, Taylor’s descriptions of his travels from New York to British Columbia provide an extraordinary travel journal giving vivid descriptions of his experiences aboard *Northern Light*, of the places he encountered for the first time, and of cultural differences displayed by the people he met. The ship stopped in Acapulco

³⁸ *The Fifty-Ninth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1863), 265-266.

³⁹ For a discussion of the early arrival of Methodist preachers in British Columbia, including Evans, see Bob Stewart, “The United Church of Canada in British Columbia,” in *Circle of Voices: a history of the religious communities of British Columbia* ed. C. P. Anderson (Lantzville, British Columbia: Oolichan Books, 1983), 195-213.

⁴⁰ Lachlin Taylor, Journal, 22 April 1863. Lachlin Taylor Fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, 86.189C 2-6.

on the 29th, and then at Manzanillo on the first of May, a place he felt no affinity to. “Donkeys, dogs, half-civilized men, filth [and] worldliness constitute the aggregate of the famous town of Manzanillo.”⁴¹

No journal entries exist for the summer of 1863, during which time Taylor likely stayed in San Francisco, the location from which his last journal entry was made that spring. He finally arrived in British Columbia in October of that year. The *British Columbian* posted news of his tour on behalf of the BFBS, stating that he would “visit [Victoria] during the last week of the present month for the purpose of organizing a Society.”⁴² A meeting was held on Tuesday the 18th of October, during which time an auxiliary of the BFBS was formed. Two weeks after his arrival in Victoria, Taylor traveled to New Westminster with the same purpose. The *British Columbian* once again announced his arrival from Victoria, urging the public to hear him preach at the Wesleyan Church on Sunday afternoon and attend a Bible Society meeting to be held Monday evening. “A public meeting, to promote the interests of that great and good organization whose agent he is, will be held early in the week... We should advise as many as can make it convenient to go to hear this able and distinguished gentleman on Sabbath, and all to avail themselves of the rich treat in store on the night of the public meeting as it is not often we are favored with such an opportunity.”⁴³ The meeting itself was well-attended, “notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather,” with introductory speeches by an Archdeacon Henry Press Wright, the first Anglican Archdeacon in British Columbia, and Colonel Richard Moody, who was about

⁴¹ Lachin Taylor, Journal, 28 April 1863. Lachlin Taylor Fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, 86.189C 2-6

⁴² *British Columbian* (New Westminster), 17 October 1863, 3.

⁴³ *British Columbian* (New Westminster), 31 October 1863, 3.

to return to England after his tenure as military officer and lieutenant governor in the colony.⁴⁴

Lachlin Taylor then took his turn on the platform, and “amid prolonged and enthusiastic applause, made one of those speeches which have gained him so much celebrity.”⁴⁵ He expressed his hope that by forming BFBS auxiliaries in British Columbia, there might be “one grand British American Bible Confederation from the Atlantic to the Pacific,” and that the work in British Columbia would contribute to the BFBS’s enterprise within the “vast and wide-spread colonial possessions of the British Empire encircling the globe” and in other territories and kingdoms around the world.⁴⁶ The meeting ended with the collection for the support of the newly formed auxiliary and the formation of an executive and a committee comprised of prominent citizens of the colony.

The committee of the newly formed “British Columbia Bible Society, Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society” met for the first time the following week on the sixth of November in that year. Lachlin was provided a summary of the stock that was in the possession of the branch, books that were left over from a previous BFBS branch that had diminished and become dormant. He listed 507 volumes of “Bibles and Testaments in sixteen different languages as the commencement of our stock, some of which he would take with him this week to Yale and Lillooet where he intended organizing branches in connection with this Society.”⁴⁷ Taylor suggested that the New Westminster branch “adopt the prices fixed upon by the Society

⁴⁴ For a detailed analysis of Archdeacon Wright, see “Henry press Wright: First Archdeacon of Columbia” *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* XIX no 3 (1955), 123-186.

⁴⁵ *British Columbian* (New Westminster), 7 November 1863, 3.

⁴⁶ *British Columbian* (New Westminster), 7 November 1863, 3.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the New Westminster branch of the British Columbia Bible Society, British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria, QRB77v, 6.

at Victoria for the books at present in our hands,” seeking consistency in the stock available in British Columbia.⁴⁸

During the early months of the New Westminster branch’s Committee meetings, Taylor appears to have been overseeing much of the activity. Soon after its founding, the Committee considered the employment of a colporteur, and Taylor informed them that “he was authorized by the Parent Society to appoint one or two Colporteurs to travel in connection with the Societies in this and the neighbouring Colony. The New Westminster’s minutes record that “it was unanimously agreed to suggest to Mr. Taylor the name of William Perrin as a suitable person, and the salary to be fifteen hundred dollars including expenses, excepting freight of books.”⁴⁹ In a similar way, Taylor seems to have overseen the spending and activities, as “[b]ills of expenses connected with the public meeting amounting to eleven dollars were presented to Mr. Taylor, and ordered to be paid by the Treasurers.”⁵⁰ As the BFBS’s agent, Taylor had considerable authority and oversight in the early work of the branch at New Westminster.

The New Westminster Branch made a formal statement of their appreciation of Taylor’s work on their behalf with a motion during its annual meeting. The Committee recognized Taylor’s “indefatigable and persevering labors in the Bible cause in Canada,” and that his efforts afforded him “a very high place in the estimation of all with whom he came in contact.”⁵¹ Taylor

⁴⁸ Minutes of the New Westminster branch of the British Columbia Bible Society, British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria, QRB77v, 7.

⁴⁹ Minutes of the New Westminster branch of the British Columbia Bible Society, British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria, QRB77v 9.

⁵⁰ Minutes of the New Westminster branch of the British Columbia Bible Society, British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria, QRB77v, 7.

⁵¹ Minutes of the New Westminster branch of the British Columbia Bible Society, British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria, QRB77v, 18.

had provided an important impetus for the formation of the auxiliaries in British Columbia, and had further expanded the BFBS's reach in North America.

Despite the good feelings and the sense of satisfaction, the work in British Columbia lapsed in 1866 for a number of years. There is no indication in the New Westminster Society's minutes about the reason for this interruption in the work there. In the last entry for the minutes in 1866, the Committee was still seeking out a colporteur from the Kootenay region for employment. The BFBS's Annual Report celebrated Taylor's efforts in establishing auxiliaries at Victoria and New Westminster, stating that, “[t]he circumstances under which the Auxiliaries were formed in this locality were of the most encouraging kind. Liberal contributions were subscribed, and there seemed every prospect that the mission of Dr. Lachlin Taylor, which had commenced so auspiciously, would be crowned with final success.” However, it appears that Taylor's departure left a significant void in the auxiliaries' abilities to maintain the work, and the Reverend Alexander Garrett wrote to the committee, “enclosing a cheque for £55 14s. 1d., and stating that nothing can be done at present in the interest of your Society.” The reason for the turn is not stated in the Annual Report, except that a “reverse of fortune has, however, visited the Colony, and for the present no other course seems to be left open than to break up the Society.”⁵² Regardless, the Society's regular operations ceased until 1872, when the Secretary for the UCBS wrote to a clergyman in New Westminster to revive the BFBS's work there. The Victoria Branch's work also ceased in this period, and it was revived in 1872. Unlike the Society at New Westminster, the Victoria branch's minutes from the 1860s do not exist, but the first entry in the

⁵² *The Sixty-Third Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1867), 265. For a sense of the difficulties faced by colonists in establishing cultural institutions and the worsening economic conditions in the 1860s, see Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 92-96.

new minute book reveals that it was the initiative of the Secretary of the Upper Canada Bible Society that spurred its renewal. The minutes of the UCBS report that “the New Westminster be recognized as a Branch of the UC Bible Society.”⁵³ The revival of the auxiliary as a branch of the UCBS was a reflection of the enormous reach that Toronto’s committee held across western Canada, as the chief administrative body that oversaw almost all of the branches west of Ontario.

Women’s Leadership of the Miramichi Auxiliary

Although most of the colonial auxiliaries in North America followed similar patterns of establishment and organization, the Ladies’ Auxiliary at Miramichi is a remarkable exception to this pattern because it was run exclusively by women. It was established in 1821, early in the history of the BFBS’s work in North America, and continued to operate as a fully independent auxiliary under the authority of the London Committee. The Miramichi Ladies’ Auxiliary was listed alongside other auxiliaries in the BFBS’s published annual reports, reflecting its equal status as an auxiliary alongside others. Although the Miramichi auxiliary’s reach paled in comparison to the extensive network of branches of an auxiliary like the UCBS which by 1845 had 107 branches under its supervision, it was similar to other auxiliaries at Fredericton, Bathurst, and Woodstock which had few if any branches under its supervision. Because of its unique standing, the Miramichi case reveals much about the BFBS’s auxiliaries and the way they carried out their distribution operations.

In 1821, Mrs. D. McDonald of Miramichi wrote to Lord Teignmouth, the President of the BFBS, outlining the desire to establish an auxiliary of the BFBS there. The letter marked out the

⁵³ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 15 October 1872, LAC MG17F1 V1, 186.

unique circumstances behind her request: unlike the Ladies' Associations that existed in Britain, which operated under the administration of a local auxiliary, ordering their books and paying their remittances through them, no such auxiliary existed anywhere near Miramichi. McDonald wrote that, "our little Society stands here alone, at a considerable distance from any other, so that we could procure from them no assistance to our wants without much delay [and] inconvenience."⁵⁴ The women at Miramichi had met almost a year earlier to form a local society for the benefit of the BFBS and to distribute bibles to the residents there. Just over a week before her writing to Teignmouth, the women had met together once again and voted to send £40 to the BFBS in London with an order of bibles for distribution. Half of the money was to go to the work of the BFBS, but the other half was to be used to pay for an order of "4 Bibles 4 Testaments in French, - 3 do in Irish, 3 do 3 do in Gaelic, 1 do 1 do in Welch, - all the rest in English – half Bibles, half Testaments, and there to be of a larger [and] smaller type, half [and] half if convenient for the use of the people in this place." By including these details and the funds raised, McDonald's letter demonstrated the activity already taking place by the women who intended of forming an auxiliary to support the BFBS.

The circumstances by which the Ladies' Auxiliary was formed and its continuance as an auxiliary were exceptional among the other North American auxiliaries. This initial letter written by McDonald to Lord Teignmouth was unusual because it was written directly to the BFBS's President as opposed to its secretaries. McDonald justified this unique order of business in her letter to Lord Teignmouth: "Another reason why I prefer communicating with your Lordship

⁵⁴ McDonald to Lord Teignmouth, 31 July 1821. Cambridge University Library, British and Foreign Bible Society archives BSA/X/1/M.

instead of the Secretaries of the BFBS is that contrary to the practice of ladies' Societies in Britain, who usually lend their contributions to Societies of the other sex, and by them are provided with whatever bibles they may want, our little Society stands here alone, at a considerable distance too from any other, so that we could procure from them no assistance to our wants, without much delay [and] inconvenience.”⁵⁵ McDonald's letter seems to imply the women's anticipation that if the letter had been written to the Secretaries of the BFBS in London, their request to be redirected to an auxiliary in British North America, which would have caused considerable delays in obtaining their bibles.

McDonald's book order and petition was not answered until the following year, but she eventually received the bibles. The books had to be shipped by way of St. John, and in her letter confirming their arrival, McDonald reiterated the importance of shipping them directly to Miramichi. She stated that “it is quite out of the way to send any thing to us by St. John, that it was wholly with the idea of having them during winter, they were ordered,” and that they were fortunate that a ship was travelling from the West Indies was able to carry the shipment from St. John to Miramichi free of charge and in good time.⁵⁶ She urged the Assistant Secretary to communicate by sending messages with any vessel trading between London and Miramichi, because such messages would be carried free of charge. The receipt of the books and the BFBS's favourable response to the Auxiliary's founding confirmed the establishment of the auxiliary in Miramichi. The practical concerns about the delay in obtaining books and coordinating the payment were considerable. The BFBS auxiliary at Fredericton had been founded in 1820 and

⁵⁵ McDonald to Lord Teignmouth, 23 August 1821.

⁵⁶ Letter from McDonald to Roenneberg, 14 July 1822

the overland journey to Miramichi would have added considerable time to the movement of goods. The auxiliary in Pictou was likely the closest alternative because of the easier sea route for shipping, but the women at Miramichi may have anticipated some complications at associating with an auxiliary in Nova Scotia rather than New Brunswick.

Besides these practical concerns, however, was the equally likely premise that the women sought equal status as an autonomous auxiliary, independent of any other. Instead of requesting Lord Teignmouth to refer her to a Secretary or to another North American auxiliary, McDonald requested that he might pass on the information to the “different gentlemen in Office, who receive money [and] issue Bibles.”⁵⁷ It appears that McDonald was pre-emptively arranging the direct transactions between the Ladies’ Auxiliary and the BFBS in London, doing her best to avoid being deferred to another auxiliary by already operating as an established auxiliary.

It was a bold petition to Teignmouth. The women at Miramichi asserted the status of an independent auxiliary by directing their order for bibles and their donations to the appropriate BFBS officials through the Society’s President. The Ladies’ Auxiliary was unique in standing apart from a number of other Ladies’ Associations that were formed under the direction and oversight of urban auxiliaries in British North American cities led almost exclusively by men. These Ladies’ Associations were all under the direction of male-dominated auxiliary committees. No other auxiliary featured women prominently in its leadership. Equally extraordinary about the Miramichi Auxiliary was its longevity. The Ladies’ Auxiliary is listed as an auxiliary throughout the nineteenth century, having never relinquished its position as a Society directed by women.

⁵⁷ McDonald to Lord Teignmouth, 23 August 1821.

The Ladies' Auxiliary remained the only BFBS representation in Miramichi, and no other BFBS general auxiliary or branch was established in that town.⁵⁸

The fact that the auxiliary was managed by women seemed to be the cause of some problems for its leaders. McDonald wrote to the BFBS's Assistant Foreign Secretary E. F. Roenneberg that her efforts to employ someone to collect subscriptions and provide books that had been ordered had been unsuccessful, as she was unable to find anyone to do it. "To send a man of any kind will not answer," she wrote, because "they take it as an affront, when they hear that some of the ladies call, in general for their donations and subscriptions."⁵⁹ It is unclear whether the objection was because women would have been exercising authority over the activities of the collector, or if potential collectors felt that because the work was being led by women, that this role was one that was only appropriate for women. Nonetheless, McDonald expressed in her correspondence with London her frustrations about these limitations caused by women leading the auxiliary.

As a result of her difficulty in securing a representative to collect money from settlements surrounding Miramichi, McDonald undertook a number of tours herself, travelling along the branches of the Northwest Miramichi River. During an 1822 tour, she secured the help of a "Christian man [and] a little boy to convey me in a canoe, [and] accompany me in my peregrinations thro [sic] the rough roads of these upper settlements."⁶⁰ In that year, McDonald spent a week on the northwest branch of the River, and four days on the southwest branch, and

⁵⁸ One anomaly exists in that from 1841 through 1843 a separate auxiliary at Miramichi is listed in the BFBS Annual Reports, with Mr. W. Abrams listed as President of the Auxiliary and Mrs. Abrams, presumably his wife, listed as the President of the Ladies' Auxiliary. See *The Thirty-Seventh Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1841), 37.

⁵⁹ McDonald to Foreign Secretary, 7 August 1822, BSA/X/1.

⁶⁰ McDonald to Roenneberg, 21 November 1822.

collected £22 in her travels. She had been hindered by spasms in her back that limited her movement and her correspondence to London related this as a severe limitation on her ability to travel to communities where bibles were sought after.

McDonald's letters give the impression that she was at times quite alone in maintaining the business of the auxiliary, and that it likely would have become dormant had she not continued in the work. After leaving Miramichi temporarily to look after her family in 1824, she returned to find little had been done to maintain the work. She wrote to Brandram, stating that some accused her of "carrying the concerns of the Society with her," and that she "did not wish for the Soc'y to prosper in my absence, but to take all the merit of it to myself [and] etc."⁶¹ McDonald's letters refer to few others beside herself providing administrative direction to the work of the auxiliary, and that her absence had threatened its existence. Her letters also suggest her willingness to share the Bible work, though her zeal may have given the perception of control of the work that may have discouraged others from participating.

Upon her return to Miramichi 1825, McDonald proposed turning the Ladies' Auxiliary into a conventional auxiliary, run by clergymen and laymen in the town. "As the place was getting populous, [and] the members of the Society very widley [sic] scattered, I proposed setting forward a general Society to be conducted by the gentlemen of the place, [and] for this end, I gave my husband no rest till he consulted some of the magistrates about the measure." Her husband assured his support of his "donation [and] countenance to it, when a Minister was got to the Church they were commencing to build."⁶² But nothing came of the plans in that year, due in

⁶¹ McDonald to Roenneberg, 21 November 1822

⁶² McDonald to Andrew Brandram, 8 November 1825.

large part to the extraordinary fire that devastated much of the area around Miramichi.⁶³ In her letter to Andrew Brandram, the BFBS's recently appointed Foreign Secretary, McDonald gives a riveting account of the fire:

boats full of people came to our side [of the river, from Newcastle], crowding, half-naked, in the midst of as dreadful a storm of fire +water as could ever be beheld, the brands + burning shingles from the roofs of the houses, flying over to our side, ready to consume us next, but by the good providence of our Heavenly Father we escaped + our property. The devastation spread a distance of 30 or more miles, sweeping all before it – one of our Depositories of Bibles went with the Stores + House of a Merchant, whose wife was one of our vice Presidents, + the family escaped in a schooner across the River.⁶⁴

After the fire, McDonald again presented her desire to establish a general auxiliary. “I told one of those I waited on for his answer respecting establishing a general Society, that I considered it a poor reflection on this place, that there were none but a few females who would carry on a Society to distribute the Word of Life, while the more distant and newer Colony of Van Dieman’s Land had one, besides Hudson’s Bay, South American places, [and] many others were taking an interest in its success.” In her hopes for a regular auxiliary, McDonald wrote that, “we would have had the pleasure of seeing one on a better footing, I should hope, than the one ours in feeble operation.” Various individuals responded to the idea with reticence, some saying that they must wait for a “more convenient season,” and another remarked that, “he was afraid the calamity might be prejudicial to the establishment of such a thing as another Society.”⁶⁵ After this incident and the resistance she faced to the idea, McDonald no longer raised the issue of establishing a “general Society” at Miramichi. The lack of interest from the town’s men, coupled

⁶³ For insight into the Great Fire of 1825 and its impact on New Brunswick historiography, see Martin Brook Taylor, *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth-century English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 72-75.

⁶⁴ McDonald to Andrew Brandram, 8 November 1825.

⁶⁵ McDonald to Andrew Brandram, 8 November 1825.

with the Ladies' Auxiliary competence in carrying on the work, likely contributed to the Auxiliary continuing on as one directed by women for the rest of the century. McDonald's oversight of the auxiliary and her correspondence with Brandram continued after soliciting interest in a general (male-led) auxiliary.

In contrast to the unique Miramichi Auxiliary, a number of Ladies' Associations were listed as branches of other general BFBS auxiliaries. In 1900, ladies' branches are listed in the BFBS's annual report at Yarmouth, Fredericton, McDougall, Richibucto, Red Bank, and two Ladies' Branches in New Glasgow (one listed as the James Church Ladies and the other as the United Church Ladies).⁶⁶ As such, ladies' branches or associations were not uncommon in larger urban centres. In a number of exceptional cases, women served as branch treasurers or secretaries in general branches, and are listed in the BFBS report as such. In spite of these unique cases, the predominant pattern was that branch committees and executive offices were overwhelmingly filled by clergymen and laymen in cities and towns across the country. In this context, the Miramichi auxiliary stands as a remarkable exception as it remained a fully functional auxiliary into the twentieth century, overseeing the BFBS's Bible distribution for the Miramichi region, equal with any other BFBS auxiliary in North America.

The Miramichi Auxiliary is a powerful reflection of the gendered nature of the BFBS's administration in nineteenth-century British North America. The persistence of female leadership in an auxiliary independent of any other North American auxiliary demonstrates that there were no functional or practical limitations by which women holding the executive offices of an

⁶⁶ See *The Ninety-Sixth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1900), 95-117.

auxiliary would hinder its distribution. Instead, the overwhelming predominance of male leadership in the BFBS's enterprise was a convention based on constructed gender norms. In addition, the leaders of many British North American auxiliaries were also professionals, businessmen, and clergymen, positions that were predominantly filled by men. Christina Burr describes public space in mid-nineteenth-century Canada as "defined primarily as the terrain of men," in which "[m]asculine entitlement to public office was based on their status as married men and was informed by convictions about what a good husband and father should be."⁶⁷ The public leadership of the Miramichi women who led the BFBS auxiliary was a marked departure from the predominantly male involvement in civic leadership.

Women's leadership in civic matters was rare, but it was also rare in religious organizations in general. In her analysis of women's involvement in Protestant missions, Ruth Compton Brouwer highlights the traditional gender roles in religious missions that existed, even as they were challenged in particular settings.⁶⁸ The administration and activity of local churches and missionary movements was overwhelmingly led by men in the nineteenth century. The Miramichi women established their claim on the auxiliary's leadership early in the Bible Society's expansion in British North America. As the Bible Society grew throughout the nineteenth century, Miramichi presented a stark contrast to other auxiliaries in Canada became more pronounced, highlighting the extent of this gendered imbalance.

⁶⁷ Christina Ann Burr, *Canada's Victorian Oil Town: The Transformation of Petrolia from a Resource Town into a Victorian Community* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 123-124.

⁶⁸ See Ruth Compton Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902-69* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).

Conclusion

The BFBS's growing influence in Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century is highlighted by the increase in the number of auxiliaries, including the one at Miramichi, and the staggering number of new branches created in that period. Though the number of central auxiliaries remained constant in this period, the larger existing auxiliaries were adding branches to their number at an incredible rate so that by the turn of the century, there were 1181 branches operating across Canada (see Table 1). This number of local committees actively raising financial support for the BFBS and distributing its bibles locally constituted an extraordinarily effective institutional foundation for the BFBS's enterprise and for its influence in Canadian society in general.

The network of BFBS branches and auxiliaries provided the means by which the BFBS could distribute bibles and raise considerable financial and moral support for their enterprise. This network was the framework by which organizing committees and fundraisers in hundreds of communities from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans contributed to a broader global enterprise. Apart from churches themselves, few other organizations could boast the enormous number of local branches that were affiliated with North American BFBS auxiliaries. It was in this volume of branches and the level of representation that the BFBS enjoyed in almost every town and village that the BFBS derived its prominence, both commercially as the foremost provider of bibles to Canadians and socially, as its leaders wielded considerable authority on issues of morality and public interest. The Bible Society became a central component of a consensual English-Canadian Protestant vision that shaped policies and normative beliefs in Canadian society.

Table 1 – North American BFBS Auxiliaries and Branches, 1830-1900⁶⁹

BFBS Auxiliary	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Upper Canada	1	2	88	262	259	396	452	577
Perth		1	1	1	1	4	5	5
Western Ontario						60	79	90
Ottawa				1	45	59	74	91
Montreal	7	20	57	130	184	207	200	224
Quebec	1	1	1	28	20	26	17	22
New Brunswick (St. John)	4	10	9	44	58	53	69	64
Fredericton	1	1	3	8	4	5	2	2
Miramichi	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Restigouche				2	2	1	1	1
Nova Scotia (Halifax)	15	18	40	67	80	84	83	90
New Glasgow					11	12	12	3
Pictou	1	1	12	10	12	12	6	7
Yarmouth	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Prince Edward Island			1	2	3	3	1	1
Newfoundland			1	1	22	23	3	1
Other	6	44	11	26	134	14	1	0
Total Branches	38	92	228	607	839	942	1008	1181

Agents were the primary actors behind this expansion, and their reports provide an important account of their work in expanding the influence of these auxiliaries throughout British North America and the Dominion of Canada. Their reports also reflect the powerful ideals that defined the BFBS's enterprise in North America, as these auxiliaries' values and the priorities in Bible distribution are reflected in the way that agents' reported their work. Because they so closely represented the auxiliaries for whom they worked, agents were subjected to close

⁶⁹ The figures for this table are taken from the BFBS Annual Reports for each year listed. Each figure includes the Auxiliary in the tally of branches. Auxiliaries that existed in earlier years but were merged with other auxiliaries or ceased operations by 1900 are listed, along with their associated branches, under "Other." Blank cells denote years in which auxiliaries were not yet operational.

scrutiny and strict accountability in their behaviour and their work, discipline that was reflected in the case involving William Brookman.

The formation of the auxiliaries in British Columbia provide an important example of agents' work in expanding the reach of their auxiliaries, and the sometimes tenuous hold that a Bible Society branch might have in a community. The lapse that occurred in the work in New Westminster and Victoria branches resembles the circumstances in the earliest iterations of the Bible Society in British North America, as auxiliaries faced intermittent support from local clergymen and workers, and at times local volunteers were unable to maintain the BFBS's presence in a community.

The expansion of these auxiliaries reflects the wider colonial settlement of what was to become twentieth-century Canada. Sanctioned by governments in the North American colonies and the Colonial Office in London, and then by Canada's federal government of Canada, territorial acquisition was accompanied by the expansion of social and cultural institutions. This concurrent extension westward reflects the association between colonial settlement and the establishment of local religious institutions. In this expansion the BFBS and other voluntary associations felt the imperative to contribute to the social fabric in burgeoning communities, using language that reflected the same colonial ideals that accompanied this expansion, as they were convinced of their work's importance in creating strong, stable, and vibrant centres.

As a voluntary society that had a considerable public standing, the enterprise was dominated by men in positions of leadership and representation. With very few exceptions, the executive members and committees of each auxiliary and their branches were populated exclusively by men, both clergymen and laymen. Employing men exclusively as agents for these auxiliaries also reflected this imbalance. The extensive travel required of the agents and the

requirement of preaching in Protestant church services were likely the most salient reasons behind the hiring of only men by auxiliary leaders. Individuals were also celebrated for embodying the BFBS's ideals of thrift, efficiency, hard work, and physical endurance, and agents were a close reflection of the auxiliary Bible Society they represented.

In this context of gender imbalance, the auxiliary at Miramichi in New Brunswick is a remarkable exception. These women championed their own auxiliary and impressed their abilities on the BFBS's Secretary in London. They acted on the assumption that the practice of women leading a BFBS auxiliary was appropriate and demonstrated their commitment to this conviction by initiating the BFBS's distribution in Miramichi. Rather than seeking out a men's auxiliary to operate beneath, these women maintained the inimitable convention of filling its offices exclusively with women. Theirs remained the only BFBS auxiliary in Miramichi throughout the twentieth century, constituting a unique exception to the pattern of auxiliaries and Ladies' Associations that was common in other jurisdictions.

The BFBS auxiliaries and their agents reveal the ideals at the heart of the BFBS's Bible enterprise. It was through their efforts that the institution and its ideals gained such profound influence across Canada. The staggering number of branches across the country by the end of the nineteenth century demonstrates how central these ideals were in English-Canadian life in this period. They also show the remarkable demand of bibles among English-Canadians and the importance of Bible-possession. Owning the Bible was important, and the Bible Society propagated the belief that participation in the great enterprise of making bibles available to all Canadians who wished to buy them was in itself a pursuit of the highest moral and religious aspirations.

CHAPTER 5: COLPORTEURS AND BIBLEWOMEN

In 1880 John Lowry wrote one of his last annual reports as a colporteur of the Upper Canada Bible Society. He was appointed as a travelling Bible-seller in 1856 and travelled to homes and settlements around York Township and Toronto for the almost a quarter of a century. In summarizing his travels and his encounters with potential customers, Lowry reported one instance in which “a little girl who bought a Bible for another poor little girl, who was unable to buy it herself, and made her a present of it.” Lowry also recalled a story of another little girl “who bought a seventy-five cent Testament for her grandmother with Psalms,” and added the remark that “the people were greatly surprised at the cheapness of the Books.”¹ John Lowry was one of many colporteurs employed by Canadian BFBS auxiliaries in the second half of the nineteenth century who carried bibles, testaments, portions of scriptures, and the Bible Society’s own literature to sell in remote communities across Canada. But far from being on the periphery of the Bible Society’s work, colportage was held up as one of the most important aspects of its work and an important reflection of the Society’s mandate of making the Bible available to anyone who might wish to purchase one.

The expansion of BFBS auxiliaries and the branch societies under their administration created an extraordinary network on which the Bible Society’s presence in British North America was built. These branches created the foundation for the successful Bible enterprise that the BFBS established in the nineteenth century, but branches could only extend their influence so far. To reach the most remote regions of settlement in Britain’s North American colonies and in

¹ *The Forty-First Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1881), 31.

Canadian provinces after Confederation, BFBS auxiliaries relied upon colporteurs to cover enormous distances in order to bring bibles to those who lived at the edges of colonial expansion in Canada. These colporteurs were employed by the Bible Society's auxiliaries to carry their scriptures, often relying solely on commissions from the purchase of bibles as their remuneration. Colporteurs wrote reports each year to the auxiliary employing them, and these reports were featured prominently in the auxiliary's published annual reports, demonstrating the importance of colportage to the BFBS's enterprise in North America. Selections from these reports were also printed in the BFBS's Annual Reports that were printed in London and distributed around the world. The colporteurs' reports reveal the practical ways in which bibles were distributed and the unique challenges and circumstances that shaped local distribution. The emphasis on the financial aspects of colportage demonstrates the BFBS's commitment to the voluntary principle in which colporteurs distributed bibles in exchange for money. This "Bible transaction" affirmed the value of the book to the purchaser, contributed to the cost of the book's production and distribution, and helped pay the colporteur's wage. This Bible transaction also affirmed the BFBS's commitment to encouraging spiritual transformation through commerce and economic development, rather than in opposition to it. These priorities reveal the important differences between colportage and the work of more traditional Protestant missionaries. While both colporteurs and missionaries were celebrated for their persistence and stamina in facing the harsh Canadian landscape for a heavenly purpose, the colporteur's exclusive task was selling scriptures and promoting the BFBS's broader enterprise.

The other major form of local distribution employed by the Bible Society was through Biblewomen who were employed by local auxiliaries to distribute bibles within larger cities. The reports on Biblewomen were printed in the same annual reports as the colporteurs' reports, and a

comparison between the two highlights the differences in expectations and characterizations between the men and women who distributed the BFBS's bibles and their differing roles in the broader Bible enterprise. The Bible Society's local distribution through colporteurs and Biblewomen demonstrates the wide reach of its enterprise in the second half of the nineteenth century and the ideals that were associated with that enterprise. In the most remote colonial and national settlements, colporteurs could be found peddling cheap bibles, and Biblewomen brought bibles into homes in Canada's largest cities. Practically and materially, these distributors provided bibles to those who might not have otherwise been able to obtain them. But more importantly, colporteurs and Biblewomen were each an important reflection of the BFBS's ideals and contributed to the powerful narrative of Bible distribution as a redemptive and missional act. Their reports provided the BFBS's enterprise with an urgency and idealized sense of purpose that framed its Bible distribution as a matter of moral and spiritual consequence in Canada and around the world.

Early peddling in British North America

Travelling salesmen were not unknown in British North America before the BFBS began to employ its own booksellers to travel on behalf of its auxiliaries in the 1840s. Booksellers were among others who travelled as hawkers and peddlers with various goods in the early colonial period. The definition of hawking and peddling differs in that hawking is done when goods are moved about by horse and cart or some other type of vehicle, while peddling is done when a pedlar carries stock on his or her person. Typically, however, the terms are synonymous and used

interchangeably.² Early peddling in British North America was famously featured in Thomas Chandler Haliburton's essays about a travelling salesman in the instalments of his story *The Clockmaker: The Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick*, published together for the first time in 1836. In the tales of Sam Slick, a Yankee clockmaker peddling his wares travels with a companion and provides an inside glimpse of the tactics of hawking the clocks that he makes. Russell Johnston argues that Haliburton situates Sam Slicks within a context of consumerism wherein Slick was able to compel another character to buy his wares. "Slick managed Zeb's decision-making process by supplying the 'consumer' with information that he knew would prompt the right action – that is, a decision to purchase the clock. Slick created desire."³

The peddling of bibles by the BFBS's colporteurs shared important aspects of Sam Slick's trade, as both sought to discern buyers' tastes and provide goods that were in demand. An important distinction for the BFBS was that its own peddling was a charitable and religious enterprise rather than simply a commercial one. But as it was for Sam Slick, on-the-ground sales and distribution of bibles was a crucial part of the broader BFBS enterprise. In one of the UCBS's annual reports, one speaker described the BFBS's various offices through a metaphor, where each role reflected a part of the body: "the translators, as the brains of the Society, and the executives...as the eyes of that Society, looking out for members; and the subscribers – the men

² John Benson, "Hawking and Peddling in Canada, 1867-1914" in *Histoire Sociale/Social History* vol. 18 no 35 (May 1985), 76. In his study of early shopping in rural Upper Canada, Douglas McCalla debunks the idea of settlers subsisting on the goods they produce for themselves, what he calls the Robinson Crusoe myth. Instead, consumers made purchases based on tastes and desires of the type that Sam Slick created. Douglas McCalla, *Consumers in the Bush: Shopping in Rural Upper Canada* (McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, 2015), 148-52. See also Beatrice Craig's examination of consumption and production in early eastern Canada and the complex relationship between capitalism, consumption, and market preferences in Béatrice Craig, *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists: The Rise of a Market Culture in Eastern Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2009).

³ Russell Johnston, *Selling Themselves: The Emergence of Canadian Advertising* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 5.

who have been putting their hands into their pockets to make it possible for these eyes to utilize the members that present themselves to the vision of these men – as the hands of the Society; and the colporteurs as the feet.”⁴ The work of colportage was perceived as the most practical and on-the-ground manifestation of the BFBS’s Bible enterprise. Colporteurs filled an important rhetorical role as the feet of the Bible Society, and colporteurs’ anecdotes and records of their exploits were included in the annual reports of the various auxiliaries, showcasing the romance and the novelty of their distribution work. Colporteurs were praised for their efficiency and skill as salesmen, and their performance in selling bibles was lauded.

This image of the travelling salesman peddling his wares may suggest that hawking and peddling were largely rural practices, but as John Benson argues, they were an important form of retail before the expansion of fixed retail stores and outlets, and one that remained a critical form even as Canada underwent both urbanization and industrialization. In cities and in rural areas, travelling pedlars were important in providing goods that performed “a useful retailing function.”⁵ Hawkers sold items ranging from whiskey, tea, coffee, sugar, and fruits and vegetables, all while providing a convenient supply of the goods to many urban poor, filling a gap between the rapid urbanization and the slow industrialization and the presence of stores and shops. Colporteurs also operated in Canadian cities where their Bible distribution was ascribed as much importance as that of rural colporteurs.

An important example of the work of a travelling book and Bible salesman in the United States was Parson Weems, the famous travelling bookseller who sold bibles and other books on

⁴ *The Sixty-Fourth Annual Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society*, (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1904), 162.

⁵ John Benson, “Hawking and Peddling in Canada, 1867-1914,” *Histoire sociale- Social History*, vol. 18 no. 35 (mai-May 1985), 79.

behalf of Matthew Carey at the turn of the nineteenth century. In his examination of Parson Weems's bookselling, Francois Furstenberg highlights the shrewd way in which Weems was able to discern American consumers' tastes for books and bibles, and that this sense of the market informed the type of biography he came to write about George Washington. Furstenberg quotes the American historian Daniel Boorstin, who called Weems a "one man market research enterprise," who created George Washington into a national hero that was "calculatedly concocted to satisfy the demand."⁶ Mason Weems's awareness of market tastes and his careful attentiveness to his buyers' boundaries of religious tolerance contributed to his success as a bookseller, but most importantly to his success in producing a popular biography of Washington. In many ways the Bible Society's Canadian colporteurs were praised for a similar ability to appeal to the tastes and demands of the communities they visited, and their reports highlight the range of demands and unique circumstances for which their bibles were sold.

The BFBS and French Colportage

Colportage became an integral part of the BFBS's work around the world in the nineteenth century. Two decades after the Bible Society's founding in 1804, colportage was first being used as a method by which bibles were distributed for the BFBS. In France, Bible Societies were encouraging colporteurs to go out and "distribute Bibles and Testaments at a low price from cottage to cottage, from mansion to mansion, from hamlet to hamlet."⁷ The method grew from there and came to be employed in Europe by the middle of the nineteenth century.

⁶ See Francois Furstenberg, *In the name of the father: Washington's legacy, slavery, and the making of a nation* (Penguin Press, 2006), 140. See also note 73.

⁷ William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society* vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1904), 400.

The concept of colportage began in France under Jean Daniel Kieffer who was Professor of Oriental Languages in the Royal College of Paris who had begun to supervise an office of the BFBS in Paris in 1820. He developed the method of colportage in which pedlars carried bibles to individual readers in order to avoid the censure of the Roman Catholic Church.⁸ His successor in the work of Bible distribution in France was Victor de Pressensé, who was nominated for the role by the BFBS's Paris corresponding committee in 1832. He maintained close contact with the BFBS Committee in London, and oversaw an extraordinary network of colporteurs in France and abroad. M. de Pressensé remained an agent of the BFBS in France until his death in 1870. He was hailed by the BFBS as a key figure in creating the system by which travelling salesmen distributed its bibles.⁹ The BFBS committee in London printed a full memorial to de Pressensé in its annual report for 1871, lamenting the throes of the Franco-Prussian War in disrupting its Bible distribution in France and the loss of de Pressensé, one of their longest-standing agents.¹⁰ The BFBS celebrated Pressensé as his innovations spawned the use of travelling Bible salesmen that became very popular across British North America and Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century. In particular, Pressensé trained French-speaking Protestants to provide bibles to French-speaking Roman Catholics, a task that became an important part of Canadian colportage.

The earliest efforts to employ a colporteur in British North America were undertaken by James Thomson, the BFBS's travelling agent who toured Britain's North American colonies

⁸ See Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 160ff.

⁹ See William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, (London: John Murray, 1904), 192-199.

¹⁰ *The Sixty-Seventh Annual Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1871), 6-17.

between 1838 and 1842 establishing branches and strengthening distribution networks. In a letter to Andrew Brandram from Montreal, Thomson related the discussions he had with the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society's committee "in regard to the distribution of the Scriptures among the French population here by means of colporteurs or hawkers." Thomson wrote that one person had been previously employed "for some time in thus hawking books among the French population; but he is an English Canadian and of course not so suitable as a Frenchman would be." Because of this, and with the assurance that the BFBS Committee in London had already authorized the employment of two Bible vendors in Lower Canada, Thomson sent the Montreal Committee's petition to Brandram, asking for "two of Mr. De Pressensé's colporteurs, that is two of those very persons whom he has already employed in the service, and in whom he has particular confidence. Our country is new in this respect, and the thing is untried with us, so that we required to act at the beginning with all the judgment possible, in order that the results may be good." He asked in particular that Pressensé "select for us two of his well tried and best men, and send them out to this city in the spring, say by way of Havre and New York. I do hope you will grant us this boon, and in this way; and doing so you will confirm a very great special favour on the Canadians, and on the Montreal Bible Society.¹¹ The Montreal Auxiliary's desire to employ French speaking colporteurs made international connections between London, Paris, and Lower Canada that persisted through the second half of the nineteenth century. The use of French-speaking Protestant colporteurs reveals the transnational movement of the ideas that underpinned the BFBS's enterprise and the people that worked to extend that enterprise.

¹¹ Thomson to Brandram, Montreal, 20 December 1838 (no. 76), British and Foreign Bible Society archives, Cambridge University Library, BSA/X/T.

In British North America, the use of colportage was limited until the 1850s, as auxiliaries relied mostly on its agents to expand its work. The UCBS, which became the largest and most well-funded auxiliary of the BFBS by the time of Confederation, first lists its colporteurs as volunteers in its 1848 annual report, in contrast to its paid agent James Richardson. The BFBS auxiliary at Nova Scotia appears to be the first Society that employed a colporteur full-time in 1848. The auxiliary at New Brunswick reported in 1851 the “sales and distributions” of its colporteur, acknowledging the £40 received from the Parent Society in London to support him.¹² Eventually, the UCBS began employing colporteurs to carry their bibles exclusively.

Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century, colportage was a mainstay among the BFBS’s British North American auxiliaries as a method for distributing scriptures, though the number of colporteurs employed remained small. Despite the few colporteurs in operation in this early period, the method of employing travelling salesmen became increasingly important aspect for their work and colporteurs grew in their importance in distributing bibles throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Ottawa’s annual report for 1886 listed eight colporteurs engaged for various lengths of time in the year, ranging from as much as five months’ employment to sixteen days. In 1890, six colporteurs were employed by the UCBS auxiliary. The Quebec Auxiliary in 1896 reported: “Your Committee, during the year, has employed six colporteurs and one Biblewoman. Five of these for twelve months, one for nine months, and one for two months.”¹³ Colportage became a common practice for BFBS auxiliaries.

¹² *The Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1851), cxiv.

¹³ *The Sixty-First Report of the Quebec Bible Society, Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, (Quebec: Quebec Bible Society, 1896), 17.

Indeed, this growth in Canadian colportage mirrored the BFBS's global expansion of the practice in the nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, the Society's colportage was one of the consistent elements of its work in each of the many countries around the world in which it operated. The BFBS's periodical *The Bible in the World* reveals the extraordinary scope and significance of colportage to its work in 1905, stating that the BFBS employed 930 colporteurs around the world. "If our eyes could trace these humble Bible-sellers up and down the world amid the many-coloured conditions of their service, we should see them busy among Indian rice-fields and along Chinese waterways, over Canadian prairies and through the Australian bush, and beside the great African lakes... Last year these colporteurs sold over 2,250,000 copies of the Scriptures – a total far above all previous records."¹⁴ Colportage had become one of the most important aspects of the BFBS's global Bible distribution enterprise, a project of which Canadian colporteurs were a part.

The Work of Canadian Colporteurs

The instructions for colporteurs were clearly laid out for all of those who wished to travel on behalf of the BFBS to carry their bibles. In British Columbia, rules were given to colporteurs which were derived from the BFBS's London Committee's policies for colporteurs (see Appendix II).¹⁵ These guidelines laid out in ten articles the way colporteurs should care for their stock of bibles, note sales figures, report monthly to their auxiliary's committee a summary of labour, and keep accounts of those who gave to the Bible cause. Colporteurs were also instructed

¹⁴ *The Bible in the World* vol. 1 (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905.), 170.

¹⁵ Minutes of the New Westminster auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Provincial Archives of British Columbia Q/R/B77n, 23-27.

to make note of the names of those whose extreme poverty might hinder them from purchasing a Bible, in which case the colporteur were “authorized to supply according to your own discretion.” Perhaps most importantly, colporteurs were reminded that “the Society you serve is not a Missionary Society employing men to go forth simply to converse or preach, but a publishing institution, and that its great work and the prominent work of all connected with it must be to circulate printed truth.” Nevertheless, colporteurs were allowed to engage in “personal religious conversation with those you meet, especially with the unpenitent,” though the manner of those conversations was to be guarded. The BFBS had strict guidelines for its colporteurs and defined very clearly the differences between their work as colporteurs and other missionaries, and that they were set apart from other missionary organizations. In selling bibles for the BFBS, colporteurs were constantly treading the interstitial space between an evangelistic missionary cause and a competitive corporate book trade.

The role of the colporteur was unique within the BFBS organization, and was a separate role from the travelling agent. The key differences between the agents employed by the BFBS auxiliaries and colporteurs were the responsibilities each was given and the audiences for their work. Agents were tasked with extending the reach of the auxiliary by establishing local branches in smaller communities and raising the profile of the BFBS work in the towns they visited. Agents preached during church services, and in towns where there was no branch of the BFBS, they looked for local businessmen and leaders to form a committee whom could liaise with the central auxiliary. Although they might carry a number of bibles with them, their principle task was not the distribution of bibles, nor was their remuneration tied to their bookselling, which in contrast was a defining characteristic of the BFBS’s colporteurs.

The most significant element of the colporteur's work in Canada was the vast distances that were typically travelled. Colporteurs were often employed to carry bibles to communities and settlements that suffered from intermittent commercial shipments because of their isolation, and, as such, reaching those neighbourhoods necessitated colporteurs travelling great distances to them. In the introduction to its report on colportage in 1902, the UCBS cites its circulating of the scriptures "more especially in the *outlying* and *more remote* portions of our land." Earlier a UCBS colporteur reported that, in remote places, the individual settlements themselves were separated by considerable distances: "I have a notion to stop this month in Wollaston to finish the supply there, as there is quite a population moving and stationary, though the settlers are far apart, making it severe labour to carry books so many miles per day. I do not grudge my labour among so many different religions and classes of people; but I feel an earnest desire to see them all supplied with these valuable books and I hope that God will encourage and bless to see their use."¹⁶ The distance between settlements was one of the challenges colporteurs reported most frequently in their reports.

Because of the distances that colporteurs traveled, their role in making the Bible available to anyone who wished to obtain one was an important theme that emphasized the types of places and people that would not normally be able to purchase them. John Lowry wrote of one community he visited in 1881 that "[v]ery few knew where the Bible Depository was; besides, many will buy the Bibles when you go to their houses, who never think of going for one." He also wrote that "I found a family in the Township of Aldboro' [near present-day St. Thomas in southern Ontario] without the Bible, although there are three Branches of the Society in the

¹⁶ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 31.

township, which shows that Colportage is the only means by which a certain class of society can be reached.”¹⁷ The reach of the Bible Society’s branches was already extensive by the 1880s, but Lowry found that, in spite of this, colportage remained an effective way of reaching those who might not otherwise set out to obtain bibles on their own accord.

Western Canada was an important field for colportage, and the UCBS was the auxiliary that oversaw the colportage and agency for the territory west of Ontario. James Patterson was instructed to travel from Winnipeg as far west as Calgary, but he stopped at Medicine Hat after being advised that any further travel west would require more equipment than he had. In a single month, Patterson “travelled 1180 miles, made 738 visits, and sold 272 copies of the scriptures,” meaning that one copy of the bible was sold at roughly a third of the visits made, and a single bible for every four and a bit miles travelled.¹⁸ While most settlements had branches of the UCBS, colporteurs operating in what would become Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba were employed by the UCBS and reported their progress to the UCBS committee.

Throughout Canada, not only the distances, but also the conditions of roads and weather featured regularly in the reports. Richard Pyke, a colporteur working in the Township of Woodhouse in 1884 on behalf of the UCBS, noted the difficulties of his work owing to the adverse travel conditions on account of inclement weather. “The first month has been a peculiarly trying one for Colportage work – the continued rain and consequent deep mud making it almost impossible to carry on the work with success, which has in my case, at times, had a very depressing effect. But thank God it has not been all cloudy; the unfeigned pleasure

¹⁷ *Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society*, (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1881), 31.

¹⁸ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884),

manifested by some that they are thus supplied with copies of God's Word they can read is cheering amidst the gloom.”¹⁹ A colporteur’s report for the Ottawa Auxiliary cited “the unusual severity of the winter, and the consequent hindrances to travels” as a reason for Bible distribution in that year being less than hoped for. “All the records that have been received for last winter’s experience in travelling,” the report concluded, “show that the difficulties and hardships encountered were unprecedently great. A rapid succession of heavy snow storms and long continued extreme cold were very trying. Several proposed journeys had to be abandoned.”²⁰ Seasonal conditions could have a significant impact on the number of bibles sold and the number of miles travelled.

As access to distant settlements improved, leaders of the Canadian Bible Society auxiliaries recognized the changing dynamics of Bible distribution, and reorganized its colportage accordingly. “Your board have recently revised their fields of labour,” declared the UCBS’s report in 1867, stating that it had “taken care that on the whole the Colporteurs shall be confined to the remote and thinly-populated portions of the country. It is not always, however, that the labours of a colporteur are found to be superfluous even in older settlements.”²¹ The primary concern for colporteurs and the auxiliaries employing them was that bibles be made available to those who were unable to obtain the Bible at an urban BFBS depository or through a local branch. But as transportation networks developed, the UCBS, in particular, recognized the changing landscape of that aspect of their work, with the recognition that any settlement, old and new, could present a fruitful market to a colporteur.

¹⁹ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 31. 5833

²⁰ *The Thirty-Second Annual Report, Ottawa Auxiliary to the BFBS, 1886-87*, 18

²¹ *The Twenty-Seventh Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1867), 13.

The importance of colportage despite the expansion of transportation and shipping networks was highlighted in an extract printed in the UCBS's own annual report in which the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society's colporteur made a lengthy appeal for the continued importance of colportage. He argued that although some expressed the opinion that colportage was a waste of money, colportage continued to be successful because there was still a "keen demand for the colporteur's books." In one case, until he had arrived in a particular township, the people there "had been in absolute destitution of the Bread of Life... In the remoter districts, recently settled, and with a sparse population the importance of colportage has been still more strikingly proved," he continued. "To visit them with the Scriptures is truly Evangelistic work; it is to remind them of the want of their spirits, of the love of God, and of other divine and eternal realities. But few call on them on such an errand, and therefore is the presence of the Colporteur the more suggestive."²²

Even as the distances between communities became less and less problematic for the movement of goods, local auxiliaries continued to express the importance of the work of colportage. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, transportation infrastructure and supply lines were much improved, and fewer families faced "Bible destitution," even in more remote parts of the country. During a regular monthly meeting of the UCBS on 21 October 1890, the report from Mr. Thomas Paton was submitted, and the committee highlighted the conditions he encountered in Southern Alberta. "Mr. Paton spent one month in the newly settled district south of Calgary; the distance between settlers being from 2 ½ to 4 miles, so he could not visit more than from 4 to 10 houses daily; he found them well provided with Bibles but their use was very

²² *The Twenty-Seventh Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1867), 19.

limited, and the whole district had been without any religious services during the previous winter; He visited many homes, cattle [and] horse ranches – met and had services with all classes of people.”²³ The far-flung areas of southern Alberta were “well provided with Bibles” by 1890, but still Paton found his visit there worthwhile. Throughout the nineteenth century colportage remained an important means by which the Bible Society both distributed bibles and promoted its enterprise.

An additional concern for colporteurs that was associated with the distances that needed to be travelled was the BFBS’s founding policy of distributing the Bible “without note or comment.” The regulation that colporteurs would carry no other piece of literature was rooted in the strict guidelines that governed the BFBS’s mandate to work in bibles without added material. This was difficult in Canada because of the large distances that had to be covered by Canadian colporteurs, and the issue was raised in 1904 when the Bible Society auxiliaries met to discuss the federation of those societies under a single organization. The BFBS’s Foreign Secretary John Ritson declared to the gathering of Canadian BFBS leaders: “We are bound by law 1 to every subscriber of the Society not to spend a penny of Bible Society work on any other work than circulating Scriptures. Then if we pay the full salary of a colporteur, that colporteur ought not to carry with him any literature but ours.”²⁴ The policy was clear that colporteurs employed by the Bible Society must only carry BFBS bibles, and the literature promoting the Bible Society’s works, so that none could ascertain a bias or preference to a particular denominational position.

²³ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, LAC MG17F1 Volume II 21 October 1890.

²⁴ Canadian Bible Society Conference Proceedings BSA/D1/XX, 220.

The disadvantages for colporteurs of carrying only BFBS's books was articulated in some of the auxiliaries' reports of their work. The UCBS's 1902 report addressed shortcomings in the number of bibles distributed by its colporteurs by citing the competition of other peddlers and publishers: "the fact that large quantities of Bibles with hymns of the different denominations are sold by book peddlers throughout the country; also, that Bibles are sent out by publishing houses with religious and denominational newspapers, tends to reduce the sales of our colporteurs, who carry and circulate the Bible only, *without note or comment.*"²⁵ One colporteur named Mr. Turnbull wrote to the UCBS committee requesting that he be sent ten "Teachers' Bibles," of a type that included additional teaching aids and notes that contravened the BFBS's regulations. The committee responded by suggesting that the colporteur could obtain the bibles, "and on delivering such a Bible that he will explain that this is an act of personal courtesy and that the work of the Bible Society is to translate, print and circulate the Bible without note or comment."²⁶ The BFBS auxiliaries stressed to their colporteurs the importance of following this rule.

Nonetheless, there were exceptions to this policy. Early in its work in Upper Canada, the Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society (RTS) cooperated with the UCBS to their mutual benefit. Jesse Ketchum was a businessman in York and a founding member of both societies. Ketchum left property for the use of both societies, which did much to bring the two together in cooperation. At times the joint ownership of the property challenged the exclusivity that the BFBS demanded in its operations. As its colporteurs faced long distances to sell its

²⁵ *The Sixty-Second Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1902), 5.

²⁶ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 18 September 1906, Library and Archives Canada, MG17F1 vol. II, 7 October 1905, 269.

bibles, the UCBS overcame some of the costs and difficulties of its colportage by cooperating with the Religious Tract Society. Particularly in the North-West Territories and Manitoba, colporteurs carried bibles and religious literature for both the RTS and UCBS.²⁷

This arrangement demonstrates that at times the BFBS's Canadian auxiliaries worked together with other organizations, and that the BFBS's strict regulations of exclusivity were locally mediated according to the unique demands posed in Canada. The UCBS annual report for 1884 lists six colporteurs employed by the Society for bible distribution, and several colporteurs employed jointly with the Religious Tract and Book Society (RTS). The six circulated 5318 copies of the scriptures, while the Tract Society's colporteurs sold 1765 of the UCBS's bibles. Roughly a quarter of the UCBS's bibles that were distributed through colportage were distributed by colporteurs employed jointly by the RTS and UCBS.²⁸ In the early 1860s, the Kingston Auxiliary to the London Religious Tract Society employed a colporteur, his expenses having been met in part by that Society and "partly by the Bible Society. This union of effort between institutions so accordant in spirit and aim had wrought advantageously to both."²⁹ For some Bible Society colporteurs, the restriction on the books that could be distributed proved too prohibitive. One colporteur for the UCBS named Mr. Currie wrote in his resignation to the Board that "he did not like being kept so much away from home as the service of the Society requires; and as he also wished to be able to sell other good books as well as Bibles, he asked to be

²⁷ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 18 September 1906, Library and Archives Canada, MG17F1 vol. II, 17 May 1904, 194.

²⁸ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 5.

²⁹ *Annual Report of the Kingston Auxiliary to the London Religious Tract Society*, (Kingston: 1863), 7.

allowed to give up the work at the end of November.”³⁰ The BFBS policies proved difficult in the colporteurs’ increasingly competitive work of Bible-selling.

Proselytizing and evangelism were also prohibited for the BFBS’s colporteurs. The principle of “no note or comment” being added to the BFBS scriptures extended to any activities which would be seen to privilege a particular denomination. As such, colporteurs were expected to cease any responsibility or duties as a missionary for a church while acting on the behalf of the BFBS. In 1904, as the BFBS’s Foreign Secretary John Ritson led discussions about the work of Canadian auxiliaries, he entertained the idea that colporteurs could be employed on a part-time basis, but emphasized the need for those colporteurs to leave whatever other missionary work for which they were employed to ensure that bibles were being distributed among unbelievers rather than peddled among the Christians whom those missionary workers were already serving. In such circumstances, he argued, “[missionaries] are merely selling among their Christian people and not touching the heathen… They sell nothing but Testaments; they are only touching their own people. They ought to do that for nothing - - it is a part of their own work and the Bible Society ought not to pay a penny towards that work. That is a part of the work of the Missionary.” In contrast, Ritson argued that “it is our work to send the Scriptures to heathen, to those people who cannot receive them through other channels; and if we subsidize missionaries, we must take care that those missionaries distribute Scriptures among more than their own flock. We should not say ‘Take half of each day.’ But we should insist on those men going out for a

³⁰ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 18 September 1906, Library and Archives Canada, MG17F1 vol. II.

fortnight into some distant place where there is no minister, and then giving a fortnight to their own work.”³¹

Citing an example in Portugal, Ritson explained that although its colporteurs were paid a partial salary to carry the BFBS’s scriptures, they were also allowed to carry pamphlets for the Tract Society, which provided a large commission for the sale of any pamphlet. The colporteurs continued to receive their salary from the Bible Society, but pushed the pamphlets from the Tract Society in order to obtain a larger commission.³² As had traditionally been the case with the Bible Society’s business, emphasis here was once again placed on the meticulous restrictions upon the use of funds being seen to support the work of anything but the distribution of Scriptures and thus supporting work that might have its own denominational or sectarian influence.³³

Unlike missionaries and pioneer clergymen who provided religious literature and bibles to those within their mission fields and parishes, the Bible Society’s entrenched policy of insisting that as a rule bibles be purchased rather than given away was a defining aspect of colportage. The BFBS consistently discouraged the distribution of bibles for free, believing that the exchange of money for the book infused the book greater value. That principle was clearly articulated in the December 1886 issue of the *Bible Society Monthly Reporter* in an article entitled “Cheap Sales Better than Promiscuous Free Distribution.” Although some circumstances necessitated the distribution of bibles as a donation to some, the article argues that, “in general,

³¹ Proceedings of the Canadian Bible Society Conference, Toronto. BFBS Archives, Cambridge University Library, BSA D2/14/48 231.

³² Proceedings of the Canadian Bible Society Conference, Toronto. BFBS Archives, Cambridge University Library, BSA D2/14/48 231.

³³ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 50-55.

we have found cheap sale preferable to gratuitous distribution.” One Bible Society agent’s own cautions were included in the article, who wrote that “I regard gratis distribution as undesirable and out of harmony with God’s general procedure, that man must do his part – often a very laborious one – in order to obtain what is, after all, the gift of God.”³⁴ For many leaders of the BFBS, the belief was that if people paid out some money for a bible, that there was a greater chance that it would be used. “When it is remembered that all these have been purchased, we have good ground for believing that they have been *read*, and we may hope, in many instances, with spiritual profit.”³⁵ The Bible transaction that occurred between a colporteur and an individual purchaser infused the book with added value because of the money that had been exchanged. That monetary transaction was then directly linked to the spiritual profit that it afforded, as a reflection of the close association between the monetary business of Bible distribution and the religious aims of the BFBS’s enterprise.

The commitment to this monetary transaction remained even where poverty or a lack of means prohibited some from obtaining a Bible from a colporteur. In William Nicholls’s 1860 report of his colportage on behalf of the Peterborough Branch Society, he wrote that though a “very rough looking man” had read a portion of his Bible and wished to purchase one, he was unable to at the time. “He said he would be glad to buy one, but really he had no money, but if I would call again in a week’s time, he would take care to have the price of one ready: I made

³⁴ “Cheap Sales Better than Promiscuous Free Distribution,” in *Bible Society Monthly Reporter* (December, 1886), 205.

³⁵ “Cheap Sales Better than Promiscuous Free Distribution,” in *Bible Society Monthly Reporter* (December, 1886), 207. For further analysis of the BFBS’s policy against distributing bibles for free, see Leslie Howsam, “The Nineteenth-Century Bible Society and ‘the Evil of Gratuitous Distribution,’” in *Free Print and Non-Commercial Publishing since 1700*, ed. James Raven (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000), 119-123.

arrangements with a friend in the neighbourhood to see him supplied.”³⁶ The colporteur was not willing to give a Bible away for free, but instead preferred to come back when the man was able to pay. This commitment made the cost of the books all the more important for colporteurs, and a low price was something that made the Bible all the more appealing for potential buyers of limited means. “I found a great many poor,” one colporteur reported, “and many were thankful that our Society enables them to buy cheap Bibles for their children; more would have bought Bibles but for the want of money. I found a poor German woman very anxious to get a large type German Bible so that she could read God’s Word for herself. I sold her one at a reduction of 40 cents. She was very thankful for it. An Italian also showed great anxiety to possess a Bible.”³⁷ The poor German woman’s desire for a Bible merited a discount from the colporteur, but notably, the “want of money” did not lead him to make gratuitous gifts of the bibles he carried. The transaction of bibles being given in exchange for money was foundational to the value of the book, and much more broadly, that transaction was at the core of the BFBS’s Bible enterprise in Canada

In his report to the UCBS committee in July of 1880, John Lowry wrote that “[T]he people were greatly surprised by the cheapness of the Books,” a response that enabled greater sales among them.³⁸ In his report for March 1881, James Badger remarked that the people in Gravenhurst West “expressed their thankfulness to the Upper Canada Bible Society for sending the Word of God, at such cheap prices, among them.”³⁹ The BFBS’s commitment to the principle

³⁶ The Fifty-Sixth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1860), 166.

³⁷ The Forty-Seventh Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1887), 41.

³⁸ The Forty-First Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1881) 1881

³⁹ The Forty-First Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1881), 32.

of selling bibles rather than giving them away was a prominent feature in colporteurs' reports and defined much of their work, regardless of the purchaser's status or wealth. In addition to noting the poor who made a great sacrifice to obtain the Bible, colporteurs' reports also highlighted those who were wealthier and capable of paying for a copy of the Bible without trouble. In Thunder Bay, J. E. Taylor wrote that he "sold a good number of Testaments, and found the people very well to do and able to pay for a Bible."⁴⁰

In addition to their skill as salesmen and the importance of the voluntary purchase of bibles from colporteurs, the travelling salesmen were also an idealized representation of the larger BFBS enterprise. Much more than just a practical way to distribute bibles to outlying communities, colportage embodied the ideals and the imagination of the Bible's place in the world. For the BFBS leaders, colportage was the place where God's divine work in making His Word known was combined with the human effort that served as vehicle for that purpose. They described colporteurs as hearty, adventurous, and tough. At the conference for the federation of the Canadian Bible Society auxiliaries, the BFBS's foreign secretary John Ritson played on the image of the hard working, industrious, and efficient colporteur hoping to convince the delegates that keeping depositories in cities was an unnecessarily costly policy.⁴¹ The perception that colporteurs worked very hard in trying conditions was affirmed by a UCBS colporteur named McPhail, whose resignation, which was recorded in the minutes-book of the UCBS board, "did not take the Board by surprise" because of his age and the "arduous work" in which he had been

⁴⁰ The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 28.

⁴¹ Proceedings of the Canadian Bible Society Conference, British and Foreign Bible Society archives, Cambridge University Library, BSA D2/14/48, 140.

employed for fifteen years.⁴² The colporteur's work was consistently held up as difficult because of the toil that the travel imposed on them over long distances and difficult terrain.

Colporteurs were depicted as rugged men who overcame extraordinary physical hardships to bring bibles to those whose remote location prohibited them from obtaining a Bible. This is consistent with Myra Rutherford's description of missionaries being associated alongside trappers, hunters, and explorers whose physical exploits were a part of a wider masculine culture.⁴³ In the same way that the Bible Society romanticized colporteurs, missionaries were also presented in idealistic terms of masculinity, thrift, and diligence. Gail Edwards demonstrates that the language of the Methodist Missionary Society also used this tactic: "The late-nineteenth-, early twentieth-century Methodist Church of Canada constructed missionary heroes – male and female – in its magazines, pamphlets, and biographies. By emphasizing the missionary as a romanticized figure of bravery and duty, the Methodists sought to create and sustain interest in the missionary enterprise in British Columbia among a metropolitan readership."⁴⁴ As Edwards and others have noted, missionaries' idealization was in part a result of racial dynamics between European missionaries and the North American natives to whom they ministered, but another element of their exploits that was especially shared with colporteurs was the perception that they were encountering new territory and bringing Christian ideals into a spiritually barren land.⁴⁵

⁴² *The Forty-First Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1881), 6.

⁴³ Myra Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), 10.

⁴⁴ Gail Edwards, "'The Picturesqueness of His Accent and Speech': Methodist Missionary Narratives and William Henry Pierce's Autobiography," *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad* ed. Alvyn Austin, Jamie S. Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 67.

⁴⁵ Sarah Carter emphasizes the growing reliance on missionaries as agents of assimilation, rooted in their movement into undiscovered places. Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1990), 23.

Bible Society colporteurs found it noteworthy when people of different races and nationalities purchased bibles. F. E. Rouleau reported that in his work on the north side of Rock Lake, “two French half-breed families were tented near the house where I stayed. One of the Half-breeds sent word that they wanted to see me. I accordingly went to their tent, where they made me very welcome... They had the Testament that I gave them last year in their house, but they had not read it since I had read it for them the year previous. One of the men told me that he had always the hope that some one would come round who could read French, to do so for him. We had a profitable time together talking of the love of God. The next day I met again with some Half-breed families, in another settlement, one of whom could read French. I gave a Testament, which was received with great show of pleasure.”⁴⁶ John Lowry wrote in the 1881 report that “I sold one Bible to a German Romanist and one Testament to another Romanist; a coloured woman bought two Bibles and five Testaments.”⁴⁷ Noting unique and unusual characteristics about the purchasers signalled to the reports’ readers that the Bible was reaching beyond white Anglo-Protestant communities, adding to the sense that the Bible Society’s enterprise was actively bolstering the Christian character of the country among groups who were seen as less naturally oriented towards Britain’s Christian heritage.

Colporteurs also noted their work among immigrants and highlighted the importance of bringing them bibles. One seller wrote that “[m]y colportage work in Winnipeg has been, besides visiting immigrants, in visiting the numerous tents, shanties, and smaller houses, where the poorer classes most likely need the Scriptures are supposed to live, and the columns on the other

⁴⁶ *The Forty-First Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1881), 34.

⁴⁷ *The Forty-First Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1881), 31.

side of the report show each day's work. Those found without Bibles were mostly bachelors living in tents and shanties. One family could not read. Those without Bibles, who could read, except two, were supplied either by sale or grant.”⁴⁸ Colporteurs' reports shared with other sections of the annual reports published that featured stories of Bible distribution around the world and among foreign people in exotic places. In many ways, domestic distribution by colporteurs reflected this same emphasis on the exotic and the unknown, and their success in distributing bibles to immigrants and to those who were not of European descent added to significance of their work.

Bible-selling among labourers and tradesmen, especially in work camps, was another aspect of their work highlighted in their reports. Often the rugged masculinity with which colporteurs were characterized was a parallel to the masculine and rough environment of these work camps. Distributing bibles in labouring camps reinforced the sense that bibles belonged in all places, and that no place was so rough to be impenetrable to the Bible's power. As an example of the demand for bibles among miners and railroad men, a colporteur for the UCBS wrote of his visit to Wollaston Mines where he found “some demand for Bibles, &c, from the miners and railroad men in the vicinity.”⁴⁹ One colporteur for the Ottawa Auxiliary reported: “At one lumbering depot I found that the proprietor had considerably bought two large Bibles from one of your colporteurs, and placed one in the office and one in the dining-room. Although the Bible was a sadly neglected book among the shantymen, as well as others, I was told that, on Sundays, these Bibles were frequently read by both Protestants and Catholics.”⁵⁰ Another

⁴⁸ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 31.

⁴⁹ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 31.

⁵⁰ *Thirty-Second Annual Report Ottawa Auxiliary* (Ottawa: Ottawa Auxiliary Bible Society, 1887), 18-19.

anecdote from the same annual report for the Ottawa auxiliary describes a colporteur's success among workers in remote regions. "More of the shanty men than usual had taken the Scriptures, previously purchased, to the woods with them," it was reported. "He witnessed, however, many proofs of ignorance and superstition. One objection to the books was that there was no cross on their covers. Another objection was that they contained nothing about Joseph and Mary, and when it was shown to be groundless, a copy was purchased."⁵¹ Reports of successful distribution among workers in remote camps added to the image of the colporteur at home in masculine, rough, and unrefined places, and spoke to the power of the Bible's appeal among those who might otherwise be seen not to need such a book.

Colporteurs also attended fairs and exhibitions, occupying booths and spaces where they sold their bibles. J. E. Taylor traveled to Guelph and, with a letter from the Secretary of the Bible Society branch there, obtained space in the town's fair to sell the BFBS's bibles. "What made this fair so interesting," he wrote, "was the great sale of God's Word. My sales were very large, and numbers expressed their pleasure at seeing our noble Bible Society represented at our large fairs. When I gave them the pamphlet containing the 215 different languages they were quite surprised, it seemed to give them a renewed interest in our work. I trust that they went home impressed with the necessity and desire of helping the cause."⁵² In September 1906, the UCBS's kiosk had been demolished at the Exhibition Grounds in September 1906, and although the cause was not noted, the President "urged on the Board, the importance of having a strong representative to wait on the Exhibition authorities, with a view to secure a proper permanent

⁵¹ *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Ottawa Auxiliary*, (Ottawa: Ottawa Auxiliary Bible Society, 1887), 19.

⁵² *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 29.

place for the Society’s exhibit in future years.”⁵³ Public fairs and exhibitions were often important venues at which the BFBS’s colporteurs found willing purchasers. They did not always find success in distributing bibles and raising support at rural fairs, however. In 1884, the UCBS’s colporteur Mr. Patterson reported that the Exhibition at Portage la Prairie Fairs “was not a very successful undertaking either for the Bible Society or for others interested in it, but the exhibit by the Society of scriptures in six languages and in raised letters for the blind appeared to awaken considerable interest and was well noticed by the press.”⁵⁴ Nevertheless, public events were important venues for colportage.

Biblewomen and Local Distribution

Another important element of the BFBS’s local distribution was that carried out by Biblewomen. In addition to colporteurs, auxiliaries employed women to carry bibles and solicit subscriptions in urban centres. Like colporteurs, these Biblewomen held the important role as the “feet” of the organization, carrying scriptures into places where it could be difficult for people to obtain them. Indeed, Biblewomen were classed as colporteurs in the auxiliaries’ expenditures and reports. The Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society cited the “disbursements which include the salary of an additional colporteur” who was a Biblewoman working in that city.⁵⁵ Biblewomen were thus included in the project of local Bible distribution alongside colporteurs, and, as such, Biblewomen became an important part of the local distribution of bibles and the public activities of auxiliaries in city centres.

⁵³ Minutes of the Upper Canada Bible Society, 18 September 1906, Library and Archives Canada, MG17F1 vol II, 306.

⁵⁴ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 6.

⁵⁵ *Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society*, (Montreal, Lovell & Sons, 1907), 13.

In spite of their similarities with colporteurs, Biblewomen operated in ways that separated them from male colporteurs, and the depiction of them in auxiliaries' annual reports was also distinct.⁵⁶ One difference between colporteurs and Biblewomen was the geographical boundaries of their work. Where colporteurs were celebrated for the vast distances they covered and the difficult terrain they overcame in order to bring bibles where none were available, Biblewomen operated exclusively in well-established urban centres. Like colporteurs, Biblewomen were celebrated for their hard work and their persistence. Instead of celebrating their success at selling bibles, however, reports trumpeted a Biblewoman's ability to bring respectability and gentility to neighbourhoods and homes where the hardships of industrialization and urbanization were evident.⁵⁷ There is no mention of any Biblewomen travelling great distances and overcoming physical and geographical challenges, notes that are common in colporteurs' reports. Instead, Biblewomen are much more often described as entering the homes of the poor, the needy, and the sick, activities that are absent from male colporteurs' reports. The home in the city was the most common setting in which the Biblewoman's work was undertaken. In their analysis of gendered spaces and roles in England, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue that, "Bible Associations and other Benevolent undertakings... wrenched open a space for women in the extended activities of church and chapel." Although women's involvement in public religious affairs was seen by some as a transgression of social mores, it

⁵⁶ Some of these distinctions and the proliferation of Biblewomen around the world through Protestant missions is explored in Valerie Griffiths, "Biblewomen from London to China: The Transnational Appropriation of a Female Mission Idea," *Women's History Review* 17, no. 4 (September 1, 2008): 521–41.

⁵⁷ For an example of the urban circumstances in which Biblewomen worked, see Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993); See also the classic study of urban challenges in Montreal in Herbert Ames, *The City below the Hill* (Montreal: The Bishop Engraving and Printing Company, 1897).

was generally regarded that a Biblewoman carrying out work in the privacy of the home operated in a space where it was appropriate for her to do so.⁵⁸ In her study of nineteenth century British Methodist women, Jennifer M. Lloyd notes the “increasing rhetoric of domesticity in evangelical circles by mid-century,” and that some exceptional female evangelicals “stepped out of their domestic environments to engage in philanthropy, founding missions to working men, rescuing prostitutes, organizing mothers’ meetings, campaigning for temperance, and recruiting and training Biblewomen.”⁵⁹ The role of the Biblewoman in the city opened avenues for philanthropic work for women who were otherwise discouraged from public service.

Where the rugged masculinity of the colporteur qualified him for work in the field, it was the gentility and grace of the Biblewoman enabled her for effective ministry in the city. “Long may the gentle Biblewoman be spared to continue her work,” read the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society’s report on Biblewomen, after highlighting a list of their work: “a blind man longing for the Biblewoman’s visits that he might hear God’s Word read; an aged couple listening like little children to the old, old story; the sick and afflicted visited and comforted; the overburdened mother cheered; the wayward and wicked warned; the dying trusting the Saviour.”⁶⁰ Reports emphasized the maternal characteristics by which Biblewomen offered care and compassion alongside a Bible, caring for the sick as a part of their ministry. By working primarily with women in cities, the place and scope of the Biblewomen’s impact also stood in stark contrast to the impact of the colporteur. The distribution of bibles overland to remote regions and across

⁵⁸ See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (Women in Culture and Society) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 430.

⁵⁹ Jennifer Lloyd, *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism: Persistent Preachers, 1807-1907*, (Gender in History) (Manchester: Manchester University Press ; 2009), 7.

⁶⁰ *Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society*, (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, LTD., 1907), 89.

very difficult terrain was placed within the context of an expanding empire and nation. The restricted scope of women's distribution, it seems, was deemed necessary because of perceptions of women's gentility and fragility.

Another contrast to the colporteurs' work was that Biblewomen were rarely celebrated for their performance in selling scriptures. Male colporteurs were explicit in stating the number of bibles sold and recalled anecdotally instances where the exchange of money was a crucial part of the Bible transaction with an individual. But the work of Biblewomen seems to be described without the financial performance tied to their work, as if they operated in an entirely separate sphere. Nonetheless, Biblewomen still emphasized their stewardship with the books, and their reports still celebrated the sale of bibles. "Quite a number of Bibles have been sold this year in the district," read one report. In addition, the Biblewomen's care for the sick and time spent with individuals was credited as the facilitator of Bible sales. "Our Biblewoman sold six Bibles last spring," declared one report, as a direct result of a Testament having been given to a sick man, "and his testimony to friends concerning the comfort it has brought him."⁶¹ While still highlighting the sale of books, Biblewomen seem to be afforded greater latitude for non-monetary interaction, and there was an emphasis on the importance of the personal care that Biblewomen provided. These gendered expectations of care reflect similar ideas about women in medical professions in Victorian Canada and the care women could provide to the sick and needy.⁶²

⁶¹ *Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society*, (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, LTD., 1907), 90.

⁶² See Constance Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice: Women and Law in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto,: Canadian Scholars' Press and Women's Press, 1991), 143; Ruth Compton Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902-69* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 8-9.

Unlike more well-to-do women who volunteered to canvas for subscriptions and donations to the Bible Society, Biblewomen were of a lower social standing who were typically paid a wage for their work. In their analysis of women's religious activities in England in the first half of the nineteenth century, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall demonstrate class differences in what women were expected to do. "Upper middle-class women often organized and paid 'Biblewomen' to distribute tracts or Bibles for them." They argue that, "as the expectation that ladies did not work for pay increased, so the importance of the voluntary principle of women's contribution was emphasized."⁶³ Although middle and upper-middle class women were enthusiastic supporters of the Bible Society, their involvement in the Bible Society's activities was usually voluntary, where Biblewomen were paid for their work. Examining one particular middle-class evangelical in Victorian England, Frank Mort explains that "recruiting poor but respectable Biblewomen provided the 'missing link' between the lady philanthropist and the urban poor."⁶⁴ Biblewomen were tasked with the close connections and care of the urban poor in order to distribute bibles and promote the Bible Society's cause in Canadian cities.

The depictions of time and efficiency were another way that the BFBS's reports distinguished the work of colporteurs and Biblewomen. Colporteurs were praised for their ability to visit many homes, making quick work of their visits and transactions, and the speed with which they could work across various communities. Biblewomen's work, on the other hand, was described in a much more pedestrian and slow manner. One Biblewoman working for the

⁶³ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (Women in Culture and Society) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 144.

⁶⁴ Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities : Medico-moral Politics in England since 1830* (London: Routledge, 2000), 43-45..

Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society is credited for the joy of “finding herself in homes, where one or other, or where both parents were Christians, and glad of an opportunity of spiritual communion.”⁶⁵ In many ways, these gendered differences in Bible distribution reflect the characterizations of men and women that featured in ideals of muscular Christianity and the separate roles that men and women played in public religion in this period.⁶⁶ In their analysis of gendered expectations for behaviour and respectability, Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag demonstrate, “independent, rebellious middle-class females who dared to transgress conventional gender norms were occasionally referred to as ‘wild women.’”⁶⁷ Within the BFBS, women who volunteered and those of a lower station who were employed as Biblewomen were operating within widely accepted social roles.

The Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society (MABS) employed seven Biblewomen in 1906, each for a particular district or a particular group. Two women named Madame Piche and Madame Raymond were both designated for work among the French population, while a woman named Signorina Tognotti was employed for work among the Italian population. Miss Smith, Mrs. Fraser, and Mrs. Hinchcliffe were employed for work in the St. Mary’s, St. Lawrence, and Point St. Charles districts respectively. Mrs. E. Lyman was employed to work in the General

⁶⁵ *Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society*, (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, LTD., 1907), 92.

⁶⁶ Michael Smith examines similar perceptions of women’s bodies and their physical capabilities with regard to the rugged demands of athletics. “Graceful Athleticism or Robust Womanhood: The Sporting Culture of Women in Victorian Nova Scotia, 1870-1914” in *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23.1 (Spring 1988): 120-137; see also Nancy Barbara Bouchier’s description of “biologically based physical attributes of size, strength, and speed, as well as cultural constraints associated with appropriate gender behaviour” behind sports conventions, in *For the Love of the Game: Amateur Sport in Small-Town Ontario, 1838-1895* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 48; Quentin Casey, “‘Green Spaces amidst the Smokestacks’: Halifax’s Waegwoltic Club and the Boom of Leisure and Open-Air Recreation in Nova Scotia, 1908–1914” (M.A., Dalhousie University (Canada), 2005), 19-20.

⁶⁷ Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag, *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 60.

Hospital.⁶⁸ We know little about these Biblewomen as the reports provide little detail about their personal lives or their backgrounds. However, some indication of Signorina Tognotti's background was given in the Montreal Auxiliary's report. She was recommended by a Protestant minister in Italy and the MABS report cites her own status as an immigrant as a unique qualification for her work: "Herself a stranger, she knows how to approach her fellow countrymen in a strange land. In the Hospitals, where she often interprets, while visiting the sick, and in the large boarding-houses where men congregate, she reads and prays and already has proved a blessing to many."⁶⁹ Tognotti's ministry in translating for Italian speakers was an important asset for the organization.

Biblewomen played an important role in the Bible Society's enterprise in Canada, but much of their work functioned in very different ways from male colporteurs. On one hand, Biblewomen were able to serve in ministry in a Protestant context that limited the opportunities for women to serve in positions of leadership. Biblewomen were able to participate in the Bible enterprise and were happy to promote the goals of the auxiliaries under which they served. However, their work was characterized in very different ways to that of male colporteurs, and their fields of ministry were much more limited. The differences between the two demonstrate the perceptions of where men and women belonged in Canadian society and what interactions and emphases were appropriate for each.

Conclusion

⁶⁸ *Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society*, (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, LTD., 1907), 84.

⁶⁹ *Report of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society*, (Montreal: John Lovell & Son, LTD., 1907), 16.

The Bible Society's local distribution efforts through colporteurs and Biblewomen provided an important supply of bibles in remote regions and in urban centres, but they also infused the BFBS's enterprise with images of heroism, persistence, and rugged masculinity that added to its urgency and weight. Their reports reveal much about the broader efforts of the Bible enterprise in the nineteenth century, in the local interactions and responses to Bible peddling, and in the values the BFBS celebrated in their work. As the development of transportation infrastructure improved the speed, frequency, and reliability of overland shipments, bibles were more easily obtained. Nonetheless, colporteurs continued to seek out isolated communities where distance and the difficulty of travel limited an individual's ability to obtain books from a central depository, and communities in which they might still find success. Biblewomen too grew increasingly important in distributing bibles and caring for the poor in urban centres. Colportage and the work of Biblewomen remained a foundational tool for the BFBS to sell its books and promote its enterprise.

Colportage was rooted in the importance of an individual's voluntary purchase of the Bible that signified one's free choice in obtaining the Word of God and one's appreciation for the value of the Book. Although church leaders lamented the materialism by which Canadian society pursued the expansion of industrial capitalism, such pursuits could be harnessed for redemptive purposes. Colporteurs perpetuated links between money and bibles by insisting that a financial transaction must take place in order to obtain scriptures. Rather than rejecting and condemning the principles of market capitalism, the BFBS leaders in Canada sought to minister through them. The association between the religious missional fervour and the advancement of the Protestant Christian faith is a powerful reflection of the close relationship between capitalism and Protestant Christianity that Max Weber describes in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of*

*Capitalism.*⁷⁰ In his introduction to Weber's book, Anthony Giddens suggests that for Weber, capitalistic enterprise implies both a disciplined labour force and the regularized investment of capital.⁷¹ These were each hallmarks of the Bible enterprise undertaken by the BFBS in nineteenth-century Canada. For Weber, these characteristics were especially evident in the Protestant sects that eschewed church establishment, and he lists Calvinism, Pietism, and the Methodist and Baptist movements as displaying these traits of "Protestant asceticism."⁷² These sects represented much of the evangelical base of the Bible Society's support and the influence of voluntarism within the organization.

The rhetorical praise and veneration of discipline and hard work by the Bible Society's employees and volunteers highlights the close intellectual connections between the "Protestant asceticism" that defined the thrift, efficiency, and self-sacrifice of colporteurs, agents, and depositaries. Biblewomen and women who canvased to raise subscriptions were praised alongside their male counterparts in showing their hard work and discipline, with stronger associations to the moral and behavioural discipline as an indication of those qualities. The persistent investment of capital back into the enterprise was a hallmark of the BFBS's Bible distribution, and another characteristic of Weber's Protestant asceticism.⁷³ The insistence on the purchase of bibles provided the Bible Society enabled the Bible Society to advance its enterprise and to increase the number of bibles distributed. The impulse to expand the Bible Society's

⁷⁰ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: HarperCollins Academic, 1930).

⁷¹ Anthony Giddens, "Introduction," *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 1958).

⁷² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 95-97.

⁷³ For an examination of the mindset and ideological foundations of business leaders in Canada, see Michael Bliss, *A Living Profit: studies in the social history of Canadian business, 1883-1911* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974).

material resources through the re-investment of capital reflects the ideological affinity between capitalism and the Protestant asceticism that Weber describes.

The power of individual transactions to infuse the Bible with greater value to its possessor was an important part of the BFBS's policy against giving bibles away at no cost. But more than that, the BFBS's used shrewd business methods and access to capital as a means to advance its mission of providing bibles to as many people as possible. The tens of thousands of Bible transactions that occurred in Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century infused the purchase of bibles with a moral and spiritual element. Through those transactions, colportage sought to coopt capitalism's methods and materialism, redeeming its appeal to human self-interest in order to distribute bibles and build the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER 6: EVANGELICAL BIBLE DISTRIBUTION AND ANTI-CATHOLICISM

The British and Foreign Bible Society's enterprise in Canada was rooted in the conviction that all Canadians ought to have the opportunity to purchase a Bible. This conviction emphasized an individual's voluntary choice in religious matters and the importance of the Bible transaction as an element of sacrifice on the part of the purchaser. To read the Bible and to obtain it was a choice that one ought to make voluntarily, and purchasing a Bible conveyed a sense of value onto the book. The BFBS's enterprise was also characterized by transdenominational participation by evangelicals who could unite around the religious and civic benefits of the widespread availability of the Bible in Canada. But such principles generally excluded Roman Catholics from this collective enterprise. For many evangelical Protestants, the orientation of the Catholic Church toward institutional pre-eminence in the Christian faith was antithetical to their belief in the "priesthood of all believers," and the sacraments and rituals that were mediated by bishops and priests undermined the liberty of conscience by which individuals could affect their own salvation through the Holy Spirit and the Bible.¹

Divisions between French and English Canadians have been among the deepest social cleavages in Canadian history, and a major element in those divisions has been the conflict between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, religions that have historically been central to the cultural identities of each. The religious differences between them were largely based on theological disagreements, many of which related to the differing interpretations and uses of the

¹ On the concept of the priesthood of all believers and American evangelicalism in particular, see David Charles Swift, *Religion and the American experience: a social and cultural history, 1765-1997* (M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 89.

Bible to define ecclesiastical authority. Added to these theological differences were deep disagreements about the very possession of the Bible and its unfettered distribution. For evangelical Protestants, access to the scriptures provided an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work for the conversion and salvation in the heart of anyone who might read the Bible, and this belief lent urgency and importance to the material distribution of the Bible. The Catholic Church's restrictions for its members on access to the Bible contributed to Protestant anti-Catholic thought that strengthened Protestant interdenominational unity around the BFBS's enterprise in Canada. John Wolffe argues that anti-Catholicism was primarily a way by which different Protestant denominations defined their mutual relationship and their religious identity in a changing world.² For Roman Catholics, reading scriptures without the guidance and direction of the Church invited heresy in the Christian faith by undermining the balance of both the Church and the Bible in forming doctrine. This chapter argues, therefore, that the material aspects of Bible distribution were central to the conflicts about religious differences that predominated for French and English Canadians. Ideas about liberty, individual freedoms, and the role of the Church shaped the contrasting approaches that Protestants and Catholics in Canada took to the Bible, and shaped their activities in respective promotion and restriction of Bible distribution. As such, evangelicals used Catholicism as a powerful device, casting the Catholic Church, its leaders, and its ethos as an enemy of their Bible distribution enterprise.

Historical Roots of Anti-Catholicism

² John Wolffe, *The Protestant Crusade in Victorian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Tensions between French and English Canadians were strong after 1763, when the uncertainty of Britain's control over its newly conquered territory in North America necessitated the British to allow French Canadians to maintain their distinctive cultural and religious institutions, a leniency towards Roman Catholics in Quebec that fuelled radical dissidence in New England before the American Revolution.³ In the nineteenth century, the French and English in Lower Canada were divided along linguistic lines as well as religious lines. The Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada in 1837 and 1838 highlighted for colonial leaders the strain caused by two separate peoples within the same colonial institutions. During the rebellion in Lower Canada, Roman Catholic clergy refused to support any violent upheaval, but religion was still a part of the national identity pursued by the rebels. Ramsay Cook argues that “[Louis-Joseph] Papineau’s nationalism was founded on a belief that the French-speaking agricultural society, whose members were over-whelmingly Roman Catholic... was threatened by the English-speaking, commercial Protestant minority backed by the British Colonial office.”⁴ To a large extent, however, there was no religious impulse behind the Lower Canada rebellions. In contrast to French society in Louisiana, Marc Egnal argues that “the path of French-Canadian intellectual life turned inward and pointed to the growth of a clerical nationalism, not rebellion,” an orientation that undermined any widespread Catholic support for the uprisings of 1837 and 1838.⁵ This left some ambiguity about the place of the Church in Lower Canada after the

³ J. R. Millar argues that the Jesuits were a “special case” to whom this leniency did not apply, resulting in their dissolution and suppression in the 1770s. See J. R. Miller, *Equal Rights: The Jesuits’ Estates Act Controversy*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens’ University Press, 1979), 3. See Philip Jenkins, *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27.

⁴ Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1986), 88-9.

⁵ Marc Egnal, *Divergent Paths : How Culture and Institutions Have Shaped North American Growth: How Culture and Institutions Have Shaped North American Growth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 132.

rebellions were over, given the failure of the rebellions and questions about the place of French and Catholic traditions under British rule.

In the aftermath of the rebellion, John George Lambton, who had been named Baron Durham in 1828, was sent by British Prime Minister Lord Melbourne to investigate the conditions in Upper and Lower Canada. Lord Durham's famous report, which was published in 1840 after his return to Britain, promulgated the belief that French Canadian cultural and linguistic assimilation was already underway, and that a legislative union between the two provinces would provide the governing power to ensure that Lower Canada would indeed become an English province.⁶ French culture would, it was expected, eventually die away. The implications of Lord Durham's report for French Canadians and the Roman Catholic Church were significant, and religious leaders sought to affirm religion as a central part of French Canadian political survival. Ramsay Cook argues that there was a renewed and reinvigorated push by ultramontanists like Mgr. Ignace Bourget of Montreal after 1840. "As the Church extended and consolidated its control over education and other social institutions in Quebec, so too it redefined that society's ideology. Where [historian François-Xavier] Garneau had recognized religion as a component of nationalism and the Church as one of the institutions of collective survival, clerical ideologists made religion integral to nationalism and awarded the Church the central role in the defence of the nation."⁷

Jacques Monet argues that after the rebellions, many French Canadians sought to affirm their loyalty to the British government, as Catholic clergymen recognized that British institutions

⁶ Durham argued that "the ascendancy [of government] should never again be placed in any hands but those of an English population." See *Lord Durham's Report: An abridgement of Report on the Affairs of British North America* by Lord Durham ed. Gerald M Craig (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 197.

⁷ Cook, *Nationalism*, 89.

would better protect their language, culture, and religion than that of American republicanism, which would likely destroy them.⁸ In maintaining cultural survival, French Canadians could see British rule as a way of protecting cultural distinctions despite the intention that political and legislative union would bring about assimilation. Cultural identity, including religious difference, could survive. In his study of Catholicism in Ireland and Quebec, Garth Stevenson describes French-Canadians' Catholic religion being given pride of place among the defining characteristics of the nation, protecting the place of Catholicism in a predominantly Protestant North America became a critical part of *la survivance*. Responsible government under British rule was seen as a way to ensure the survival of French-Canadian language, cultural traditions and the role of the Roman Catholic Church in society.⁹

The affirmation by French-Canadian Catholic Church leaders of the benefits of British rule did not, however, invite English-Canadian political interference into the Church's activities. This defensive posture was, as Jacques Monet has argued, rooted in the doctrine, "so dear to nineteenth-century ultramontanes, that the Church by natural and divine right was autonomous with respect to the state."¹⁰ The mutual suspicion that characterized the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in the nineteenth century hinged on the power given to the Roman Catholic Church to oversee its own affairs. For Protestants, this gave the Catholic priests and bishops the ability insidiously to undermine the democratic and liberal ideals of British North

⁸ Jacques Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot: A Study of French-Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: R. Kenneth Carty, *National Politics and Community in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press,), 32

⁹ Garth Stevenson, *Parallel Paths: The Development of Nationalism in Ireland and Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 125-132. See also Jacques Monet's examination of French-Canadian clergymen's belief in , *The Last Cannon Shot: A Study of French-Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: R. Kenneth Carty, *National Politics and Community in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press,), 32.

¹⁰ Jacques Monet, *The Last Cannon Shot: A Study of French-Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: R. Kenneth Carty, *National Politics and Community in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press), 248.

American society. For Roman Catholics, the Church's autonomy was seen to be persistently attacked through legislative policies and through efforts of evangelical Protestants who sought to undermine its work.¹¹

The growth of ultramontanism and the power of the Catholic Church in French-Canadian politics and society suggests on the surface that in the aftermath of the rebellions and Lord Durham's Report, the Church's significance was primarily political. However, the assertion of French-Canadian Catholic culture in the 1840s was more than a political pursuit of French-Canadian nationalism. Equally significant was the religious and theological response of the Church, which saw a revival of the Catholic faith that began in the 1840s and was sustained throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. Robert Choquette describes the "religious revival that started in Montreal in 1840 and presided over by Bishop Bourget" as a "growing Catholic evangelical movement" that "simultaneously took over both the religious revival that began in Montreal and its accompanying French Canadian nationalism. For more than a century Catholicism and nationalism would constitute the twin pillars that supported French Canada's national identity. They were the two faces of the same French Canadian coin."¹² This revival defined the theological orientation of the Catholic Church around much of the world by the 1850s and contributed significantly to the antagonism with which evangelical Protestants viewed Catholicism for the rest of the nineteenth century. In an important article published in 1972, Emmett Larkin examines this theological Catholic revival, which he calls a devotional

¹¹ Mason Wade argues that Bourget and other Catholic clergy of Quebec remained active in politics, asserting the Church's demands on government. See Mason Wade, *The French-Canadian Outlook: A Brief Account of the Unknown North Americans* (Toronto: Macmillan Company, Ltd., 1946), 47.

¹² Robert Choquette, *Canada's Religions: An Historical Introduction* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004), 241-243.

revolution, in Ireland, describing the same shifts instigated by Bourget towards a much more distinctly Catholic religious identity, rooted in a renewed emphasis on “the sacraments, and especially sacraments of penance and Holy Eucharist.” These emphases, he argues, “were organized in order to communalize and regularize practice” under the spiritual direction of the Catholic Church and its sodalities, fraternal societies, and altar societies, in a period when “the whole world of the senses was explored in these devotional exercises, and especially in the Mass, through music, singing, candles, vestments, and incense.”¹³ This Catholic revival amplified the importance of the Church as an institution, asserting its centrality in facilitating religious practices.

The emergence in Canada of these distinctly Catholic rituals, practices, and beliefs in the 1840s had an important impact on local Catholic congregations and orders in British North America. In her study of nuns in nineteenth-century Canada, Marta Danylewycz argues that this re-emergence of Catholic devotion saw growth in prayer groups and confraternities, while pilgrimages and participation in sacred Catholic activities became a common part of the religious fervour that emerged under Bishop Bourget. The expansion of these devotional exercises adapted to the rhythms of work and family life, so that the work of the Church became an important part of society. While the devotional revolution of the 1840s drew upon ancient customs and traditional Church practices in prayer and sacraments, the Catholic faith was also popularized because of the ability for anyone of any social standing to participate.¹⁴

¹³ Emmet Larkin, “The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 77, No. 3 (Jun., 1972), pp. 625-652

¹⁴ Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920*, (Canadian Social History Series) (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 33-45.

By embracing these tenets in the religious practice and belief, the Roman Catholic Church stood in stark contrast to the growing influence of the European enlightenment in Western thought. Philippe Sylvain argues that Bishop Bourget's affirmation of these sacramental and ritualistic elements of the Catholic faith and the institutional authority of the Church was his response to the problem of civil and religious liberties that had been so widely and powerfully adopted in the West after the eighteenth century European enlightenment. In denouncing liberalism, Bourget argued that "No one is permitted to be free in his religious and political opinions" and that Christ had "given his church the power to teach all peoples the sound doctrine."¹⁵ The values of individual liberty, intellectual freedom, and the critical examination of authority that threatened to undermine the Church's dominion were parried by reinforcing its role in the sacred aspects of Catholic religiosity that were popularized in the 1840s.

Bourget's push against liberalism and towards a sacramental faith shaped the practice of Catholicism in the province well into the twentieth century, evinced by Marc Egnal's assertion that "the devoutly Catholic province fashioned by Bishops Lartigue and Bourget were still recognizable in 1940."¹⁶ Bourget's emphases also spread across Canada. In her study of Catholic missionaries' expanding reach in the Pacific Northwest in the nineteenth century, Patricia O'Connell Killen argues that Bourget's emphasis on Catholic social institutions and the ritual life of the sacraments to reassert Catholic revival and power was being modeled by a Catholic

¹⁵ Bishop Ignace Bourget, quoted in DCB Philippe Sylvain, "BOURGET, IGNACE," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed December 7, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bourget_ignace_11E.html.

¹⁶ Marc Egnal *Divergent Paths : How Culture and Institutions Have Shaped North American Growth: How Culture and Institutions Have Shaped North American Growth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 133.

priest named A.M.A. Blanchet on the Pacific coast.¹⁷ Aiding this popularization of Catholic sacramental rituals and church institutions was the “distribution of devotional literature and religious aids.” These printed materials affirmed the central role of the Church in overseeing social activities and moral regeneration.¹⁸

This devotional revolution highlighted the differences between Protestant and Catholic expressions of the Christian faith, and caused English-speaking evangelicals to cast an increasingly troubled eye toward Catholicism and its place in Canada. J. R. Miller argues that anti-Catholicism in Canada operated in distinct phases that shaped the nature of English-Protestant antagonism towards Catholics. Early in the nineteenth century, by which time Catholics had secured legal and political rights in Britain’s North American colonies, anti-Catholicism shifted from an official phase of restricted political rights to a theological phase, where critics of Catholicism “based their critique on their own reading of Scripture.” Miller argues that Protestants insisted “that their beliefs, being based exclusively on the Bible, were more faithful to Christ’s teaching,” and that as a result, Protestants took exception to what they perceived to be doctrinal deficiencies of Catholicism in matters including transubstantiation, idolatry in the worship of Mary, papal succession and infallibility, and the practice of aural confession.¹⁹ Evangelicals’ focus on the theological difference between Protestant and Catholic

¹⁷ Patricia O’Connell Killen, “Writing the Pacific Northwest into Canadian and U.S. Catholic History: Geography, Demographics, and Regional Religion,” CCHA, *Historical Studies*, 66 (2000).

¹⁸ Murray Nicolson, “The Growth of Roman Catholic Institutions in the Archdiocese of Toronto, 1841-1890, in *Creed and Culture: The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930* eds. Terrence Murray and Gerald Stortz (Montreal: MGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 165-167. For more on Bourget’s influence on Canadian ultramontanism, see Brian P. Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850-1895* (Montreal: MGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 3-4,

¹⁹ J. R. Miller, “Anti-Catholicism in Canada: From the British Conquest to the Great War,” *Creed and Culture: The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930* eds. Terrence Murray and Gerald Stortz (Montreal: MGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 25-48.

Christianity provided the basis for much anti-Catholic thought in Britain and North America, but it was the popular perceptions of these differences, regardless of their accuracy, that became the most important element of anti-Catholicism. In his study of anti-Catholicism in Victorian England, E. R. Norman argues that Protestants' popular hatred for Catholics, which was "founded largely on ignorance of the real tenets of Catholicism," combined with a more informed antipathy about the Catholic Church's structure and beliefs to depict the Catholic Church as an archaic, superstitious, and unenlightened institution that was inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible.²⁰

More recently, John Wolffe has provided useful categories for understanding historical anti-Catholicism in English-speaking Britain and the United States, categories that fit well to the nineteenth-century Canadian context. Wolffe argues that anti-Catholicism could be manifested as constitutional-national, theological, popular, and socio-cultural expressions. Perhaps the most pertinent expression of anti-Catholicism in the work of the Bible Society and its enterprise was theological, rooted in an objection to Roman Catholicism's distinctive teachings. He argues that from the 1820s onward, theological anti-Catholicism was "particularly associated with evangelicalism," stimulating "antagonism to devotional manifestations of Catholic theology, including the veneration of saints and ritualism in the later Victorian Church of England." Wolffe also argues that this form of theological anti-Catholicism fuelled the evangelistic impulse towards the conversion of Roman Catholics, as it "inspired missions to proselytise Roman Catholics, founded in the conviction that they were deluded victims of the priesthood, whose

²⁰ E. R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968) 14-16.

eternal destiny depended on their acceptance of true saving Protestant faith.”²¹ Evangelicals harboured a powerful impulse towards saving lost souls who were encumbered by an ecclesiastical tradition that kept them from a true knowledge of God’s truth.

This theological anti-Catholicism played an important role in the imperative felt by the leaders of the British and Foreign Bible Society to actively promote and facilitate the distribution of scriptures among the French-Canadian population. That popular anti-Catholicism, Wolffe argues, was “entangled with ethnic antagonisms... to the French in New England and British North America.”²² Especially after the rebellions and the articulation in Lord Durham’s report of a distinctively antiquated and backward culture, popular anti-Catholicism directed its enmity toward the role of the Church and its institutions in retarding the development and flourishing of French-Canadian society. As Kevin Anderson demonstrates, this ethnic element of anti-Catholicism persisted in English-Canada into the twentieth century, because Catholicism was thought to be “antipathetic to a nation dedicated to British Protestant ideals of freedom and self-sufficiency.”²³ This stemmed from what Protestants perceived as an erroneous and dangerous intellectual culture in the Church. Many believed that the Catholic Church as an institution was backward and medieval, resisting liberal ideals and relying on antiquated power structures and hierarchies prone to corruption.²⁴

²¹ John Wolffe, “A Comparative Historical Categorisation of Anti-Catholicism,” *Journal of Religious History* Vol. 39, No. 2 (June 2015), 189ff.

²² Wolffe, “A Comparative Historical Categorisation of Anti-Catholicism,” 197.

²³ Kevin Anderson, “‘The Cockroaches of Canada’ : French-Canada, Immigration and Nationalism, Anti-Catholicism in English-Canada, 1905–1929,” *Journal of Religious History* Vol. 39, no. 1 (March 2015): 104-122.

²⁴ Michael Wheeler demonstrates that within Catholicism were debates about liberal and conservative expressions of the faith and that the ultramontanism and conservative devotional expressions were not without contest or debate within the Catholic Church. See Wheeler, *The Old Enemies: Catholic and Protestant in Nineteenth Century English Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 245-248.

These characterizations became a common sentiment among Protestants in nineteenth-century Britain, Canada, and the United States who shared “the same vocabulary of vituperation, the same historical interpretations, and usually even the same examples were employed in the vilification of Rome by men of British origin everywhere.”²⁵ This common language was a source of unity between Americans and British North American Protestants who would have otherwise been divided because of their opposing views of the British Crown. Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan argue that popular and intellectual anti-Catholicism accompanied the militant Protestantism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that “most English-speaking Canadians inherited Protestantism as a central part of their national myth, paving the road for the anti-Catholic nativism to flourish.”²⁶

The popularity of anti-Catholic rhetoric was especially important because of the BFBS’s transdenominational approach in drawing support from across a number of different Protestant groups. In affirming itself as a bulwark against the threat of “popery”, the BFBS’s anti-Catholic rhetoric was able to bring together otherwise disparate and disagreeing denominations.²⁷ The fervour that drove evangelicals to come together to distribute bibles in large numbers also drove their criticism of the Catholic Church’s role in mediating religious practice and insisting on its authority in interpreting and understanding scripture.

James Thomson and the French Canadian Missionary Society

²⁵ E. R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968).

²⁶ Bannister and Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 215.

²⁷ In his description of itinerant Protestant preachers in Ireland, Desmond Bowen suggests that no discernable creed unified them except for their “virulent anti-Catholicism.” See Desmond Bowen, *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800-70: A Study of Protestant Catholic Relations Between the Act of Union and Disestablishment* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978), 240.

With this background of the Catholic Church's devotional revolution in the 1840s and with the increasing popularity of anti-Catholic sentiments, James Thomson's arrival in Montreal shortly after the rebellions in Lower Canada had even greater significance as he began his tenure as the BFBS's agent to British North America between 1838 and 1842. While Thomson toured throughout the colonies of Upper Canada, Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island in the spring and summer months, Montreal was the base of his agency and the place where he spent the most time. It was here that Thomson most directly encountered the cultural divisions between Protestants and Catholics and the ways in which evangelicals sought to advance the place of Protestant faith in the region.

Among French Canadians in particular, whom he encountered frequently in his travels in Lower Canada, Thomson recognized the need for expanding the reach of the Bible Society and improving on its ability to distribute bibles widely. Writing to the BFBS's Foreign Secretary Andrew Brandram in January 1839 about the state of French Catholics in Lower Canada, he reported that "[i]n religion, education, and civil standing, they are, as before hinted, very low."²⁸ He saw, however, as a result of the recent rebellions an opportunity to the intellectual and cultural reinvigoration of French Catholics as a people, stating that "there is a movement among these very dry bones...The late and present civil commotions have been visibly over-ruled for awakening the attention of these people, and opening their minds in some degree to inquiry."²⁸ Seeing a life-less and staid community, Thomson felt that the rebellions might prove a disruption from which the Bible Society could benefit.

²⁸ James Thomson to Andrew Brandram, 31 January 1839. The allusion is a biblical reference to a vision of the Valley of Dry Bones given to the Prophet Ezekiel, where after prophesying to the bones to "hear the word of the Lord," the bones came together, with tendons and flesh, and life was breathed into them. See Ezekiel 37: 1-14.

Throughout his time in British North America, and particularly in Montreal, Thomson took a considerable interest and concern in the French Canadian Catholics that he encountered in his travels, and during his tours of Lower Canada he observed that “nearly the whole of the parts I have passed through are inhabited by [them].” He perceived them to be in need of spiritual awakening, and that the Bible could provide such animation. “They are greatly in need, and have a strong claim for help, for they are in a low estate, and need to be lifted up. The Bible, and the Bible only will and can set them on high, religiously, morally, and civilly. All people everywhere are in a low estate where the Bible is not; and the Bible always raises them in proportion to its entrance and extension.” In light of these changes, he called for the BFBS Committee in London to provide two colporteurs, or in his terms “gens d’armes, or rather gens de paix,” to distribute bibles among the French population in Lower Canada.²⁹ Colportage became an important way for the Bible Society to obtain donations and to distribute bibles, and often the “Parent Society” in London funded the employment of colporteurs.³⁰ For Thomson, the Bible Society’s object of making bible available to those who would wish to have one was an important function in the current climate among French-speaking Catholics in Lower Canada.

After his arrival in Montreal, he was able to visit the missionary effort at Grand Ligne, which he considered to be “a beautiful though small oasis in this French desert.” Here, two missionaries from Switzerland, Louis Roussy and Henriette Odin Feller, established a mission for the evangelization of French Canadians, and inspired Thomson with regard to evangelism

²⁹ James Thomson to Andrew Brandram, 31 January 1839

³⁰ The BFBS often funded colporteurs and Biblewomen from its own funds designated for colportage around the world. Although colportage were often selected by local auxiliaries, the BFBS executive in London held the purse-strings and could determine which endeavours should be financed and for how long. See Thomson’s letter to Brandram numbered 76 from Montreal, sent on 20 December 1838 for a description of Thomson’s request for colporteurs from Europe. More information on colportage and Biblewomen is found in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

that could be done among them.³¹ Thomson was enamoured with their efforts, and wrote that it was “a truly gratifying sight to see these French Canadians constituting their church worshiping God in the true knowledge of the gospel of Christ, in a manner so different from their late ignorant and superstititious services.”³² Thomson leaned on the popular perception among Protestants of Catholicism’s erroneous theological and liturgical practices to celebrate the introduction of true worship into their lives.

Shortly after this tour and his visit to Grand Ligne, Thomson undertook one of his most significant initiatives in Montreal. In spearheading the formation of the French Canadian Missionary Society (FCMS), Thomson helped found an organization designed to convert French-speaking Roman Catholics to Protestantism for the next several decades.³³ The FCMS remained an important organization in ethnic, linguistic, and religious relations before Confederation, providing an institutional voice promoting the predominance of English Protestant identity in Canada.³⁴ The French Canadian Missionary Society (FCMS) was established by a number of

³¹ James Thomson to Andrew Brandram, 31 January 1839. For information on the ministry of Roussy and Feller, see Randall Balmer & Catherine Randall, “Her Duty to Canada: Henriette Feller and French Protestantism in Quebec”, *Church History*, Vol.70, No.1, 2001 and Philip G.A. Griffin-Allwood, “Mère Henriette Feller (1800-1868) of Grande Ligne and Ordered Ministry in Canada” Canadian Society of Church History, *Historical papers*, 2011: 87-98.

³² In the 1840s, while an outspoken Catholic priest, Charles Chiniquy opposed efforts like those at Grand Ligne of “le petit-Suisse,” French-speaking Protestants who proselytized to Roman Catholics. Chiniquy later became a famous convert to Protestantism and a vocal critic of the Catholic Church. See Donald M. MacRaild, “Transnationalising “Anti-Papery”: Militant Protestant Preachers in the Nineteenth-Century Anglo-World,” *Journal of Religious History* Vol. 39, no. 2 (June 2015), 230.

³³ One similar Society that was founded on the same principles and one that embraced the importance of Bible distribution as a means by which Catholics could be converted was the Society for Irish Church Missions. See Desmond Bowen, *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800-70: A Study of Protestant-Catholic Relations Between the Act of Union and Disestablishment* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978), 224-230.

³⁴ For more on the French Canadian Missionary Society, see Bernice Andrews, “The Rise and Fall of the French Canadian Missionary Society, 1839-1880: A Study in Conflicting Aspirations” (Unpublished paper, University of Toronto, 1977) and Scorgie, Glen G. 2004. “The French Canadian Missionary Society: a study in evangelistic zeal and civic ambition,” in *Religion in the Americas Series: French-Speaking Protestants in Canada : Historical Essays* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 79-108.

leading Protestant ministers and prominent citizens in Montreal, with the belief that the 600,000 French-speaking Canadians “are a people naturally of intelligent and amiable character, but deeply sunk in ignorance and superstition. Romanism has here full sway.”³⁵ One of the leaders of the FCMS was Henry Wilkes, a Congregationalist minister and businessman in Montreal. The Society worked in connection with missionaries from Switzerland whose experience in proselytizing French Catholics could be used in Canada. The FCMS brought Thomson and the advocates of the Bible Society into cooperation with the Rev. Robert Baird from the United States. Baird was an agent of the American Bible Society in the 1820s. Wilkes or Lillie had pursued Baird and the support of his American and Foreign Christian Union (AFCU) in the United States to undergird the FCMS.³⁶

The FCMS first formally met in February 1839, not long after Thomson arrived in Montreal. The historian Phylippe Sylvain has written that on the 13 of February 1839 “Thompson [sic] appealed to ten or so of his compatriots to found the French Canadian Missionary Society, Wilkes made it his business to establish close ties between the Protestant body in Montreal and the powerful AFCU.”³⁷ Sylvaine writes that the establishment of the FCMS and the associations it had with the AFCU in the United States was a precursor to the Gavazzi riots of 1853 connecting the anti-French ideas with the FCMS foundations. This suggestion has merit, given that Wilkes was the pastor of the Zion Church where Gavazzi preached his “violently anti-Catholic speech.”³⁸ Horner describes Gavazzi’s visit as a “source of

³⁵ Archive.org FCMS, “Appeal to the Evangelical Churches of Great Britain. Montreal, 5 September 1850.

³⁶ Philippe Sylvain, “Wilkes, Henry.” Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed February 5, 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/wilkes_henry_11E.html.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ For more on the Gavazzi Riots and the Anti-Catholic sentiments they exhibited, see Robert J. Grace, “A Demographic and Social Profile of Quebec City’s Irish Populations, 1842-1861,” *Journal of American Ethnic*

pride for many in the city's Evangelical Protestant community" that "drew Montreal into a transnational network of anti-Catholic activism."³⁹ Donald MacRaild argues that the Gavazzi and other preachers "tapped ancient British prejudices" of popular anti-Catholicism that were common in Protestant communities.⁴⁰ Thomson's association with the evangelical community in Montreal brought him into contact with this network in which anti-Catholicism was one of the defining characteristics, and that anti-Catholicism remained an important element in the FCMS's work.

Quickly after the FCMS was formed, however, problems arose over Thomson's involvement in the organization. The Bible Society had always been very careful to ensure that it showed no preference or favouritism towards a particular branch of Protestant Christianity, so that it could continue to rely on the support of Protestants of all stripes who sympathized with their evangelical aims. Because of this sensitivity to sectarian influences and denominational strife, participation in proselytization and missionary outreach was forbidden for its agents. The leaders of the Quebec Auxiliary Bible Society heard that Thomson had spearheaded the FCMS in Montreal and voiced their concerns to London and to the Montreal Auxiliary. The leaders of the Quebec BFBS auxiliary believed that Henry Wilkes had overpowered the work of the auxiliary in Montreal so as to make it a vehicle of his own sectarian beliefs. Thomson was told by these Quebec leaders that Wilkes had been using the Bible Society to create his own sort of

History, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Fall, 2003), 55-84 and Gavazzi's own "The Canadian Riots – Account by Gavazzi of the Attack upon Him," *Public Ledger*, June 13, 1853. Irish evangelicals also invited Gavazzi to speak in Dublin in 1852. See Desmond Bowen, *The Protestant Crusade in Ireland, 1800-70: A Study of Protestant-Catholic Relations Between the Act of Union and Disestablishment* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 242-43.

³⁹ Dan Horner, "'Shame upon you as men!' Contesting Authority in the Aftermath of Montreal's Gavazzi Riot," *Histoire sociale / Social History* 44 (2011), 36.

⁴⁰ Donald M. MacRaild, "Transnationalising 'Anti-Popery': Militant Protestant Preachers in the Nineteenth-Century Anglo-World," *Journal of Religious History* Vol. 39, no. 2 (June 2015), 243.

denomination which would undermine the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, and the Wesleyans, as Wilkes was a Congregationalist. They believed that Thomson's involvement in forming the FCMS was another step in this pernicious scheme and that Thomson was being used to advance Wilkes's agenda. Thomson wrote to Andrew Brandram after in London learning of the Quebec Auxiliary's objections, explaining the circumstances by which he was publically associated with the FCMS. Thomson believed he was not in the wrong in associating with the FCMS, citing the example of cooperation in Britain between the Religious Tract Society and the BFBS as a cooperative relationship. He also felt there was no problem in his association, because the FCMS was "formed, not on sectarian views, but on precisely the same catholic, general, broad grounds as the British and Foreign Bible Society." For Thomson, the BFBS and FCMS shared intellectual, theological, and evangelical interests that naturally fostered cooperation and the involvement of Montreal's evangelicals in both. Further, Thomson's belief that the foundation of both the BFBS and FCMS were formed "not on sectarian views" demonstrates how naturally evangelical Protestants embraced theological anti-Catholicism within its own ideology. The FCMS's reason for existence, the conversion of French Canadian Roman Catholics to the Protestant faith, was not seen to be a natural extension of the goals pursued by the BFBS. In spite of his belief in his own faultlessness, Thomson's letter sought clarification from Brandram of the BFBS's policy rather than a defiant defence of his behaviour, and Thomson appears to have sought a clear conscience in his involvement with the FCMS. In response to the trouble that was stirred, he formally withdrew his name from the FCMS "in order

to meet the wishes of our Quebec friends, and in my letter of withdrawal, I stated in the simplicity of my heart the cause of my doing so.”⁴¹

The rift caused by Thomson’s involvement in the French Canadian Missionary Society reveals two important features of the evangelical Protestant community of which the Bible Society was at the heart. The first was that despite the transdenominational alliance of Protestants and other religious and benevolent societies which shared an evangelical outlook, there were important boundaries that rendered various societies distinct from one another. The exclusive goal of the BFBS was the distribution of the Bible, not the conversion or evangelistic proselytization of any particular people group. Although informal cooperation and overlap of membership occurred between these organizations, there were formal boundaries that had to be respected in order to protect the integrity of the constitutional guidelines, especially in the case of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The second reality was that even within a single society like the BFBS, there were denominational, regional, and personal considerations that could cause deeply felt enmity and antagonism between evangelical leaders. Transdenominational cooperation, like that which took place within the Bible Society, did not erase denominational rivalries or disagreements, and incidents like Thomson’s involvement in the FCMS reveal the persistence of these issues despite shared interests.

Although Thomson felt right by his own motivations in cofounding the FCMS, later correspondence with Brandram also raised his concerns about the Bible Society’s non-sectarian policies and its refusal to support proselytization activities, the rules of which remained murky after the episode with the Quebec Bible Society and the FCMS. A separate case involved Major

⁴¹ James Thomson to Andrew Brandram, 12th March 1840

William Plenderleath Christie, a wealthy figure in Lower Canada who used his fortune to advance evangelicals' goals in the colony. Christie financed the erection of Trinity Church on St. Paul Street in Montreal, cementing his status within the Protestant establishment in Lower Canada. Trinity Church, an Anglican congregation, "drew many of the fashionable military to its pews, and Captain Maitland a staunch supporter and President of the Bible Society was church warden."⁴² As a pillar of the Protestant community in Montreal, Christie funded missionaries and colporteurs who carried tracts and proselytized to the colony's French Canadians.⁴³ He was a major benefactor of the Grand-Ligne mission spearheaded by Roussy and Feller, and his death in 1845 meant the loss for the mission of one of its primary sources of income.⁴⁴ Christie also wanted to support missionaries whose exclusive role was the evangelization and conversion of French Canadian Roman Catholics. Peter Burroughs describes Christie as a "fervent evangelical, who took an active interest in the spiritual as well as the material welfare of his peasantry, trying to convert Catholic censitaires to Protestantism."⁴⁵

Alongside Thomson, Christie was also involved in the formation of the FCMS and raised suspicions among French Canadians that there were aims to convert Roman Catholics in a spirit of Conquest. Elinor Kyte Senior has written that "regular British officers were discreet enough to keep away from militant Protestant groups in the city such as the French Canadian Missionary

⁴² *British Regulars in Montreal: An Imperial Garrison, 1832-1854*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press 1981), 154

⁴³ For more on the importance of Major Christie to Protestant evangelistic efforts in Lower Canada, see Richard W. Vaudry, "The Colonial Church and School Society and the Early Years of the Sabrevois Mission, 1850–1884," in *Religion in the Americas Series : French-Speaking Protestants in Canada : Historical Essays* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 49-78.

⁴⁴ See Randall Balmer and Catharine Randall, "'Her Duty to Canada': Henriette Feller and French Protestantism in Québec," *Church History* vol 70 no 1 (March 2001), 64

⁴⁵ Peter Burroughs, "'The Garrison Mentality' versus 'La Survivance': English-French relations in Lower Canada, 1791-1838," *The Journal of Imperial And Commonwealth History* 24 no. 2 (July 2008), 296-308.

Society whose proselytizing efforts among Roman Catholics brought to the surface latent French-Canadian fears that ‘le dessein de protestantiser les Canadiens français était ancien: il datait de la Conquête.’” Kyte Senior also highlights the past military careers of both Christie and Lt.-Col. Edward Wilgress who were both at the helm of the FCMS.⁴⁶ Christie was a part of the Protestant community in Montreal that fostered the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the French Canadian Missionary Society, and other benevolent and religious organizations, all with an aim to undermine Roman Catholicism and to promote Protestantism in the province.

The policies regulating the work of the Bible Society, however, once again placed boundaries on the level of cooperation between these societies. A BFBS colporteur by the name of Mr. Lapelletrie was employed by the BFBS and working under Thomson’s direction canvassing the suburbs surrounding Montreal. But Christie offered to pay him to proselytize as an evangelist to French Canadians with a view to converting them to the Protestant faith. The process by which Christie recruited Lapelletrie was disingenuous, in Thomson’s opinion, and he wrote Christie a lengthy letter explaining his grievance and regret at the way in which the colporteur had been encouraged to engage his time as an evangelist.⁴⁷ Regardless of any breach in process or incorrect stance, the episode reveals the lines that divided various efforts within the same Protestant community. A colporteur in the employment of the Bible Society was forbidden from engaging in evangelistic work, and it was clear that the two jobs could not be held concurrently. Although Thomson was, in an earlier period, willing to support and indeed

⁴⁶ Elinor Kyte Senior, *British Regulars in Montreal: An Imperial Garrison, 1832-1854*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press 1981), 156

⁴⁷ Thomson to Major Christie, Montreal 1 March 1840.

spearhead the FCMS in order to reach French Canadians, in this case Thomson recognized the infringement upon BFBS policy toed the Bible Society's line on the necessity for the separation of Bible distribution and proselytization.

Together, the formation of the French Canadian Missionary Society and the problems exposed by Major Christie reveal differences within the broad coalition of benevolent societies and voluntary associations in which many evangelical Protestants were involved. Various societies dedicated to schools, temperance, Sunday schools, labour concerns all remained distinct from one another based on a particular goals and policies of each. In order to maintain a broad base of support for its distribution enterprise, the BFBS's employees and leaders had to refrain at times from collaborating with other organizations, even if most members might support the aims of both. These issues also show the close intellectual and theological similarities between the distribution of bibles and the conversion of French-Canadian Roman Catholics. Behind both was an evangelical Protestant worldview that saw the reading and distribution of bibles as a means by which the Gospel could be spread and those who were lost, like the poor Catholics of Lower Canada, could be saved.

Anti-Catholicism in BFBS Colportage

The undertones of anti-Catholicism persisted throughout the BFBS's work in the nineteenth century, and remained a consistent feature in the auxiliaries' published literature. As the BFBS enterprise expanded, its colporteurs and agents travelled extensively to establish branches and to sell bibles in remote regions in Canada. The reports of each were a feature in the annual reports each auxiliary published, describing the successes and failures encountered and meaningful anecdotes from the year's work. A defining characteristic of colporteurs' reports was the anti-

Catholicism that was often used to describe the difficulties they faced in particular towns or regions. No threat was perceived to be greater to the Bible enterprise than that posed by Roman Catholicism, and the most persistent theme that arises in these colporteurs' reports was the challenge they faced in selling books in French Canadian communities where Catholic priests actively restricted their distribution. While there was variation between communities and from one priest to another, the general portrayal of the Catholic Church's attitude toward the BFBS's enterprise was that of suspicion, and that Catholicism was vehemently opposed to the unmediated distribution of bibles.

For the BFBS's sympathizers, the Roman Catholic Church attacked the liberty with which an individual could possess and read the scriptures. A common complaint among colporteurs was the influence of Papist religion in suppressing the liberty with which individuals could read for themselves of the salvation available through Christ, without the mediation of the Church. In the BFBS's Quebec Auxiliary, the reports articulated the antagonism of French Roman Catholic priests to the Bible. Working as a colporteur, the Secretary of the Quebec Auxiliary Bible Society related in his report of staying with a family whose son David had been given a Bible but who had been asked by the local Catholic priest to surrender the book, "the reading of which might endanger [his] soul's salvation." The boy kept the Testament, and asked the colporteur for the whole Bible, which he was happy to provide. He reported that "[s]ince that eventful morning that *De Saci* Bible has lived to do its work. In David's absence from home, the Curé has sought to secure it by coaxing and threats, but it remains unsurrendered. David, his daughter, two brothers and a sister and her husband have been brought to know the Bible way of

salvation.”⁴⁸ Similar stories in which the Bible Society’s colporteurs and agents overcame the oppressive restrictions of a region’s priests were published to evoke a particular sense of the religious and spiritual obstacles to their Bible distribution.

These instances seem to have been common occurrences, if their prominence in the BFBS auxiliaries’ reports are indicative, and similar anecdotes by Anglican missionaries corroborate these accounts. E. G. W. Ross, an Anglican missionary working for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in the Saguenay and Chicoutimi districts wrote in his 1856 report of the local Catholic priest’s well-known antagonism towards the purchase of the BFBS’s bibles:

Two Gentlemen, connected with the Bible Society of Montreal and belonging to the Presbyterian Denomination, visited the Saguenay and Chicoutimi Districts six weeks before your missionary: they came for the express purpose of disseminating the Word of God amongst the French Canadian Roman Catholics – were very successful and disposed of 300 copies of the New Testament, De Sacy’s French Edition, price 1/3 each. The demand exceeded the supply they had brought with them notwithstanding the denunciations of the R. C. priest of Chicoutimi, who preached against their distributions and frightened several who gave up the New Testaments to him: it is supposed he succeeded in obtaining half of the 300 copies, but even so what good may result from the frequent perusal of the 150 copies still remaining in their possession. This same priest was on the point of leaving, having sold his horse, and furniture, during your missionary’s stay there and a successor to the priest, known to be of a more liberal spirit appointed and daily expected to take the place of the hinderer of God’s work.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *The Sixty-First Annual Report of the Quebec Auxiliary Bible Society*, (Quebec: Quebec Auxiliary Bible Society, 1897), 18-19.

⁴⁹ Report from E. J. W. Ross to Bishop 9 October 1856, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts archives, Bodleian Libraries, USPG/E/1.

The SPG missionary's account corroborates the broader sense of antagonism that Protestants felt in this period about Catholicism's restrictions regarding the Bible.⁵⁰ But it also suggests that the rigour with which the BFBS was opposed varied among individual priests, and some, like the latter priest described by the SPG account, were more permissive to the Bible's distribution.

For the BFBS colporteurs and its leaders, this opposition to Bible distribution was as much a spiritual challenge as a material one. The Quebec Auxiliary's report in 1896 stated that the Catholicism in the region presented a threat to its spiritual wellbeing. "In our district the work of colportage is difficult in the extreme and demands much of the love of Jesus and for sinners, which alone can give moral courage, endurance and all conquering power."⁵¹ A separate colporteur's report was strong in its denouncement of the Church, stating that, "I am more and more convinced that Popery can only live where ignorance prevails. The priests know this and keep from them even their own version of the Scriptures. How wicked is that system that grows only in darkness. I have given a Bible to a woman whose husband is a Papist, tho' she is a Protestant. I hope it will prove a light in dark place."⁵²

Another report of a colporteur working among Roman Catholics on behalf of the UCBS suggested that the priests had warned their congregants of his visit, and that some believed the Protestants' Bible was designed to undermine the Catholic faith. Although the colporteur wrote that "I was generally very well received," he described an incident in which an Irish Roman Catholic man had purchased two bibles and who later had a young schoolmaster try to prevent

⁵⁰ For examples of popular sentiments about "a standard complaint" that "Catholics are 'forbidden' to read the Bible" see Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 144-45.

⁵¹ *Forty-First Annual Report of the Ottawa Auxiliary* (Ottawa: Ottawa Auxiliary Bible Society, 1896), 18.

⁵² *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 30.

him from doing so, telling the man that “they were bad books, and had not received the approbation of the Bishop of Quebec.” The Irish man defended his purchase, saying that the books were good and that “the only fault a Roman Catholic can find with them is that they are distributed by the Protestant Bible Society.” The colporteur invited the schoolmaster to buy a book for himself, but he refused saying “that he would never buy a book which was calculated to deprive Roman Catholics of their religion.”⁵³ The anecdote demonstrates that Bible distribution was problematic among English-speaking Catholics as well as their French-speaking counterparts. It also demonstrates the mutual antagonism that Protestants and Catholics ascribed to one-another, believing that the approach of the other was meant to undermine their own religion. Where Protestants felt Roman Catholic prohibition on Bible distribution undermined the work of the Holy Spirit through an individual’s own reading of scriptures, the Catholic leaders felt that indiscriminate distribution of the Bible undermined the very important role of the Church in ordering religious faith and practice. Both actions were considered by the other as antagonistic.

At times the descriptions of that antagonism were overt, with physical confrontations demonstrating the conflict between Protestants and Catholics over the Bible. A French-speaking colporteur working for the Ottawa Auxiliary in Clarence Creek wrote that he was “way-laid by five men, who upset his cutter, broke his harness, and struck and kicked himself so severely that some of his ribs were broken and he sustained other injuries.” The report hinted at a Roman Catholic influence in the region: “Blind bigotry, intolerance and fierce persecution, - the

⁵³ *The Sixty-First Annual Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1865).

offspring of an anti-scriptural system, - have not yet been banished from the earth. They shall not, however, deter nor diverge us from endeavouring, as we may have opportunity, to enlighten and benefit those who are the bond-slaves of ignorance and of sin.”⁵⁴ Part of the narrative of the rough and rugged colporteur was the sense that the peddlers encountered strong opposition, especially from the Catholic Church. In addition to the threat of having the books confiscated, the violence some colporteurs encountered added to the image of threats of danger and persecution.

In contrast to the hardships that colporteurs encountered because of priests’ opposition, their reports also highlight instances when there was success in their work in Catholic communities. One colporteur’s report remarked that, “there is quite a number of Roman Catholics, to whom I sold some Testaments.”⁵⁵ Testaments, containing only the books of the Gospels and the New Testament, were especially suitable for Roman Catholics because they did not contain the Old Testament, avoiding the controversy of obtaining a book without the deuterocanonical sections of the Bible, known as the Apocrypha. Though some Catholics continued to insist on the Douay-Rheims Bible based on the Latin Vulgate and endorsed by the Catholic Church, the French-Language de Sacy bibles which the BFBS distributed were purchased from the colporteurs, who seemed to have some success in selling them.⁵⁶ Regardless of which Bibles were purchased, colporteurs celebrated any success among Roman Catholics.

⁵⁴ *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Ottawa Auxiliary*, (Ottawa: Ottawa Auxiliary Bible Society, 1887), 20.

⁵⁵ *The Forty-Fourth Report of the Upper Canada Bible Society* (Toronto: Upper Canada Bible Society, 1884), 28.

⁵⁶ For useful background information on the printing of English Catholic bibles in the United States, see John Dawson Gilmary Shea, *A bibliographical account of Catholic Bibles, Testaments, and other portions of Scripture translated from the Latin Vulgate, and printed in the United States* (New York: Cramoisy Press, 1859), 3-8.

The anti-Catholicism featured in these reports reveal the extent to which the enmity between French and English Canadians was rooted in religious disagreements, and more specifically, disagreements centering on the Bible. There was considerable substance in Protestants' claims that the Catholic Church opposed the Bible Society's work. In an encyclical published in 1824, Pope Leo XII criticized the Bible Society of the "wretched undertaking" of indiscriminately distributing bibles. The leaders of the Bible Society were "rejecting the traditions of the holy Fathers and infringing the well-known decree of the Council of Trent" in order to "have the holy Bible translated, or rather mistranslated, into the ordinary languages of every nation." The encyclical called on Catholics to actively resist the work of the Bible Society, exhorting them to "try every means of keeping your flock from those deadly pastures. Do everything possible to see that the faithful observe strictly the rules of our Congregation of the Index. Convince them that to allow holy Bibles in the ordinary language, wholesale and without distinction, would on account of human rashness cause more harm than good."⁵⁷ The decree of the Council of Trent referred to in the encyclical was the Tridentine Profession of Faith that was issued by a Papal bull *Iniunctum Nobis* on 13 November 1564. It affirmed the authority of scripture, but also the necessity of ecclesiastical oversight in its reading and interpretation: "I likewise accept Holy Scripture according to the sense that Holy Mother Church has held and does hold, to whom it belongs to judge the true meaning and interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures. I shall never accept or interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers."⁵⁸ The Roman Catholic Church's position required Catholic leaders and

⁵⁷ "Ubi Primum: Encyclical of Pope Leo XII on His Assuming the Pontificate, 5 May 1824" in Claudia Carlin, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. I (Wilmington: McGrath Publishing Company, 1981), 200-203.

⁵⁸ "The Tridentine Profession of Faith," Papal bull of Pius IV *Iniunctum Nobis* 13 November 1564 in *Trent: What Happened at the Council* John W. O'Malley appendix B

priests to mediate the reading of scriptures, which was at the heart of the Bible Society's concern. The Catholic Church's opposition to the Bible Society was affirmed in a more direct statement in a papal encyclical issued in May 1844 by Pope Gregory XVI that denounced the work of "bible societies" in distributing bibles indiscriminately.⁵⁹ Although evangelicals used misinformed popular anti-Catholicism to depict the importance of their enterprise, there was legitimate opposition to the Bible Society's distribution that substantiated their concerns.

In their respective approaches to the Bible, the Roman Catholics' tradition of collective spirituality and ecclesiastical authority clashed with Protestant evangelicals' emphasis on individualism and voluntarism. From both Roman Catholics and Protestants, there was considerable embellishment of the other's nefarious motives over the use or restriction of the Bible. Both affirmed the importance of scriptures in matters of faith, but they were deeply divided over matters of interpretation and the proper reading of the Bible. The Catholic Church associated the undirected interpretation and because of the converse importance to Protestants of an individual's direct access to the scriptures to be read for themselves, the distribution of bibles and the material possession of them became the point at which the conflict over these views was carried out.

The BFBS's leaders' dismay at Catholic opposition to its enterprise grew in the nineteenth century, though their concerns about that opposition were likely rooted in the narrative they had created rather than the reality of the Catholic Church's position toward the Bible. Colleen MacDonnell argues that, in the United States, Catholic attitudes towards Bible

⁵⁹ "Inter Praecipuas Encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI on Biblical Societies" in Claudia Carlin, ed. *The Papal Encyclicals*, vol. I (Wilmington: McGrath Publishing Company, 1981), 267-271.

reading became much more flexible, as bishops were prepared to encourage their people that the Bible was an ethical guide in decision making and an important part of a family's library. The growing acceptance of Bible reading, MacDonnell argues, was meant to counteract the influence of Bible societies and biblical criticism.⁶⁰ Though a similar shift likely occurred in Canada, the rhetoric of the BFBS auxiliary's reports continued to portray Catholics as antagonistic to the Bible and actively opposed to the BFBS's work. Likely due to the continued antagonism between French and English Canadians over cultural encroachment, Protestants continued to see the Catholic Church as an enemy to its enterprise.

That this was a popular perception among Protestant Canadians is indicated by its basis for a short story by the Reverend Charles W. Gordon entitled *The Colporteur*, written in 1909 under the pseudonym of Ralph Connor. Gordon was an enormously successful Canadian author by this time, and a staunch supporter of the BFBS in Canada. His presence at important meetings of the Canadian Bible Society in 1909 and 1919 was highlighted in the journals of the BFBS's Foreign Secretary John Ritson when he visited various Canadian auxiliaries.⁶¹ *The Colporteur* depicts a professor, a businessman, and an "aesthetic lady" who travel to a fictional French-speaking village of St. Marie in Quebec, and encounter a young French-Canadian colporteur.⁶² The story's dialogue describes popular perceptions of colportage, and uses the three travelers to represent three popular perceptions of colportage. The professor's learned and skeptical

⁶⁰ Colleen MacDonnell, *Material Christianity: religion and popular culture in America* (Yale University Press, 1995), 75-82.

⁶¹ John Ritson's diary of his 1921 Canada tour features a discussion with Gordon regarding the divisions in the Canadian Bible Society over whether or not western Canadian auxiliaries and branches should remain under the administration of Toronto's Upper Canada Bible Society or have their own auxiliaries. See Ritson's diary entry for January – March 1921, BFBS archives, Cambridge University Library, BSA/D2/14/50.

⁶² Ralph Connor (Rev. Charles W. Gordon), *The Colporteur*, (Toronto: Presbyterian Church of Canada, 1909).

perspective showed contempt for the colporteur's meddling and crass proselytization, dismissing the need for the work and defending the historical status of the Church, which was likely a common objection to the evangelical enthusiasm behind the BFBS's enterprise. The "aesthetic lady's" fixation on the romantic aspects of the young man's experiences characterizes the sense that colporteurs were indeed an idealized hero figure of muscular Christianity. The businessman's attention to the financial and practical aspects of the work led to his support of the cause and the sympathetic appreciation for the stories at the Bible meeting and the French-Canadians. The short story was a tool that educated readers about colportage and extoled the virtues and the urgency of a colporteur's work in French-Canadian communities.

The Colporteur's most striking feature is its attack on the Roman Catholic Church and the importance of the colporteur's work in overcoming the regressive tendencies of Catholicism and its priests' oppressive restrictions on reading the Bible. In the story, the colporteur tells the travelers of a priest who "visited every home and demand the Bibles left by the 'wolf heretic' and every Bible given up was burnt in the stove."⁶³ The Professor repeatedly defends the Catholic Church as a "great, historic, venerable Christian church," and criticizes the colporteur for bothering the French people when they should be allowed "to hold their own faith in their own way." The colporteur responded by attacking the Church's corruption, false doctrine, and its veneration of the Virgin Mary, arguing passionately that Bible distribution would free the French from a repressive religion. The colporteur defined his work in a way that was common in the BFBS's depiction of its distribution efforts: "We don't make them Protestants. We give them the Bible and teach them to read it. We want to give them the light, the good Gospel that you have,

⁶³ Connor, *The Colporteur*, 13.

that your children have.”⁶⁴ The short story relied on common anti-Catholicism to describe the necessity of the BFBS’s colportage and to refute popular objections to its distribution. The story’s depiction is consistent with the Bible Society colporteurs’ reports that frequently highlighted the oppressive and stifling influence of the Catholic Church. Both highlight the belief that Catholicism hindered French-Canadians’ free choice in obtaining the scriptures and reading them for themselves, a restriction which defied the voluntary principle that underpinned the BFBS’s enterprise in North America.

Conclusion

The Bible played an important role in the tension between Roman Catholics and Protestants in the nineteenth century, especially in the differences between French and English Canadians. The BFBS evangelical distribution enterprise was fuelled in part by the commitment to voluntarism and the freedom of conscience that all individuals had in religious matters, that everyone who wished to have a copy of the Bible must have it. Evangelicals made substantive claims that Catholic bishops and priests were denying this access to their flock and defying the principles of individual liberty, actions that confirmed for many the popular and theological aspects of anti-Catholicism that were common in Canadian Protestantism in the nineteenth century. James Thomson’s involvement in the foundation of the French Canadian Missionary Society in 1840 highlights the broad reach of evangelical anti-Catholic principles but also the boundaries that persisted between organizations that sought to enact them. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the Bible Society’s colporteurs used well-known characterizations of Catholicism to add

⁶⁴ Ibid., 17.

urgency and weight to their work of selling bibles throughout Canada. The anecdotes in their reports helped contributed to the popular anti-Catholic ideas of the oppression and overbearing control of the Church as an institution. These depictions continued into the twentieth century, when, as Ralph Connor's short story demonstrates, the Catholic Church's apparent opposition to Bible distribution had become a key antagonist in the BFBS's narrative of the rugged colporteur heroically overcoming all obstacles to ensure that anyone who wished to purchase a Bible could do so. These differences were fuelled by anti-Catholicism that was a part of popular thought in English-speaking countries in the nineteenth century. The colportage reports also contributed to those notions, providing anecdotal evidence for the oppression of Roman Catholic Church members by overbearing priests and bishops who refused to allow their congregations access to the saving message of the Word of God. For Roman Catholics, the aggression with which the Bible Society pursued its distribution enterprise confirmed for many that Protestants were bent on destroying the Catholic community by undermining the God-ordained authority and order in which bishops and priests administered and oversaw the practice of the Christian faith.

The mutual antagonism over Bible distribution created further tensions between French and English-speaking Canadians who viewed one another with mutual suspicion. For French-Canadians who felt their traditions were being attacked through legislation and cultural encroachment, survival meant protecting the distinctive aspects of French-Canadian society, which included the prominence of the Catholic Church and its practices. For English-Canadians, the power of the Catholic Church over French Canadians transgressed the values of liberty and freedom of conscience that had become bedrocks of English-Canadian society. Voluntarism as a religious preference had become a requisite characteristic of Canadian identity, and the Catholic Church's imposition on the liberty of worship transgressed a powerful national quality. The

cultural and social associations with religion, nationalism, and identity propelled the Bible into the forefront of these confrontations.

CHAPTER 7: THE CANADIAN BIBLE SOCIETY CONFERENCE, 1904

In September 1904, dozens of religious leaders from across Canada gathered in Toronto. These men were representatives of Canadian auxiliaries and branches of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) scattered across the country. The BFBS's Foreign Secretary, John Ritson, had himself traveled to Toronto from London to meet with them at a conference held to discuss the coordination of Bible Society work in the country. Local auxiliaries of the BFBS were established throughout British North America before Canada's Confederation in 1867, and the organization continued to expand so that by the turn of the twentieth century, there were sixteen auxiliaries and more than a thousand branches in Canada. But throughout the nineteenth century, each of these auxiliaries worked independently of one another, raising donations, employing agents and booksellers, ordering bibles from the BFBS's Bible House in London, and sending money in return in order to pay for the books received and to help fund the organization's work of translating and distributing scriptures around the world. This 1904 conference was called with the aim of unifying these auxiliaries into a single Canadian Bible Society with shared resources for procuring books, shared policies in distributing and selling them, and a shared vision for expanding the network of auxiliaries and branches into Western Canada. Beginning with a public luncheon on Tuesday 14 September, the conference delegates then participated in a two-day conference on Wednesday and Thursday in which the minute details involving such a federation were discussed. A public meeting on Thursday evening ended the conference with a jubilant declaration of the newly formed Canadian Bible Society and its bright future in Canada.

The comments and remarks recorded from the private conference sessions and the public meetings provide an important insight into the BFBF's work in Canada at the turn of the

twentieth century. These records highlight three characteristics of the enterprise that the BFBS auxiliaries in Canada had built in their work in the nineteenth century. The first is that the breadth of support for the BFBS from ministers and Christian leaders across denominations demonstrates that the Bible Society comprised an important coalition of unified evangelicals which supported its Bible distribution enterprise. Earlier divisions within denominations about the support of the BFBS had given way to a broad Protestant consensus that supported the BFBS's enterprise. The second was the Bible Society's distribution enterprise bolstered an Anglo-Protestant vision of Canada in the British Empire, a nationalistic vision that fed off of nativist sentiments about immigrants who might not assimilate readily into Canadian society. The BFBS's leaders gathering in Toronto saw their work as a critical part of maintaining the Christian character of Canada. The third is the transformation in the book trade in which the BFBS operated, where consumer tastes and market competition thrust Canada's BFBS auxiliaries into a more competitive market for bibles, forcing its leaders to reconsider its role as both a charitable organization and a mass distributor and retailer of books. Together, these concerns highlight important developments in the BFBS's enterprise that took place over the course of the nineteenth century.

The Canadian auxiliaries that had dominated the Bible market in the 1800s encountered a remarkably different context at the turn of the twentieth century. The rise in Canadian economic development was changing the character of the nation. Canada was still rapidly undergoing industrialization and urbanization in which the growth of the state, cities, industry, civil institutions and immigration all contributed to the expansion of Canada's economic development. The result was a discernible rise in the transnational movement of goods that paved the way to the rise of consumer society in Canada, so that, as Donica Belisle and a number

of other historians have observed, “wage-earners began expressing consumer wishes in the 19th century.”¹ The work of the BFBS in distributing bibles was deeply entrenched in these developments, and its enterprise of Bible distribution and selling responded to these broader social transformations. Bibles were still mostly obtained from Britain, but numerous factors shifted the demand for bibles in Canada. Within the organization, the BFBS had achieved extraordinary success in Bible distribution through colportage and the broad expansion of auxiliaries into small communities throughout Canada. This expansion, coupled with the growing number of Canadian consumers with expendable income, led to a virtual elimination of “Bible destitution” by ensuring the near universal access to the Bible for anyone who wished to have one. As a result, consumer tastes, stylistic preferences, quality, and value became much more prominent concerns. In addition, the market for bibles was shifting because of the rise of major retailers, namely department stores, which could rival the BFBS in its purchasing power and its geographical reach. Growing immigration contributed to this economic development but also created anxieties about Canadian identity and national character, a problem that BFBS leaders felt well equipped to solve. In addition to responding to new consumer demands, the BFBS also shifted its attention toward the growing concerns about the “foreign element” in recent immigrants. Negative characterizations of immigrants helped to unify Anglo-Protestants around the Bible Society, which presented itself as a rampart against alien influences that might undermine the moral fabric of Canadian society.

¹ Donica Belisle, “Toward a Canadian Consumer History,” *Labour/Le Travail* 52, (Fall, 2003), 181, 190. [181-206]. See also David Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) and Carolyn Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 116-120.

The Transdenominational Support for the BFBS

The Canadian Bible Society conference began on 13 September 1904 with a luncheon held at Webb's Restaurant in the *Globe* building on Yonge Street.² The luncheon was attended by "over one hundred ministers and prominent laymen representing all the Protestant Churches in Toronto."³ The luncheon was held to honour John H. Ritson, the BFBS's Foreign Secretary, and to celebrate the work of the BFBS in Canada and around the world. It was a significant event in the city, bringing together some of Toronto's most important and influential ministers and laymen. The *Globe* printed an article describing the event, listing the most prominent guests in attendance.⁴ The list of Bible Society supporters and the relative diversity of their respective religious backgrounds are a powerful demonstration of the transdenominational cooperation that the BFBS maintained throughout the nineteenth century. Rather than drawing on a particular branch or wing of Canadian Protestantism, the Bible Society enjoyed the backing of a wide range of Protestants in Canada, reflecting a unified evangelical outlook. The broad endorsement it received as an organization was a key to its success as an expanding Bible distributor.

One of the key figures at the luncheon was James Paterson Sheraton. He was the Principal of the Protestant Episcopal Divinity School from its inception in 1877, and in that capacity had become influential in evangelical Anglican circles. Alexander Neil Bethune, Toronto's Anglican Bishop at the time, initially refused to ordain its graduates, but eventually the

² The restaurant was founded by Harry Webb "where 300 diners could be seated at once" and which served See Mary F. Williamson, "Prime Minister to the Interior": Thomas and Harry Webb, for eighty years bakers, confectioners, caterers and restaurateurs," *Culinary Chronicles* no. 50 (Autumn 2006): 5-7.

³ The proceedings of the luncheon, the two days of the conference, and the final public meeting were all recorded and bound for the British and Foreign Bible Society. The bound copy is held in the British and Foreign Bible Society library among John Ritson's notebooks from his tours in Canada at Cambridge University Library. BSA/D1/2/49, 1. Hereafter, the records will be noted as "Proceedings."

⁴ *The Globe* (Toronto), 15 September 1904.

support of important Toronto Anglicans enabled Sheraton and his school to bear considerable influence by the time the school occupied its first building under the name Wycliffe College.⁵ Sheraton's evangelical leanings aligned him with the Bible Society's broadly ecumenical approach to its distribution enterprise. Because of Sheraton's influence among evangelicals, his connections to Wycliffe College, and his role as editor of the *Evangelical Churchman* from 1872 until the 1890s, Donald Campbell Masters describes him as "the dominant personality of Wycliffe and at the intellectual centre of the evangelical community in Toronto."⁶

Canon Henry Cody, another of the attendees named by the *Globe*, was a close ally of Sheraton's in Toronto's evangelical community. He was the priest at the helm of St. Paul's Anglican Church in Toronto, and later became President of University of Toronto. As the minister at St. Paul's, Cody worked closely with Principal Sheraton at Wycliffe College and they were united in their theological views and their involvement at the college.⁷ His father had served as secretary-treasurer of the Bible Society branch at Embro for four decades, evidence of a long history between Cody and the BFBS.⁸ The noted presence of Sheraton and Cody from the Anglican Communion suggests that the firmest supporters of the BFBS came from the Church's more evangelical leaders, a disposition that lent itself to both the ecumenical and interdenominational nature of the Bible Society's enterprise and the emphasis on Bible circulation and reading.

⁵ Alan L. Hayes, "SHERATON, JAMES PATERSON," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 25, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sheraton_james_paterson_13E.html.

⁶ Donald Campbell Masters, *John Henry Cody: An Outstanding Life* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1995),

⁷ Cody and Sheraton were both uncomfortable with the "liberal tendencies in theology and churchmanship" embraced by H. P. Plumptre who taught Pastoral Theology from 1902. See Masters, *Henry John Cody: An Outstanding Life*, 49 – 50.

⁸ See Masters, *Henry John Cody: An Outstanding Life*, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1995), 1.

The article also listed T. B. Hyde, a local Congregationalist minister whose conservative theology demonstrates the range of support for the BFBS in Toronto. Hyde was student and a supporter of the Moody Bible Institute and a key organizer in the evangelistic campaign held by Reuben Archer Torrey and Charles Alexander in 1906.⁹ Eric Crouse describes Torrey as “one of the most conservative [American evangelists], particularly on the matter of theology” who was criticized by the *Canadian Congregationalist* as the “literalist of the literalists” in biblical interpretation.¹⁰ Hyde’s attendance and support of the Bible Society, but also the attention paid to him by the *Globe*, highlights the participation in the organization’s work from across the Protestant spectrum.

Another of the ministers listed was the Reverend Dr. Thomas, President of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. His evangelical transdenominationalism was evident through his appreciation for Presbyterian doctrine and faithfulness to Scripture, once describing them as “the magnificent defenders of the Word of God throughout the ages, true to the principles which all Christians loved,” and that “Baptists and Presbyterians were drawn together because of the fellowship of doctrinal connection.”¹¹ The attendance of Reverend Oates C. S. Wallace, Chancellor of McMaster University until 1905, was also mentioned. He took up the role as the head of the Baptist’s seminary in 1895 and by 1904 he had left his mark on the university in his long tenure as head, one that placed him prominently among Toronto’s Protestant leadership.¹²

⁹ Eric R. Crouse, *Revival in the City: The Impact of American Evangelists in Canada, 1884-1914* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 22.

¹⁰ Crouse, *Revival in the City*, 100, 143.

¹¹ “Proceedings of the Fifth General Council: Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System, ed. Rev. G. D. Mathews (London: Presbyterian Church of England, 1892,) 339.

¹² <http://issuu.com/alumniadvancement/docs/lifestory/7?e=0> – “The Life Story of Rev. Oates C .S. Wallace.” For the theological emphases of Wallace’s tenure as Chancellor of McMaster University until 1905, see Charles M. Johnston, *McMaster University: The Toronto Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 70-84.

The Reverend Chancellor Nathanael Burwash of Victoria College invoked a blessing to open the luncheon.

Ministers and clergymen were not the only figures whose attendance was highlighted by the *Globe*, however. One of the city's prominent lawyers, Dr. N. W. Hoyles, had long been involved in the Upper Canada Bible Society and represented the auxiliary at the British and Foreign Bible Society's centenary celebrations in London earlier that year. He was also a frequent representative at the General Synod of the Church of England in Canada. The paper also mentioned John Harvie who was the acting Permanent Secretary of the Upper Canada Bible Society. Harvie had begun his career involved in the Northern Railway before becoming involved in real estate and politics, but had become director of the UCBS by 1878.¹³ Another prominent lay professional attending the luncheon was Dr. Walter Bayne Geikie, who was on the faculty at Victoria Medical College and who resisted the school's absorption by the University of Toronto until 1903.¹⁴ He had been a long-serving leader in the Upper Canada Bible Society's executive as Vice-President, and was slated to act alongside Judge Hoyles as one of the auxiliary's representatives at the centenary celebrations in London, but declined his attendance over concerns about the negative impact travel might have on his health.¹⁵ The presence of prominent lay members at the luncheon reflects the continued importance they played in the BFBS's leadership that had historically been an important part of the organization's development in Canada in the nineteenth century.

¹³ Philip Creighton, "HARVIE, JOHN," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed July 6, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/harvie_john_14E.html.

¹⁴ Geikie maintained a principled stance against what he perceived to be favouritism. See A. B. McKillop, *Matters of the Mind: the University in Ontario, 1791-1951* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 75-77.

¹⁵ See letter to UCBS in Minutes, LAC MG17F1

In addition to those in attendance, the *Globe* listed the regrets sent from the province's Lieutenant-Governor and from Arthur Sweatman, Toronto's Anglican Bishop who was away on a confirmation tour. Alan Hayes describes Sweatman as "distinctly more ecumenical than his predecessors, and he was conspicuous in the Bible Society, the Evangelical Alliance, the Lord's Day Alliance, and the Moral Reform Council of Canada."¹⁶ In addition to the guests listed by the *Globe*, the conference proceedings added a number of clergymen and professional laymen to the number in attendance. The conference proceedings also list apologies from those who could not attend. Regrets from Dr. Albert Carman, the General Superintendent of the Methodist Church, from Thomas C. S. Macklem, provost of Trinity College in Toronto, Professor Clark of Trinity University, and from Principal John Caven of Knox College, a staunch member of the Lord's Day Alliance and supporter of temperance whose willingness to work across denominational lines was reflected in his role as president of the Canadian Society of Christian Unity which sought a union of Protestant churches, an effort that culminated in the founding of the United Church of Canada in 1925.¹⁷ Caven died before the end of 1904 from pneumonia. Apologies were also included from Canon Welch, the rector of St. James Anglican Cathedral; Rev. Dr. Langtry, the minister at St. Luke's Parish in Toronto who, according to D. C. Masters was a "redoubtable high churchman... [with] conservative views of the Scriptures;"¹⁸ and Dr. G. M.

¹⁶ Alan L. Hayes, "SWEATMAN, ARTHUR," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 25, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sweatman_arthur_13E.html.

¹⁷ For more on Caven's role in the Canadian Society of Christian Unity, see Phyllis Airhart, *The Church with the Soul of a Nation*

¹⁸ Masters, *Henry John Cody*, 47.

Milligan, a Presbyterian minister associated with Knox College who was the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly in 1904.¹⁹

The list of guests in attendance at the luncheon and the names of those apologizing for their absence highlights the broad appeal of the Bible Society across denominational lines, and the prestige of the BFBS's Foreign Secretary in bringing such a broad group of religious leaders together. The BFBS's emphasis on restricting sectarian division, most notably in its insistence on allowing "no note or comment" to append its editions of the Bible, paid dividends by providing a space in which all Protestant denominations and their leaders could throw their support behind its enterprise. The Bible Society's transdenominationalism provided a platform for evangelicals across churches to cooperate towards a common goal of distributing the Bible, and unifying their influence within Canadian society as a powerful voluntary association.

This broad mandate and its widespread support were reflected in the several speeches made to the wide range of guests at the luncheon. Judge Hoyles welcomed Ritson and thanked him and the British and Foreign Bible Society's staff in London, England for hosting him during the BFBS's centenary celebrations earlier that year. Next, the principal of Knox College, the Reverend Professor McLaren also welcomed Ritson, portraying the great need for Bible distribution in the growing country.

In this broad transdenominational support, the British and Foreign Bible Society was heralded by its Christian leaders as a foundational British institution that featured the best of British character in Canada. After Professor McLaren's welcome, Principal Sheraton addressed

¹⁹ List of Moderators of General Assembly, *The Acts and Proceedings of the One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Cornwall: Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2002), 1.

those gathered, declaring that one of the reasons behind the great support for the Bible Society, and the hearty welcome given to Ritson at the luncheon, was that “the Bible Society is the great unifying agency” and that all Protestants could agree on the importance of distributing the Bible:

Its wonderful aim – to circulate these precious Scriptures without note and without comment, which are the whole foundation of our faith, and upon which every one of us rests everything which he believes, and in which he hopes - - the very aim there is a unifying aim. It throws aside all lesser things, all sectional things, and devotes itself to the one supreme thing - - the circulation of those scriptures which are our charter, which are the foundation of our faith, which contain the revelation of the one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Not only that, but when we come to the actual work itself we unite with all together and are absolutely one, though separated in various ways and belonging to different ecclesiastical [sic] organizations. We do not in the least abate our allegiance from the Society; there is no ground of controversy in our working; we are all agreed upon the supreme value of the Scriptures. That in itself unifies.²⁰

Sheraton articulated the breadth with which the project of bible distribution could be supported because of the foundational place that the Bible had in Christian belief and the shared conviction that bibles were needed for everyone. With these sentiments Sheraton articulated the central importance of the Bible Society’s transdenominationalism to its distribution work.

Sheraton’s allusion to “sectional things” and “controversy” affirmed the importance of the Bible and its distribution in light of the rise of Higher Criticism and greater scepticism about the authority and authenticity of Scriptures. The turn of the twentieth century witnessed a great deal of debate and anxiety about the emerging prominence of biblical criticism, debates which played out in the churches and seminaries of many of the guests at the luncheon. Only several years later at the University of Toronto, the recently appointed President of the University of Toronto Robert Falconer had to manage the potential crisis that arose because of the critical

²⁰ Proceedings, 9-10.

analysis of the Bible being taught by some of its faculty, especially Thomas Eakin, who was seen by one board member as teaching damaging attacks on the Bible.²¹ For some Protestant clergymen, biblical criticism had the potential to render the Bible spiritually impotent and meaningless, undermining the foundations of Christian orthodoxy. For others, historical criticism freed the Bible from some of its seemingly immoral or unpopular parts. David Marshall's examination of biblical criticism among Protestant clergymen includes several of those in attendance at the luncheon and supporters of the BFBS, including Nathanael Burwash and William Caven. Their support of the BFBS and its enterprise of Bible distribution were compatible with their adoption of an historical understanding of the Bible. Far from rendering the Bible meaningless, these theologians saw a renewed importance of the Bible, being able to "apply scientific principles to the Bible as a means to gain a deeper understanding of the Word of God."²² Marguerite Van Die describes the tendency among modern day scholars to divide the debate over historical criticism between "evangelicals" like Albert Carman and "liberals" like Nathanael Burwash, between what contemporaries referred to as "conservative" and "modern" leanings.²³ In spite of their theological disagreements, they were unified around the enterprise of Bible distribution in Canada. In Burwash's prayer to open the luncheon and in Carman's apologies for his absence, both signalled their support for the BFBS and its project of distributing the Bible, demonstrating the support from each side of the day's theological debates for the project of the Bible Society.

²¹ Martin L. Friedland, *The University of Toronto: a history* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 227. On Falconer and his role at the University of Toronto, see James Greenlee, *Sir Robert Falconer: A Biography* (Toronto:, University of Toronto Press, 1988), 135-155.

²² David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*: (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 64-67.

²³ Marguerite van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 91.

In his address at the luncheon, Canon Cody was explicit in addressing the importance of the Bible alongside scientific investigation, “believing that this British and Foreign Bible Society is following the lines of modern development -- specializing upon the circulation of the Scriptures.” He argued that contrary to the assertion that Christianity was passing away because of scientific inquiry, that the Bible would outlast any scientific developments, and “the Word of God will live and abide forever.”²⁴ Michael Gauvreau describes the persistent commitment to the centrality of the Bible and its divine authority among Protestant clergymen in this period, even as the scientific criticism and the belief in evolution played an increasing role in defining the interpretation of scriptures. Gauvreau sees the clergymen’s Baconian outlook as the “means of harmonizing critical thought and the evangelical creed,” allowing them to hold to a faith “founded on the authority and certainty of the Bible and the personal experience of conversion, with the equally insistent claims of the culture of inquiry whose quest for certainty was now founded on the outlook of evolutionary sciences.”²⁵ The strong debates about the place of historical criticism in Canada’s theological seminaries, the division between “liberal” and “evangelical” theology, and the questions about evolution and orthodoxy were secondary to a shared belief in the Bible as the Word of God and the shared commitment to the importance of its distribution in Canada.

In debates about apostolic succession and ecclesiastical government, the Bible Society’s emphasis on the importance of the Bible naturally lent itself to evangelical rather than High Church sympathies. David Bebbington describes “agreement among Evangelicals of all

²⁴ Proceedings, 31.

²⁵ Michael Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century*, 180.

generations that the Bible is inspired by God” as the Biblicism which characterized Protestant evangelicalism overcame theological differences of interpretation of Scripture.²⁶ But the importance of the Bible was not limited to an evangelical movement, and the commitment to the importance of scripture in matters of faith and practice was shared by all Protestants. This shared commitment unified the Bible Society’s supporters in a way that overcame differences about ecclesiastical government. As David Jeremy has written, “[e]vangelicals had little difficulty in recognizing one another's orders in the various denominations, which made co-operation between them much easier than for High Churchmen. Bible religion united; apostolic succession religion divided.”²⁷ Although High Churchmen placed greater emphasis on the primacy of the Church, its offices, and institutional authority, they remained committed to the Bible’s inspiration. Its importance in Christian life compelled them to participate in the Bible Society’s enterprise.²⁸

In garnering such a wide base of support amongst Protestant clergymen, the British and Foreign Bible Society in Canada created an important venue in which a broad coalition of Protestant clergymen and lay leaders were able to unite to express shared interests and to effect changes in Canadian society and in legislation. Although divisions along theological, ecclesiastical, and cultural lines persisted within Canadian Protestantism, the enterprise of Bible distribution was a unifying one. In particular, when social issues concerned the wellbeing of the

²⁶ David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: History from the 1730s to 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 13.

²⁷ David J. Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians: Business Leaders and the Churches in Britain 1900-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 394.

²⁸ Richard Vaudry describes these differences between evangelicalism and High Church Anglicanism in *Anglican and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 36-38.

nation as a whole, leaders from various denominations often agreed with one another in the need to act in Canada's national interests. N. K. Clifford describes a shared vision among Protestants about Canada as God's Dominion, where a "Canadian version of the Kingdom of God had significant nationalistic and millennial overtones, and sufficient symbolic power to provide the basis for the formation of a broad Protestant consensus and coalition." He argues that this vision fuelled the activities of various organizations, including Bible societies, for "shaping their conceptions of the ideal society, and for determining those elements which posed a threat to the realization of their purposes."²⁹ The level of involvement and support by clergymen and lay Protestant leaders in local Bible Society auxiliaries signifies the organization's importance in Protestant circles, and suggests that the various Bible Society committees and boards across Canada serve as a tangible expression of such a coalition.

"Bible societies" have often been listed alongside other voluntary societies like the Lord's Day Alliance, the Young Men's Christian Association, Sunday school unions, and temperance societies. This gathering in Toronto demonstrates the similarities and shared interests between them through the cast of ministers and laymen that gathered in Toronto. Michael Gauvreau argues that evangelical theology together with a need to "define the emerging community," drove ministers to seek "ties between the individual, God, and human society." The results of this search were found in benevolent organizations: "Projects of moral and social reform – camp-meetings, conversion experiences, church building, schools, temperance, Bible societies – characterized the evangelical culture."³⁰ Richard Vaudry includes Bible societies

²⁹ N. K. Clifford, "His Dominion: a vision in crisis," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* Spring 1973 vol. 2 no. 4, 315. (315-326)

³⁰ Michael Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 70.

when he argues that various groups' influence extended beyond civic involvement because of their use of print culture. "Trans-denominational religious societies such as the BFBS or the FCMS [French-Canadian Missionary Society] published newspapers and tracts, and annual reports. Special interest groups had their own publications," all of which had a role in shaping this evangelical culture because of the literature, but also because "many of these editors, printers, and publishers also served prominent roles in the various religious societies that were such a prominent feature of Victorian Protestant life."³¹ As a transdenominational evangelical organization with more than 1000 branches in cities, towns, and villages across Canada, the BFBS had considerable influence in Canadian society.

The BFBS's significance in Canada's public life and its influence in shaping legislation were not lost on Bible Society auxiliaries' leaders. During the conference meetings, the Honorary James Young of Galt, Ontario impressed upon the Bible Society delegates that the recommended reorganization of the Canadian auxiliaries would provide an important benefit to the auxiliaries, in that "the united body federated together, on any great occasion or any great question that came up touching religion and touching the circulation of the Bible, the observance of the Lord's Day, such a body could throw an influence that might have a great effect upon the whole Dominion, in support of the principles which I have no doubt every one [sic] here has at heart."³² Young's long political career in both federal and provincial politics prior to this 1904 conference gives added substance to his statement that an organization with the size and the membership that a single Canadian Bible Society would have if it were united would hold

³¹ Richard W. Vaudry, *Anglicans and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003)., 27.

³² Proceedings,

considerable influence.³³ When dealing with the character, the fabric, and the moral standing of Canada and its citizens, the unified Canadian auxiliaries of the BFBS would have a more powerful voice in advocating an evangelical response to the social questions of their day.

Once various clergymen took their turns welcoming him, John Ritson rose to speak to those gathered at the luncheon. Ritson described the work of the Bible Society and explained that although the organization had wide support around the world, it also had many critics. Some criticized the BFBS for being too sympathetic to Roman Catholics by distributing version of the Bible translated from the Vulgate, while others criticized the BFBS for being too strict in its restrictions on notes and commentaries. Some criticized the BFBS for selling its bibles too cheaply, and some for selling them at all. Some accused it of mismanaging money by overpaying its secretaries and staff, while others criticized the meager wages that were said to be paid to the binders and sewers. By describing its detractors, Ritson used these criticisms to position the BFBS as the moderate organization at the centre of the Protestant spectrum, one that navigated a middle ground between various extremes. In emphasizing the unifying work of the Bible Society, he urged the financial support from churches and their necessity of the BFBS in working alongside churches around the world. “It is not that so much the Churches that support the Bible Society, but the Bible Society that supports the Churches. The Churches cannot do without the Bible. And, brethren, I want you to regard this not as an outside institution.” He pleaded with church leaders to support the Bible Society as if it was its own organization. “We are a department of the Church; we are working in the Churches in Bible Society work on the

³³ Lynn E. Richardson, “YOUNG, JAMES (1835-1913),” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed July 2, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/young_james_1835_1913_14E.html.

principle of co-operation; we are an essential department of every branch of the Church of Jesus Christ... We must stand by the Bible, put it first put it foremost, at all cost... It is the one thing men need. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ the Savior to perishing sinners; let us give the world the Bible. Oh, brethren, I am sure you will stand by this Society, which is not ours, but yours -- the Churches' Society -- for your Country's sake, for the Kingdom's sake, for Christ's sake."³⁴ Ritson appealed to the leaders of the Bible Society to work together as a transdenominational coalition for the salvation of perishing sinners through the revelation of Jesus Christ the Saviour.

The BFBS's Role in Nationalism and Immigration

Beyond the unifying aspects of bible distribution, Sheraton affirmed the importance of the British and Foreign Bible Society in providing a foundation for the nationalism and imperialism shared by many of the luncheon's guests. Its work provided the moral foundations for the British Empire, empowering missionaries with the Word of God and creating a basis for global evangelization. "There is a true Imperialism... not the imperialism of the little flag and the loud shout, but the imperialism of the men who are conscious that they have a trust for the world, that they are the bearers of truth and justice and righteousness to men." Sheraton affirmed the importance of the Bible Society in the Empire, stating that, "this British and Foreign Bible Society represents, more than any other Society, the national consciousness of the mission of the Anglo Saxon people to the world... if you blot out the Bible Society and its work, you paralyze the whole work of Christian missions."³⁵ The imperialism to which Sheraton refers has been

³⁴ Proceedings, 18.

³⁵ Proceedings, 11.

described by Phillip Buckner as a sense of British identity as the primary national identification of citizenship and allegiance that lasted largely unchallenged until the middle of the twentieth century, and much of the language in the addresses given and the discussions among conference delegates reflected this commitment to Canada's prominent place within a larger Empire.³⁶ This British identity was not in competition with any Canadian national allegiances, however, but complementary to them. As Carl Berger has demonstrated in his analysis of the ideas of several prominent Canadians at the turn of the twentieth century, imperialism was not an impediment to national development, but instead a facilitator and enabler of that development.³⁷ The language of empire fuelled the sense of national growth in Canada, and the same can be said of the Canadian Bible Society as a national entity. Throughout the conference, the delegates from the Canadian BFBS auxiliaries clung to their identity as an auxiliary of the "Parent Society" in London, not because of its weakness and inability to command its own affairs, but out of the power and significance that it derived from its colonial legacy and its ongoing involvement as a part of an British institution. The use of this paternal language was an overt expression of deference not just to the structure of the organization, but also to the place of the British Empire in Canada's national consciousness.

This imperialism also had deep ethnic underpinnings, evinced in Sheraton's appeal, quoted above, to the "mission of the Anglo Saxon people to the world" as a part of that national consciousness. Almost a third of immigrants coming to Canada in this period arrived from central, southern, and eastern Europe. "Anglo-conformity was the predominant ideology of

³⁶ Phillip Buckner, "Introduction: Canada and the British Empire," in *Canada and the British Empire* ed. Phillip Buckner, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

³⁷ Carl Berger, *A Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* Second Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 259ff.

assimilation in English speaking. For better or for worse, there were few proponents of either the melting pot or cultural pluralism... Supporters of Anglo-conformity argued that it was the obligation of new arrivals to conform to the institutions of Canada.”³⁸ These concerns, which Bible Society leaders shared, were rooted in the fear that newcomers would not become assimilated into British-Canadian institutions and traditions. Although Sheraton does not address Roman Catholics in particular, his reference to immigrants coming from central, eastern and southern Europe evoked the language of anti-Catholicism that marked the BFBS’s colportage reports throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, presenting a common thread in this discussion of immigrants.

During the two days following the luncheon, approximately forty representatives from Bible Society auxiliaries and branches across Canada participated in a conference held to consider the possibility of bringing together all of the auxiliaries under a single federation. As early as the 1870s, the leaders of the Montreal auxiliary had raised the issue of some form of unification, although these suggestions were not met with any action. In 1903, a resolution was passed calling for the 1904 Conference in Toronto, and it was this conference that led John Ritson to respond to an “urgent invitation” to come to Toronto to consult and advise the Canadian auxiliaries about unification.

The conference had formal procedures and rules to govern the discussions and to determine voting powers allocated to each of the auxiliaries represented. Judge Hoyles was appointed as chair of the conference by a unanimous vote of its delegates, and various

³⁸ Howard Palmer, “Mosaic versus Melting Pot: Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada and the United States,” in *A Passion for Identity: Introduction to Canadian Studies* (Agincourt: Methuen Publications, 1987), 82–85.

committees were appointed with specific tasks. With regards to decision-making and the allocation of votes for the delegates representing the auxiliaries, it was agreed that one vote would be allocated for every forty branches in each auxiliary.³⁹

Once the procedures of the conference were laid out, John Ritson addressed the delegates with the same enthusiasm and zeal that was expressed at the public luncheon the day before. Again, the implications of such a conference were central in the speeches given to open the meetings, as the importance of the Bible to the nation was again pronounced. John Ritson stated that, “The future of Canada depends upon our decisions today and tomorrow. (Hear, hear). Politically, as a part of the Empire, from the point of view of God's kingdom... the future of Canada depends upon the decisions of this Conference... We cannot settle everything in the Conference, but if we could be unanimous in some scheme... then I have no doubts for the future of Bible work in Canada, and I have no doubts for the future of Canada if Canada gets the Bible.”⁴⁰

For John Ritson and others at the conference, Canada's most urgent concern in considering a Canadian Bible Society was the extraordinary immigration into Canada taking place at the time. Ritson stated that the influx of newcomers into Canada was the most compelling reason to undertake “some improvement of our Canadian Bible Society machinery.” But the concern among the conference delegates was not just general immigration, but the “foreign element” of these newcomers: citing statistics from 1902, John Ritson argued that more than half of those entering Canada “were not British; and the very fact that there is this foreign

³⁹ Proceedings,

⁴⁰ Proceedings

element, some of it not always to be desired, makes it increasingly essential that we should give the Bible to these peoples. I think that from every point of view, whether that of the Church of Christ, or that even of the Empire, we must give the Bible to those emigrants who are settling down in Canada, and now is the opportunity for doing it”⁴¹ Behind Ritson’s statement to the delegates was the idea that the British Empire and its dominions and colonies shared a collective identity that valued the Bible and a Christian worldview that was now threatened by newcomers to Canada.

The “foreign element” to which these leaders referred represented non-British immigrants who were believed to be more difficult to assimilate into Canadian society. In the minds of religious and civic leaders who held out an ideal of Canadian society as maintaining the character, traditions, and beliefs of Britain and its empire, the swell in the number of immigrants threatened to undermine the nation-building efforts toward a homogeneous Canadian society. Ritson recalled this issue in his memoirs, written decades after this initial visit to Canada, that the vast number of emigrants to Canada posed the most urgent issue for the conference to consider. “At the time of our visit, the most urgent problem was that of immigration... If these settlers were to be welded together into one great nation and have Christian ideals, they must possess copies of the Scriptures in their mother tongues.”⁴² Anglo-Protestant Canadians were committed to assimilating newly arrived immigrants, but were willing to offer scriptures in native European languages as well as in diglots, bibles in which each page had one column with English and another column with a different language. The non-British immigrants that caused concerns for

⁴¹ Proceedings, 39.

⁴² John Ritson, *The World is Our Parish* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1939),

religious leaders, the majority of whom were not British, presented the Protestant clergymen and lay leaders with a profound challenge to their vision of Canadian society.

Ritson's concerns echoed those of many Canadians at the time. Canadian immigration policies under Wilfrid Laurier's Liberals encouraged immigration into Canada from non-British countries at the turn of the twentieth century, policies that many church leaders looked upon with trepidation.⁴³ By the time Clifford Sifton resigned from his nearly decade-long tenure as Laurier's minister of the Interior in 1905, more than 300,000 immigrants had entered Canada in close to a decade, nearly a third of those were from non-British, German or Scandinavian origins. Eastern European immigrants were attractive to Sifton for their agricultural skills, meeting one of the chief objectives of his immigration policy in expanding cultivation of the Canadian prairies.⁴⁴ But the influx Eastern and central Europeans in large numbers concerned many Canadians who believed that such immigrants were inferior and were less likely to assimilate in Canadian society. Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock describe the backlash against Sifton's policies as being rooted in Canadians' perception of them as impoverished and unfamiliar with Canadian institutions, social conventions, and moral habits. Frank Oliver, a Liberal MP who was a strong critic of Sifton's policies, argued that an open-door policy to Slavs and Galicians presented serious threat to Canadian social institutions and general progress of Canadian society because they were aliens in race and in every respect.⁴⁵ Oliver succeeded Sifton as Laurier's minister of the Interior and sought increased legislative restrictions on immigration.

⁴³ See R. Douglas Francis, "The Kingdom of God on the Prairies," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land* ed. Francis and Chris Kitzan (Calgary: Calgary University Press, 2007), 231-233.

⁴⁴ Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1504-1990* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007), 103.

⁴⁵ Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

The concern over foreign religious influence that John Ritson reflected in his address to the Bible Society delegates was shared by many Protestants in Canada. Brian Fraser demonstrates that many Presbyterians felt that “non-Anglo-Saxon immigration, stimulated by the policies of the Laurier government and the economic boom that coincided with the Laurier years, posed the most visible threat to the national vision of Presbyterian leaders,” who felt “the key to assimilating the foreigners was Christianization.”⁴⁶ Nathanael Burwash’s address to the Methodist Ecumenical Conference in Toronto in 1911 characterized the millions of immigrants that had come to Canada as a “crisis,” whereby large numbers of the “population pouring in upon us are Christless, and if our country is to remain vitally Christian, we must bring upon them the saving power of the gospel.”⁴⁷ Many Protestant leaders believed Canada’s national character was threatened by foreign immigrants whose cultural backgrounds lacked Christian foundations.

David Marshall argues that there was a “growing conviction that Christianity was rooted in culture, not divine agency,” a concern that compelled churches “to pay closer attention to home missions.... as the churches recognized the considerable challenges facing them with the opening of the West and the influx of foreign immigrants.”⁴⁸ For Canadian BFBS leaders who saw themselves as great promoters of the British Christian ideal, these concerns placed increased pressure on them to fulfil their role of building a Christian citizenry.

Evangelicals’ common anti-Catholicism contributed to these concerns about mass foreign immigration as a threat to British institutions and a Protestant worldview. Writing in the midst of large foreign immigration in Winnipeg, J. S. Woodsworth’s *Strangers within our Gates* assessed

⁴⁶ Brian Fraser, *The Social Uplifters: Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1914* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988).

⁴⁷ Nathanael Burwash, address to Methodist Ecumenical Conference in Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind*.

⁴⁸ David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, 108.

in detail the various threats posed by various ethnic groups to Canada's Christian character. Woodsworth described the challenge to the Church in its mission, using Quebec's French population as an example to affirm the widespread belief that the Catholic Church opposed Bible-reading in its entirety. One need for mission activity in that province was the fact that "the Word of God is a closed book to the vast majority of [its] inhabitants.... A short visit in the homes of any village in Quebec will show, not only that the Bible is not in the possession of the people, but that they are afraid of it, having been told it was a dangerous book." Because of this, he urged his readers that "as long as there is a man in our country who is deprived of the opportunity to read the Scriptures, it is the duty of the church to give him that opportunity."⁴⁹ For Woodsworth and many Protestants in this period, the health of the nation's moral fabric and the character of its citizens were associated with the possession of the Bible, which would protect Canada's Christian culture in spite of an influx of immigrants. By describing the oppressive circumstances in Quebec, Woodsworth highlighted for his readers the importance of possessing the Bible to maintaining a Protestant Christian culture, underlining the threat that eastern European immigrants posed to that threat by strengthening a Catholic element in burgeoning Canadian settlements.

These concerns about immigration and the influx of a foreign element that diminished the importance of the Bible highlight how much Anglo-Protestants had associated national development and Canadian identity with the voluntary and ready access to the Bible. Bible distribution had become an act of nation-building. The leaders of Canada's BFBS auxiliaries

⁴⁹ J. S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates* (Toronto: Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada, 1909), 292.

recognized the urgency of immigration to its own work. Justice Forbes from New Brunswick addressed the public meeting that ended the conference and outlined the importance of the Bible Society's work as a means by which Canada could embrace the large number of immigrants to Canada. He argued that, in light of the large number of newcomers into Canada, "God in his Providence has set before us an open door. There are no licenses to be obtained to send the Bible to them; there is no persecution of our colporteurs who go amongst them and distribute God's word. Even on the low plane of a business transaction, it would pay our Christian people, and our mercantile community as well, to engage largely in this work, because on the faith and integrity of these people large transactions will depend."⁵⁰ Because the Bible Society placed itself at the heart of building a strong nation and empire, the issue of foreign immigration in Canada was one of the reasons behind the need for its Canadian re-organization.

These discussions also highlight the shift in the BFBS's distribution, moving throughout the second half of the nineteenth century to increasing concentration on foreigners and non-British Canadians. Where in the earlier period, the BFBS was still working to convince Protestant Christians to support its enterprise, by the turn of the twentieth century, the BFBS had become a central component of a broader consensual Protestant Canadian identity. By 1904, the Bible was considered an essential component of Canadian identity, and the urgency of the BFBS's work was now on providing bibles to those who needed to be convinced of this reality, as a wider project of assimilation and Christianization.

The BFBS and Canada's Competitive Bible Trade

⁵⁰ Proceedings, 28.

In addition to demonstrating the BFBS's unifying platform for Canadian Protestants and the BFBS's concerns over non-British immigration, the Bible Society conference also reveals the extent to which the Bible trade had become more competitive. Although John Ritson and the delegates spoke to some degree of the spiritual significance of bible distribution and the power to transform society, much of the discussion during the two days of meetings focused on the financial and logistical details of reorganization. The delegates needed to consider how the Bible Society would maintain the autonomy of local auxiliaries' spending while also ensuring that its bible distribution would be more efficient and cost-effective as the organization continued to expand. The tenor of the meetings was serious though amicable, with Ritson directing most of the proceedings with suggestions for the delegates' consideration. Ritson highlighted what everyone at the conference knew: the Canadian auxiliaries of the BFBS enjoyed enormous growth in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the turn of the century, an extensive network of central boards in larger centers and smaller boards in local branches had spread across the Dominion, and its reach was extraordinary. Through the enormous efforts of its agents and the impressive funds supporting it, the Upper Canada Bible Society auxiliary based in Toronto had 579 branches that spanned across Canada. More than 1400 auxiliaries and branches combined to distribute tens of thousands of bibles across Canada per year, and together they raised more than 3000 pounds for the use of the Bible Society in London to distribute scriptures around the world.

In spite of its vast size, the Bible Society's growth had exacerbated some of the problems over territorial supervision. Various auxiliaries controlled branches that were an enormous distance from their headquarters, and the regional growth in the West made these old jurisdictions awkward in their administration. The branches at Vancouver, Winnipeg, and

Hamilton were all governed by the board in Toronto, and the distance and differences in regional challenges prompted discussions about the effectiveness of administrative oversight from such a distant centre. In any overhaul of the Canadian auxiliaries' boundaries, the Upper Canada Bible Society stood to lose the most. The geographical reach of the auxiliary was immense, and any reorganization that considered provincial boundaries was inevitably going to seek the removal of some branches from under its oversight. John Ritson recognized this problem for the UCBS: "If this alteration of boundaries takes place, the Upper Canada Bible Society will be the chief loser, there is no doubt about that; but I think the Upper Canada Bible Society will not consider itself in this matter, but the needs of the whole Dominion in the great work of reorganization."⁵¹

The negotiations around the shifting of boundaries were delicate. Old loyalties and territorial sentiments threatened to undermine the process, particularly as the connections between auxiliaries and their branches were often described in paternal and relational terms. Ritson also suggested that in keeping with the changes to geographical boundaries, the names that reflected older political and colonial boundaries might require a change, as could those names that did not reflect boundaries it oversaw. Ritson identified the old political moniker of Upper Canada as one that had failed, one that was outdated, and one that would probably need replacing. However, the institution had become a mainstay among Toronto's elite, and much like Upper Canada College, the Law Society of Upper Canada, and other old institutions, the name held some prestige.⁵² Autonomy was a critical question in considering the way in which Bible work was going to be administered. An auxiliary's autonomy to decide what was best for

⁵¹ Proceedings, 49.

⁵² On the Upper Canada Law Society's continued use of "Upper Canada," see Christopher Moore, *The Law Society of Upper Canada and Ontario's Lawyers, 1797-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 98-99.

particular region was a key consideration in the deliberations of the conference, though not all of the issues were resolved at the conference. The problem of the Upper Canada Bible Society auxiliary's role in Manitoba and British Columbia remained an issue for Ritson when he returned to Canada in 1911 and 1921.⁵³ Problems over the name of the Upper Canada Bible Society also persisted. Although the issue of auxiliary names was raised in the 1904 conference proceedings, nothing is written in the minutes about any final decisions made. After 1904, the Upper Canada Bible Society auxiliary maintained its name within the broader Canadian Bible Society, Disputes over the name of the Upper Canada Bible Society and the ownership of property in Toronto pitted the auxiliary against the Canadian Bible Society and the BFBS in the 1940s.

The name of the individual auxiliaries was not the only one under consideration by the delegates. How the new unified Bible Society in Canada was to be identified was also a concern. The name needed to reflect both the Canadian and British identities of the BFBS's auxiliaries in Canada without giving too much emphasis to one or the other. The Canadian dynamic was crucial, and reflected the wider sentiment of the time that Canada was a growing nation whose influence in the British Empire would expand in the coming decades. Ritson himself urged the delegates of his hope that "the name which this Canadian Society will emphasize its oneness with the great British and Foreign Bible Society." He evoked the imperial connections in his hopes, saying that, "I know there is not much in a name, and I know that if you call yourselves the Canadian Bible Society it will not affect in the slightest your loyalty to London, and the parent Society. After all, the bonds that unite us as Bible Societies are the bonds that unite us as

⁵³ Further issues over the name of the Upper Canada Bible Society and its control over the prairie regions persisted into the 1920s. See John Ritson's diaries of future visits to Canada as the BFBS's Foreign Secretary in BSA/D2/14/49,50

an Empire -- not legal bonds; they are the bonds of love and affection, of unity of aim and purpose”⁵⁴ In the end, the conference decided upon “The Canadian Bible Society Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society” as the rather cumbersome name for the newly unified entity, one that emphasized both the new status as a national organization and its old roots as an auxiliary to the BFBS in London.

The expansion of the BFBS in Canada in the nineteenth century certainly presented institutional challenges for the Bible Society that were reflected in what auxiliaries ought to be called and how they ought to be administered. But it was the material and logistical challenges that were most salient at the time of the federation conference. In his memoirs, Ritson wrote that the most difficult problem for the Bible Society in Canada at the time of its federation was the vast distance between settlements and the difficulties in reaching them. “Again and again,” he wrote, “we found that the difficulty in effective distribution was ‘not in Canada’s millions, but in its miles.’”⁵⁵ Distribution and the goal of ensuring that all Canadians had access to bibles remained the key goal for the BFBS in Canada. Its continuing practice of organizing local Bible Society branches was one of the most effective ways to ensure that the institution had some presence across the vast expanse of Canadian colonial settlement.

The Bible Society’s influence and importance as a retailer, wholesaler, and distributor of bibles is noteworthy for the history of the book in Canada. These roles were intertwined in the work of Canada’s BFBS auxiliaries, and their success in such a widespread distribution network of bibles in Canada is an important innovation. Leslie Howsam’s examination of the British and

⁵⁴ Proceedings, 45.

⁵⁵ John H. Ritson, *The World Is Our Parish* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1939).

Foreign Bible Society's push for printing innovations and shrewd business methods demonstrates the tremendous impact the organization had on the broader industries of book printing and publishing through its involvement in the development of printing and binding.⁵⁶ Although the Canadian BFBS auxiliaries did not print or publish the bibles they sold, their influence in developing such a vast distribution network and their methods in shipping were just as significant to the Canadian book trade because of the importance of distribution to the development of the trade.

As a retailer, the Bible Society auxiliaries had to set prices, stock, and deal with consumer interests and preferences in the book market. The Bible Society also played the role of a wholesaler of bibles. The BFBS Committee in London was the primary wholesaler, purchasing the pages of the Bible from the privileged printers to be used to publish their bibles. The Canadian auxiliaries would then act as a wholesaler of these bibles, purchasing them from London and selling them to various organizations and businesses: Sunday schools, prisons, hospitals, missionaries, churches, and booksellers all purchased the Bible Society's bibles. In some exceptional instances, the books were donated to religious organizations that demonstrated the inability to pay for the bibles.⁵⁷

The Bible Society had long held its policy of avoiding the gratuitous distribution of bibles, and Ritson here affirmed that bibles were meant to be sold, so as to ensure their value and use by those who purchased them, as well as to contribute to the sustainability and viability of

⁵⁶ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles*, 39.

⁵⁷ Eli Maclarens provides a useful definition of the different roles of printer, publisher, distributor, retailer, and wholesaler in *Dominion and Agency: Copyright and the Structuring of the Canadian Book Trade, 1867-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 5.

the Bible enterprise.⁵⁸ Because of this policy of selling its bibles rather than giving them away, the auxiliaries' work of bible distribution had an enormous impact on the wider book trade. Selling bibles by an exchange of money for a book was an important element both in sustaining its enterprise financially and in defining itself as an organization. Insisting on the purchase of bibles was a way to offset the costs it paid to English privileged printers and in the binding and distribution of its books. But equally important was the belief that selling bibles rather than giving them away without charge would ensure that purchased bibles would be valued by their purchasers. John Ritson affirmed this principle to the audience at the public meeting on the last evening of the Conference. "We sell for the simple reason that if a man gives something, however little, he will value the book he gets." He noted the Bible Society's willingness to provide bibles to those in need, stating that, "[t]he Bible Society is always ready to give when there is any need to give, but it is not going to give to Dick, Tom, and Harry and anybody who comes and asks, and who can afford to pay. As a rule it sells. It sells at such a price that the people can afford to buy, the very poorest of people."⁵⁹ Citing human nature as one of the reasons for the necessity of such a policy, he told the audience that "Men are all alike -- they will get their money's worth out of anything if it has cost them something. Sell a man a book and he will read it, and that is all we want."⁶⁰ The Bible Society's principle of selling its bibles meant that it had a significant impact on the commercial trade, as its entire enterprise depended on the transaction of placing bibles in the hands in exchange for money.

⁵⁸ See Leslie Howsam, "The Nineteenth-Century Bible Society and 'the Evil of Gratuitous Distribution,'" in James Raven, *Free Print and Non-Commercial Publishing Since 1700* (Ashgate, 2000),

⁵⁹ Proceedings, 269.

⁶⁰ Proceedings, 270.

The realities of business, money, and financial transactions stood in contrast to the BFBS's public interface that touted the spiritual benefit to Canadian society. It is in this contrast that the tension between the religious and the business aspects of its work are most lucidly revealed. Although the Bible Society leaders presented a public veneer of a primarily religious and moral role in Canadian society, private discussions focused on the material realities of the costs involved in the shipping, stocking, and overland distribution of bibles. At events like the luncheon with the leading clergymen and lay supporters of the Bible Society and the public meeting that closed the conference, the Bible Society leaders emphasized the spiritual effects of bible distribution on society. But in the meetings discussing the ways in which the Canadian auxiliaries would be reorganized, the less romantic details of cost, discounts, purchasing, and territorial boundaries were the most important elements that needed to be worked out. Ritson made this clear when he opened the conference meetings. "The business of the Conference is a matter of considerable importance. Its business be financial, first and foremost."⁶¹

Beyond the fact that bibles were sold, how they were sold was an important point of discussion in the conference. Throughout the nineteenth century, the BFBS had privileged the distribution and sales of its bibles through colporteurs, travelling booksellers who carried bibles to more remote towns and villages in Canada. This emphasis was evident during the 1904 conference, as Ritson read a note addressed to the delegates from the Marquis of Northampton, the President of the British and Foreign Bible Society, who wrote: "I attach special importance to the question of colportage. It is by far the best means of attaining the object of the Society, namely, the distribution of the Scriptures to willing purchasers. No difficulty should be too great

⁶¹ Proceedings, 55.

in this matter, and any sacrifice necessary should be readily made.”⁶² Colportage remained an important symbol of the Bible Society’s commitment to carry its books over great distances to those who would not otherwise be able to obtain the Scripture.

Although colporteurs were celebrated for their central role in making bibles available in Canada, the depository had become an important part of the BFBS’s Bible distribution, particularly in the early period of Bible distribution in British North America. For much of the nineteenth century, the Bible Society had relied largely on depositories to sell books. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, the British North American auxiliaries developed a system by which central depositories in urban centres provided a ready supply of scriptures. The seasonal limitations on shipping goods across the Atlantic lent greater urgency, for if a shipment could not be made before winter, auxiliaries in British North America could be without scriptures for several months before the shipping lanes opened again. The system of having local depositories in urban centres was, in the middle of the nineteenth century, an effective way of overcoming these difficulties.⁶³

However, by the turn of the twentieth century, the use of depositories in the work of the Bible Society was less crucial for seasonal distribution, and their role in the BFBS’s enterprise in Canada was being re-evaluated. Ritson told the delegates that the BFBS committee in London had been gathering statistics on depositories, and had come to conclude “that the circulation of Scriptures through depots, that is, depots of which the Society pays the rent -- is expensive and ineffective.” He recognized that depots had a unique value that was separate from their

⁶² Proceedings, 37-38

⁶³ For the role James Thomson, see chapter 3. See also Stuart Barnard, “Making a Bible Enterprise: James Thomson and the British and Foreign Bible Society in British North America, 1838-1842,” *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture* vol. 6 no. 2 (Spring 2015).

performance as booksellers, but instead “a value as a witness. You do not need such a witness in any town [sic] in Canada, unless it may be in some of the intensely Catholic parts of Quebec.” To have a storefront in a predominantly Catholic city or town provided a physical presence within an urban space that had a different religious orientation, particularly one which he believed was naturally antagonistic to the liberal distribution of Scripture.

In spite of this important caveat, Ritson denounced the system of depositories. “But the question is what price are you to pay for a witness” he asked the delegates. “They are not remunerative methods of circulating Scriptures. We find that instead of paying for a man to stand behind a counter and there wait until people choose to come to him for Scriptures, it is far better to send a man out to visit the people. Let the man go to the people instead of waiting for the people to come to the man. (Hear, hear) It is better to spend money on colporteurs rather than on depositories. And then we must consider the effect of the work of a depot upon the work of the depositary personally. I have no hesitation in saying that many a good man has been spoiled, made bone lazy, by being appointed a depositary of the British and Foreign Bible Society.⁶⁴ Ritson used the symbol of the colporteur as a foil against the depositary, contrasting the hard work, enterprising efforts of the travelling salesman with the sedentary and passive role of standing and waiting behind a counter.

Ritson’s primary concern with the depots was not the keeper behind the counter, but the funds being wasted in maintaining them. “Many of those depots are an extravagant waste of Bible Society funds, and we think that the fewer the depots we have of which we pay the rent, the better.” And it was this waste that compelled the most significant transformation in the Bible

⁶⁴ Proceedings, 140

Society's role in the book trade. Instead of these expensive retail outlets, Ritson wanted to advance the Bible Society's role as a wholesaler of books. "Let us work through the trade, like all other publishers" he urged the delegates. "Let us try to get every respectable book seller with whose financial state we are satisfied to put in his stock British and Foreign Bible Society publications."⁶⁵ If the Bible Society could ensure that its books were stocked by booksellers, it would have a wide distribution without the expense of maintaining its own retail depositories. The advantages of working through the trade were clear. The Bible Society could gain the broadest reach in its sales without having to maintain its own retail outlets, to keep a staff to run them, or to manage the large stock of bibles for each depot. As a wholesaler to existing booksellers and retailers, the Bible Society could continue to distribute its bibles and maintain the volume of books being sold.

In a number of ways, this shift in policy was a response to the transforming book trade and the rise of both mass distribution and a consumer culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Although the reach of the Bible Society's auxiliaries and branches had expanded in proportion to the Canada's colonial expansion in the nineteenth century, the population growth and the geographical distances separating some settlements, especially in western Canada, remained a massive challenge, and the old methods of relying upon travelling colporteurs to reach them was becoming out-dated. The Bible enterprise that the Canadian auxiliaries had championed had outstripped the provincial methods of distribution that privileged the personal transaction between a colporteur and a buyer. That enterprise was now operating in a mass-distribution that had to respond to the large variety of bibles available, and the wide range of consumer demands

⁶⁵ Proceedings, 140.

for those bibles. No longer was a colporteur venturing out to bring the Bible to those who did not have the opportunity to purchase one. Instead, the ubiquity of bibles in Canadian society ensured that Canadians were not only able to obtain the Bible with relative ease, but could rely upon a larger range of choices in bibles. Where once the Bible Society's auxiliaries were interacting with consumers whose demand for bibles was based on scarcity and necessity, the Bible Society's transactions involved consumers whose demand was based on taste and preference within a wider assortment of variety in the Bible's binding, type, size, colour, and style.

Although working through the trade had its advantages, there were also problems associated with working within a competitive market that had to be overcome. The Bible Society's books had to be more attractive to retailers in order to compete with others' available. To accomplish this, Ritson suggested deep discounts to booksellers to provide incentives for selling their bibles. “[I]f we are to get the trade to take our Bibles, we must give them liberal discount [sic].” Judge Forbes responded positively, and stated “We found a Society depository cost too much money, and the result was we put ourselves in touch with trade, and wherever there was a respectable book store that we could get to take our Bibles we embraced the opportunity of making arrangements with them, and pay them 5 and some times 10 and 15 per cent on their sales, and we found that we saved money by it, and we were enabled to go into the colportage work much larger in consequence of having the funds that had been directed in this way.”⁶⁶ The issue of deep discounts placed the Bible Society firmly within the competitive book trade, and its leaders were explicitly seeking an advantageous position in that market.

⁶⁶ Proceedings, 153.

Another problem the BFBS faced as it pushed further into the competitive book trade was the choice available to consumers and the fact that bibles were being purchased in a wider range of bindings and styles that reflected the growth of personal tastes. Ritson acknowledged this, telling the delegates that “we shall have to put out attractive editions.” He explained that the London committee was revising its catalogue to reflect these new commercial realities. “You will find in our catalogue some books with expensive bindings that are sold almost at a loss. That ought not to be. People ought to pay for their luxuries. We ought to lose on nothing but missionary editions.” In conceding these tastes and preferences in the Bible market, Ritson highlighted the transformation in the Bible Society’s work in having to effectively respond to consumer demands in order to maintain its role as a popular Bible supplier.

Because of the growing catalogue of the Bible Society and because of the numerous options available to Canadians, the demand for different types of bibles in different styles became much more refined. Purchasing the Bible was moving from the realm of the practical function in the spiritual development of the individual into one that was much more consumer-oriented, driven by the need to possess a particular edition of the Bible. Bibles being sold were increasingly diverse in their packaging, with options of size, bindings, fonts, edging, and other matters determining one’s choice of book. Although the Bible retained its timeless nature as the authoritative Christian scriptures, its packaging became an increasingly important consideration for consumers in choosing a Bible.

The BFBS contributed to the growth in variety and diversity of bibles available. Even by its own standards of restricting additional material included in its bound copies of the Bible where “no note or comment” was allowed, by the turn of the twentieth century, there was a staggering number of bibles available in the Bible Society’s catalogue. Each auxiliary provided a

catalogue of editions available through their depository. These lists were ultimately derived from the editions printed and published in London for the Bible Society there. The 1901 catalogue provided in the annual report for the Ottawa Auxiliary Bible Society lists 179 editions of the Bible in English. The key variations of these bibles were in the size of type, the size of the book, the binding, and whether the text was the full Authorized Version, the New Testament, or smaller portions like the Psalms or Gospels. The type varied in size, with the smallest type measuring just over two inches in size and would have been certainly a novelty.⁶⁷ Paul Gutjahr argues that the proliferation of different types of bindings and illustrations towards the end of the nineteenth century emphasized bibles as “tools to mark levels of gentility and social status, not simply to provide an appropriate protection reinforcing the Bible’s precious words.”⁶⁸ That bibles were seen as items that reflected status, taste, and position created a new reality for the Bible Society leaders in Canada. The purpose of the Bible Society had traditionally been rooted in the desire to eliminate “Bible destitution,” but in his note delivered by Ritson to the delegates, the 5th Marquis of Northampton and President of the Bible Society, William Compton, stated that the goal of the Society was “the distribution of the Scriptures to willing purchasers.”⁶⁹ The shift in language seems subtle, but it represents an enormous transformation in the emphasis of the Bible Society in Canada, a response to the increasing consumer demand for bibles. An earlier emphasis was placed on need and making bibles available for anyone who might wish to purchase one but was unable to do so because of cost, shortage, or distance from a supply. The image of Mary Jones’s journey in desperation to obtain a Bible no longer represented the

⁶⁷ Report of the Ottawa Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1896.

⁶⁸ Paul C. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880* (Stanford University Press, 2002) 177.

⁶⁹ Proceedings, 37-38.

material realities of most Canadians. The Bible Society continued to focus on willing purchasers into the twentieth century, but no longer could their primary objective be described as providing the Bible to those who could not otherwise have it.

For the Bible Society, this created a crisis in its identity and purpose. What was to come of a Society that, defining its own reason for existence as making bibles available to anyone who might wish to have one, had succeeded in doing just that? The discussions between the delegates of the 1904 conference in Toronto focused on these shifting foundations, and emphasized the new challenges of mass distribution in an emerging consumer society. These issues reflect the competitiveness of the Bible trade in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. The Bible was a book with considerable demand and popular appeal, but for publishers, distributors, and retailers, it was a fiercely competitive market. The style of the book, its size and thickness, the quality of its binding, paper, and type were all factors in the book's appeal to a potential buyer. In order to operate in this competitive market, Ritson argued the Bible Society would have to provide attractive books that would stand up to the competition. As an example, he referred to an edition of the Bible published by Collins that had been sent to him from the depot in Toronto. Compared to a similar BFBS edition, Ritson conceded it was "very much cheaper than ours and more attractive looking." Ritson argued that it was cheaper because it was being passed off as bound in Morocco leather when its binding was fake leather. "And none but an expert can tell a sham from a real skin. Our Committee have always declined to issue shams. Our books do not look as attractive, but they are better bound books." In spite of his insistence that the Bible Society was walking the high road of authenticity and quality, he conceded the need to improve its offerings, assuring the delegates that "we are entirely revising our catalogue, and we want to issue editions that will compete with the best editions that are turned out by the trade." The Reverend Dr. Potts

affirmed the need to address this problem, stating that, “the books of the Bible Society are not specially attractive to general book-sellers. They have been very inferior, and I am glad to hear the intimation of the Secretary that there will be an improvement in the style of binding of the Bibles of the Bible Society.”⁷⁰ The Bible Society was faced with the need of providing bibles that were comparative in their quality, style and value to others on the market.

By advocating the use of existing retailers in the book trade to sell BFBS bibles, Ritson was pushing the Bible Society further into the world of consumer markets and competitive retail. In her analysis of bookselling, Laura Miller argues that competition between bookstores demonstrates “that retailing is more than just a competitive field in which the economically powerful and agile survive, it is also the site of conflicting visions of how both individual and collective life benefit from the circulation of material goods.”⁷¹ This was a particular concern for Ritson who recognized the risks that came with working through the retail industry, where the quality, reputation, and respectability of a seller were important parts of the sale of the Bible. His concerns that BFBS bibles were being sold in general stores, shelved beside things that were not in keeping with the reverence of the Bible, was one issue he raised. “Would you go into a place where corsets are made and sold if you wanted to have a Bible? I would not. What man would? You would go into a respectable book shop if you wanted a Bible. Would you go into a butcher shop if you wanted a Bible? Yet some of our depots are in butcher shops.”⁷² And so, Ritson urged that respectable booksellers in the country be encouraged to carry the Bible Society’s books, so that the prestige and reverence of the books might be protected.

⁷⁰ Proceedings, 146.

⁷¹ Laura J. Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 6.

⁷² Proceedings, 149.

Bookselling itself was subject to changing ideas about the gentility and respectability of a bookshop. Ritson's objections were not that bibles were being stocked in bookshops, but instead that they were being shelved beside items that were diminished in their respectability, whether as a result of their belonging in the private sphere (as in the knickers) or being decidedly practical and rough (as in the meat and confectionary items).⁷³ Keith Walden's examination of the discursive messages embedded in grocery store window displays demonstrates that Canadian consumers were already operating within a commercial context steeped in the meanings and symbols of respectability by the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁴ The surroundings and the context in which bibles were sold mattered to the way in which they were received. Bibles being sold without care for their placement and their context had the potential to diminish their authority and their revered status as set apart from other books, that these bibles were a commodity like any other item for sale in a general store.

In spite of the rigorous competition in the bible trade and the challenges that accompanied its push into the book trade, the Bible Society in London had certain advantages as a distributor. The first was the volume with which it ordered scriptures from the university presses in England. The Bible Society was able to place orders on a scale that far superseded the production of other publishers, and was able then to gain very competitive rates on the books it ordered. The other key advantage was the Bible Society's subscriptions and donations that it collected, which helped offset the costs associated in producing and distributing the books. These advantages served the Bible Society well, and contributed to what can only be seen as

⁷³ For the changing perceptions of the book trade and booksellers as unique, see Laura J. Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26-28.

⁷⁴ Keith Walden, "Speaking Modern: Language, Culture, and Hegemony in Grocery Window Displays, 1887–1920" in *Canadian Historical Review*, 1989, Vol.70 (3), 285-310.

extraordinary success in distributing bibles. Ritson pronounced that in the full century of its operation from 1804 to 1904 when this conference was being held, the British and Foreign Bible Society had distributed 197 million editions of the scripture around the world

The Bible Society's success in its expansion and its sales was not welcomed with resounding applause by everyone. To distribute 197 million books in a competitive bible trade had a profound impact on pricing, demand, and other publishers, printers, and distributors who worked in religious print. The detrimental effect could be felt by printers, as it was by an agent of Cambridge University Press who traveled to India, and reported that, "The Bible and Prayer-book trade is as dead as Adam and Eve, it has all gone to the Bible Society and the R.T.S. [Religious Tract Society]."⁷⁵ The enormous capacity for the Bible Society to purchase its pages in bulk from the privileged presses and the advantages through economy of scale in the number of bibles it produced annually provided it with an powerful position in the Bible trade.

The push towards further involvement in the book trade threatened to blur the lines of the Bible Society's identity as a charitable missionary organization. At the heart of the issue was profit, and whether or not the Bible Society was making money on its editions. One instance in particular exemplifies this tension. In an undated letter to the Provincial Secretary of Ontario, William Hanna, the Upper Canada Bible Society sought tax exemption from the Province's Assessment Act. The growing demand for bibles and the Society's increasing stock necessitated the construction of a new building on College Street in Toronto, which was completed in 1910, but the new property would subject the UCBS to substantially higher taxes. The UCBS Secretary

⁷⁵ David McKitterick, *A History of Cambridge University Press: Volume 3, New Worlds for Learning, 1873-1972* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151.

wrote to Hanna, communicating the public importance of the Bible Society to Canadian society. Mirroring the language used by the conference delegates in Toronto, the letter highlights that in recent years, “Foreign Immigration has been pouring its flood into our lands. We have the foreigner in our own midst in Toronto, and increasing numbers in Winnipeg.” The letter noted that bibles “had been asked for and distributed by the Society in the North West in eighty different languages,” and that many of the bibles supplied were “Diglots, the English on one page and the foreign on the other. These are picked up eagerly by the foreigner and his children who desire to learn English.” Having made clear its service to Canada, the letter then emphasizes that the Bible Society “is not a commercial concern for the purpose of making money, but is merely for the distribution of the Book, and although it does sell the book where it can and takes money from those who are able to pay for it, in no case has it been known to make anything out of the transaction.” It was the rationale that the Bible Society was not operating for profit that underpinned the petition for its recognition “within the list of philanthropic, charitable, and educational institutions which are equally exempt from taxation and should be granted such exemption.”⁷⁶ Although Hanna’s answer is unknown, the UCBS’s petition for tax exemption reveals the tension between the role of a bookseller operating in a competitive book trade and of a philanthropic organization operating a not-for-profit enterprise. In its communications with the Provincial Secretary, the UCBS emphasized its charitable role, its service to Canadian society, and the limits of its transactions as only those that were necessary.

⁷⁶ UCBS Secretary to William John Hanna, Provincial Secretary of Ontario, n.d.,(1905-1911?), Provincial Archives of Ontario, RG-8-5, B226438.

In contrast to this spiritual and social emphasis, the Toronto delegates had to focus on the commercial and market factors of the Bible Society's enterprise. Considering the problems with the perception as a disruptive force in the book trade because of its business operations, Reverend Almon asked Ritson during the conference about the BFBS's profits and losses. "The question I want to put to the Rev Mr Ritson is this -- and I do it because I think the answer will help us in regard to advocating the claims of the Bible Society -- whether their books are sold at cost price, at English price, whether they can make any profit, or whether they lose." Ritson responded by saying that taking all of the books together, the Bible Society made no profit, but a loss. "We make a profit," he said, "on the luxuriously bound books and India paper books, but those are not five per cent of our sales. We make a profit on luxuries, but we lose on the necessities." Ritson's response divided the Bible Society's books between those aimed at the poor and those aimed at consumers, bibles that were a necessity and bibles that were an amenity.

Nonetheless, it was the same organization distributing both, and that reality led to one of the key objections to the Bible Society's work in the book trade. As a publisher, the Bible Society received donations to support its global translation and distribution enterprise, and these donations enabled the Bible Society to undercut the prices of its competitors. Reverend Almon expressed concerns about the Bible Society's place in a competitive market, the fact that its bibles could be sold under cost, and that it was making a profit. To exemplify his concerns, he shared the story of a prominent businessman who refused to donate to the Bible Society. "He said his father before him had made it a rule never to give to the Bible Society, because their depositories were interfering with the trade."⁷⁷ Another delegate, Mr. Johnston, highlighted the

⁷⁷ Proceedings, 149.

problem of businessmen wishing to operate fairly in a competitive market: "My point is that the Bible Society can get those books made up in quantities of 100,000 or any other quantity just as cheaply as Mr Collins or any other firm engaged in making books. Mr Collins comes to this Country and goes to the trade and offers books at a certain discount. We go to the trade and we say, Here, we will give you the same kind of book; but we give them at 5,10, of 15 per cent cheaper than Collins can because we collect money from auxiliaries all over Canada to help make up the deficiency. Now that is not business... what I say is that you are doing exactly, or attempting to do exactly, what the Government of Canada is doing with the iron and steel business - - (Laughter) You are paying a bounty to get the iron and steel manufactured and sold."⁷⁸ Johnston recognized the purchasing power the Bible Society had in the market, but also the fact that its prices could be subsidized by the donations and subscriptions raised by auxiliaries in support of its charitable activities, just as in cases of perceived national interest, a government could subsidize an industry. In his description of shopkeepers and retailers in Canada, David Monod describes the folklore that surrounded the business of small shops, and the acclaim for their importance in Canadian society.⁷⁹ These values were shared by the Bible Society's leaders, and the language of enterprise, thrift, and hard work that shaped the folklore around small businesses and retailers were also used to commend the laudability of its own work.

Walter Geikie contended that the Bible Society, unlike other booksellers, was not in the business for profit, stating that, "business men who publish bibles and sell them largely, publish them in order to make money by it. The whole aim of the Bible Society, on the other hand, is to

⁷⁸ Proceedings, 157.

⁷⁹ David Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1930*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

distribute the word of God. They're not to be put on the same level at all." Mr. Biggar also argued that the BFBS's broader work was an important consideration. "One source of expenditure of the parent Society is in translations," he argued, "and that is a pretty heavy expense. The object of the parent Society is a Missionary one. We are not particularly book sellers, and to me it does not matter a fig whether the bibles in Canada are sold through the trade or sold through the Society, as long as they are put into circulation and there is no reason why we should not work harmoniously with the trade."⁸⁰

Ritson acknowledged the problem of moving towards a position of working as a wholesaler to the trade and its threat to other wholesalers, saying that, "the retail trade will welcome the change. The wholesale trade, if you consult them, will say 'You British and Foreign Bible Society, drop your work altogether, you are no help to us.'"⁸¹ Dealing in the book trade like any other publisher was disruptive to other publishers and wholesalers, but for Ritson, that was a necessary result of being able to most effectively distribute its bibles for a higher purpose. The discussion was curtailed to move on to other matters, and the concerns of Almon and Johnston about the BFBS as a wholesaler were left hanging. Nonetheless, the dissent raised the uncomfortable reality that despite its evangelical and spiritual aims in translating the Bible and making it available to many who might otherwise not have access to Scripture, the Bible Society's involvement in the book trade was undercutting the legitimate and fair business of smaller booksellers.

⁸⁰ Proceedings, 159.

⁸¹ Proceedings, 160.

Complicating the competitive trade in which the Bible Society sought to become more active was the rise of department stores, and especially their mail order catalogues. Eaton's and Simpsons both advertised bibles among the vast number of other items made available through their catalogues. Timothy Eaton first distributed his mail order catalogue, and by the time of the Canadian Bible Society's conference, the department store was printing 1.3 million copies each year.⁸² By that time, Simpson's department store had been issuing its catalogues for a decade. It was not uncommon to find advertisements in various magazines for bibles imported from outside the Canada, whether from the university presses in England, an authorized printer in Scotland like Collins, or from American publishers. The difference in the rise of mail order catalogues was the concomitant challenge to the Bible Society's two major advantages in the trade. The first advantage was its purchasing power through the scale of its orders. Until the rise of department stores, no retailer had the capacity to order bibles in the volume that the Bible Society ordered them. This allowed the Bible Society auxiliaries the best prices possible, benefiting not only from the volume of its own orders, but also benefiting by association from the London committee's scale of purchasing from English printers and in their binding. The department stores were able to achieve an advantageous position in the market because of the scale of their purchasing. Eaton's offered "a wide selection of classical and popular novelists and poets in both cloth and covers" which "ranged in price from ten cents to sixty-five cents and undercut publishers' prices in some cases by nearly 300 per cent. Prayer books, hymnals and bibles were offered in Presbyterian, Catholic, Methodist, Episcopal, and Ancient and Modern Versions."⁸³

⁸² John Willis, "Business by the Book: The Mail-Order Catalogue" in *History of the Book in Canada* vol. II: 1840-1918, 412.

⁸³ Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of the Department Store* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 128-29.

Department stores could offer a wide variety to a large customer base, enabling them to order large volumes of the books and offer them to customers at prices that undercut other publishers, an advantage that had hitherto been largely enjoyed only by the Bible Society. George Parker describes the power of department stores in disrupting Canada's book market and their role in driving some retailers out of business:

The retailers might have lived with the competition from the subscription canvassers, or with the numerous news depots in railway stations and bookstalls on trains, and even with high postal rates, but all of these, in addition to books sold as loss leaders by the big department stores such as Simpson's and Eaton's, drove dozens of them into bankruptcy in the eighties and nineties. Eaton's in February 1891 offered the Pansy shilling books for 19c postpaid anywhere in Canada. Since the Pansy books cost 18c wholesale in Toronto and postage was 3c, *Books and Notions* calculated that Eaton's must be losing 2c, but of course no retailer could buy these books from foreign jobbers in such bulk and receive the special large discounts that were given to the department stores. And all across the country the catalogues of the two department stores offered the authorized provincial textbooks at a 20 per cent reduction, including free postage.⁸⁴

Reaching a larger number of consumers enabled department stores to expand their market base and order books in a larger volume than other publishers.

The Bible Society's other major advantage for much of the nineteenth century had been its enormous geographical reach. No other retailer or distributor could boast such a vast distribution network that the BFBS's branches and auxiliaries constituted. The rise of the mail order catalogue coupled with the growing ease with which goods could be shipped across Canada with the expansion of rail networks enabled department stores to compete with the breadth of the Bible Society's market reach. The "Prairie Bible," as the Eaton's Catalogue had

⁸⁴ George L. Parker, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 231.

come to be known, carried the Bible into the homes of consumers who could choose from an array of bibles displayed on its pages. The mail order catalogues chipped away at the geographical coverage that the BFBS auxiliaries relied upon to so widely distribute their bibles. That Timothy Eaton was a staunch Methodist affirms that the pursuit of competitive commercial retail success was not antithetical for many Canadian Protestant Christians in this period.⁸⁵ Instead, commercial business was an outlet of an evangelical faith that privileged hard work, efficiency, and good stewardship of resources. Both Timothy Eaton's enterprise and that built by the British and Foreign Bible Society in Canada were fuelled by the belief that capital and commercial means were tools that could be used to build the Kingdom of God.

The rise of department stores highlights the shared values between the Bible Society's work and commercial retailers. The retail trade into which the Bible Society sought to become further entrenched had been steeped in the same values that the Bible Society used to emphasize the positive aspects of the Bible Society's work, especially that of its colporteurs. Donica Belisle demonstrates that this retail language of the Eaton's department store reflected the same ideals of the Bible Society, where patriotic employees were described as "eager to serve their governor, empire, and country"⁸⁶ Values of thrift, hard work, and efficiency were equally important in the language of the BFBS and among commercial retailers.

This rhetoric of business and retail was becoming more prominent at the turn of the century. In his analysis of business and evangelicism in the United States, Timothy Gloege demonstrates that because of "massive mail-order companies, wholesalers, and new chain stores,

⁸⁵ See Joy L. Santink, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of His Department Store* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 23, 117.

⁸⁶ Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation*, 91.

the world of corporate work encroached increasingly on the retail heart of traditional middle-class proprietorship.”⁸⁷ Traditional ideals of business and enterprise that Gloege lists as “productive capacity, efficiency, thrift, and bulk sales,” still underpinned the values of the Bible Society’s methods, but the shifts in the commercial book trade towards larger and more powerful wholesalers challenged the Bible Society’s dominance of the bible trade. Ritson and the Canadian auxiliaries’ leaders responded to these shifts by capitalizing on the Bible Society’s advantages as a wholesaler in order to maintain their powerful position in that market.

The choice of operating more fully as a wholesaler to the competitive book trade was an extension of its nineteenth-century distribution methods and values. The Bible Society had privileged the choice of individuals in obtaining bibles and the purchaser’s agency of exchanging their money for a bible in that transaction. The work of making bibles available and giving individuals the opportunity to purchase one maintained the important limit on any perceived imposition or encroachment. The Bible Society refused to force anyone to take a Bible, and a purchaser’s choice and willingness to buy the book was a requisite condition for its sale. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Bible Society faced a different book trade. The transformation of the market towards consumer tastes, greater competition, and the development of a mass-market were all extensions of the Bible Society’s own values that progressed alongside the wider book trade, that consumers had a choice in what items they would purchase. These values reveal the extent to which the BFBS was not out of place within the competitive consumer market of the wider book trade.

⁸⁷ Timothy E. W. Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 140.

Conclusion

The conference discussions about reorganization came to a close on Thursday afternoon, and the delegates adopted the new name “The Canadian Bible Society Auxiliary to the British and Foreign Bible Society.” The Canadian Bible Society (CBS) would be governed by a General Board comprised of representatives from all of the auxiliaries with an additional member for each fifty member branches. A General Secretary would oversee the work of the CBS, and he was to be appointed by the BFBS Committee in London after consultation and approval of the Canadian General Board. District Secretaries would be appointed by the General Board subject to the concurrence of regional auxiliaries.⁸⁸ The terms of the newly federated Canadian Bible Society were sent to each of the auxiliaries for ratification that was accepted unanimously.

That evening, a “well-attended” public meeting at the YMCA’s Association Hall signalled the end of the conference. John Ritson was once again featured as the main speaker and guest of honour. Auxiliaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society had commonly held an annual public meeting to highlight the organization’s work and to encourage those in attendance to provide financial support to the enterprise, and this meeting had a similar purpose of informing a broader audience of the work of the BFBS globally and of the decisions made in the previous two days to create the Canadian Bible Society. Like those heard at the luncheon that commenced the conference, the addresses given that evening by Ritson and others pushed the gritty details of the Bible business, retail sales, bulk discounts, and the competitive book trade to

⁸⁸ An overview of the adopted terms of the Canadian Bible Society is found in E. C. Woodley, *The Bible in Canada* (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1953), 109-113.

the background. Instead, the spiritual significance of the forming of the Canadian Bible Society as a unified auxiliary and its role in Canadian society was trumpeted for the audience. The Rev. Dr. Hill celebrated the formation of the new Society, organized “to see that not one living soul shall stand on Canadian soil without having the offer of the Bible, whether he accepts it or not... I anticipate the very greatest good to Canada from this re-organization of the Bible Society. I have been trying to persuade my friends that the British and Foreign Bible Society is rather improperly called ‘The parent Society’, because it is the Society of the Empire, and we are all imperialists, and we are all part of this Empire and therefore part of the Society.”⁸⁹ In his address, John Ritson gave an overview of the Bible society’s work, describing in some detail its international publishing, translating, and selling of bibles. Ritson called his audience to participate in this global enterprise of Bible distribution, asking of his audience “What is Canada going to do for the work? ... God help Canada, help me, help all of us to do our duty, for Christ’s sake.”⁹⁰ The Bible Society had an enormous base of support among Canada’s leading clergymen and lay professionals who were united in the belief they shared with Ritson that the Bible held the answer for the challenges posed to Canada by industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and theological and doctrinal uncertainty.

The BFBS emphasized its work in different ways for different audiences. For a broader public, the BFBS leaders emphasized the moral imperative of bible distribution for the prosperity of nation and empire was trumpeted alongside the need for the unwavering support of Christians of all stripes. The religious imperative for putting the Bible in the hands of all Canadians,

⁸⁹ Proceedings, 257c.

⁹⁰ Proceedings, 278-9.

especially recent immigrants needing to be assimilated into the Protestant Christian culture privileged by Canadian religious leaders, made the British and Foreign Bible Society an organization that could draw a broad coalition of evangelical ministers and laypeople to its cause. In contrast, the internal discussions about the business and operations of such a Bible enterprise emphasized thrift, stewardship, and the responsible use of funds and the need for efficiency in a competitive market as the hallmarks of the Bible Society's work. Those internal discussions reveal the reality that the Bible Society operated in a market that presented material, economic, and logistical challenges that necessitated shrewd management of funds and resources. The public message demonstrates the Bible Society's ability to garner support from across the Protestant spectrum and the widespread belief that the development of Canada and the British Empire was directly related to the availability of bibles and the success of the Bible Society in its enterprise.

The discussions between the delegates during the conference demonstrate that that enterprise was now operating in radically different commercial context. The BFBS's work in Canada of mass-distribution had to respond to new market realities in which a large variety of bibles were available to a wider range of consumer demands for them. No longer was the primary image of Bible distribution encapsulated by a colporteur venturing out to bring the bible to those who did not have the opportunity to purchase one. Instead, the ubiquity of bibles and the ease with which they could be obtained meant that the Bible Society had to concentrate its efforts on making its books available, alongside those of other publishers, to consumers who would choose those bibles they felt most drawn to. To maintain its success in bible distribution in Canada, the BFBS auxiliaries needed to draw on the advantages they had as a wholesaler to provide attractive bibles at attractive prices to anyone who might wish to purchase one.

In addition, the conference highlighted the shifting role of the BFBS auxiliaries within Canadian society. Immigration and the concerns for the Christian and British character of the nation compelled the Bible Society to impress upon its supporters the need for Bible distribution as a bulwark against the threats of foreign influences. These nativist sentiments highlight the close association between BFBS's Bible enterprise and the ethnic nationalism that informed Anglo-Canadians' beliefs about the British Empire and the place of Canada within it. The evangelical imperative to place bibles in the hands of all who might wish to have one was closely rooted with the belief that the voluntary reading of the Bible was a hallmark of British identity. The same anti-Catholicism that characterized the concerns over the foreign element were a continuation of the ideas demonstrated in James Thomson's involvement with the French Canadian Missionary Society and through the colportage narratives that appeared in auxiliaries' annual reports. Canadian evangelicalism defined itself by presenting Catholicism as a foil to its principles of liberalism, personal engagement with the Bible, and individual voluntarism in religious association. As a result, the BFBS's enterprise played an important role in defining the characteristics and values of English-speaking Canada.

CONCLUSION

Within the first five years of its 1904 beginnings, the Canadian Bible Society was distributing more than 100,000 bibles and testaments throughout Canada each year, a figure that represented the extraordinary reach the institution had achieved. The expansion of the British and Foreign Bible Society's Bible distribution enterprise in the nineteenth century had widespread consequences on the shape of religious belief, on the development of the book trade, and on society in Canada. Decisions made by the leaders of the BFBS's Canadian auxiliaries defined the impact of their enterprise on the place of religion in Canada. The BFBS's Bible enterprise made reading the Bible a common occurrence within Canadian homes. Without the remarkable reach of the BFBS's auxiliaries and branches, and the vast numbers of bibles distributed, the way Canadians practiced their religion would have been dramatically different.

Probing the institutional and intellectual imperatives behind Bible distribution reveals the profound influence and breadth of support for Protestant evangelicalism in Canada. Evangelicals shaped English-Canadian intellectual culture by associating hard work, thrift, efficiency, and economic stewardship with Christian character and moral virtue. The popular distribution of bibles through colporteurs and local agents linked these values to the purchase of bibles and the value of money, where the Bible transaction signified one's willingness to obtain the Word of God through their own sacrifice and initiative. These factors in the transaction were rooted in the commitment to voluntarism and individual liberty on matters of religion and conscience that became central to what has been called the Protestant consensus in the second half of the nineteenth century in English-speaking Canada.

Canadian evangelicalism also reflected the close relationship between liberalism and Protestant Christianity within the public discourse of nationhood and civil society. Rather than

critiquing the development of industrial capitalism and its harmful effects on many in Canadian society, evangelicalism sought to improve the lives of Canadians by cultivating their business acumen and management of capital. The unique vision of reform that the BFBS's leaders held out, rooted in an individual's ability to overcome obstacles through their own individual efforts purchasing a Bible and reading its transformative message was part of a broader philosophy which championed the rewards of hard work and enterprising initiative.

These links between capitalism and the Bible Society's distribution enterprise reveal a powerful backdrop to the emergence of the Social Gospel at the turn of the twentieth century. Emerging social critiques of capitalism, greed, and systems that perpetuated poverty also aimed their prophetic condemnation at Christians and clergymen whose association with industrial capitalists smacked of worldly largesse. The diverging vision offered by new voices within the Social Gospel movement challenged the values of individualism, hard-work, self-achievement as foundations of a damaging economic system that perpetuated the plight of the poor and enriched the lives of a few. The evangelical enterprise of Bible distribution was a powerful platform on which capital and entrepreneurial acumen could build the evangelicals' vision of the Kingdom of God, rooted in the individual conversion experience and the reward of hard work, thrift, and economic stewardship. The emergence of the Social Gospel challenged this vision of the Kingdom of God, offering instead a vision that championed economic justice, collective salvation and morality, and constraints on the power of wealth and capital in society.

Arguably the most useful case by which evangelicalism can be understood is found within the Anglican Communion and the various wings of that denomination. For conservative, High-Church Anglicans, the Church of England held out a unique vision for the redemption of society that was based in the close relationship between the state and One True Church. For

evangelical Anglicans, the redemptive work of Christ through His death and resurrection was given expression in the Bible, and its distribution was paramount to its mission. Their support of voluntary associations like the British and Foreign Bible Society demonstrated their view that God's work transcended a denominationally exclusive vision of redemption, but instead worked with all who confessed the Christian faith. In stark contrast to the Bible Society's sweeping goals of universal Bible distribution and translation, and the pursuit of as wide a base as possible in support of those goals, more conservative Anglicans saw in the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, the Anglican counterpart of Bible publishing, a proprietary means by which the Bible could be distributed. By striving to disseminate the Book of Common Prayer alongside its bibles, the SPCK sought to affirm the role of the Church in defining doctrine, belief and practice.

The Bible Society as an institution, and the evangelical ethos which it reflected, proscribed the participation of women in the public sphere with the exception of few legitimate avenues. The deeply gendered characteristics of Bible distribution, most explicitly reflected in the differences between Biblewomen and colporteurs, contributed to the limitations on women's involvement in religious leadership among Protestant evangelicals in the nineteenth century. The exceptional case of Miramichi Auxiliary, led entirely by women throughout the nineteenth century, reveals that women were capable leaders at the highest levels of the BFBS's administration. These proscriptions were, therefore, constructed based on long-held assumptions about normative behaviour and physical limitations, ideals that were rarely challenged in the nineteenth century.

One of the powerful characteristics of the work of the Bible Society in Canada was the close proximity of the Roman Catholic Church in its work, especially in predominantly French-

Canadian communities. Evangelicals who threw their efforts behind the mass distribution of bibles were also keen to define the importance of their enterprise as a moral imperative against oppressive forces. Chief among them was the Catholic Church and its clergy, who evangelicals saw as deliberately restricting the ability for Catholics to read the Bible and benefit from the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the reader.

These ideas and the program of Bible distribution they perpetuated the enmity between French and English-speaking Canadians, whose cultural differences fuelled important political battles over religious education, separate schools, and conscription that dogged Confederation well into the twentieth century. The Bible Society's use of anti-Catholic rhetoric helped to popularize the religious opposition to Catholic rituals by contrasting the rational reading of the Bible with the mystical superstition of Catholic rituals and sacramental practices. The corporate worship and institutional authority that Catholicism celebrated were depicted as, at best, deeply misguided, and at worst, a pernicious attempt to undermine British values and hinder the true Christian faith. The evangelicals' Bible enterprise actively contributed to the heated cultural divisions that characterized much of French-English relations in Canada.

The discussions about the Bible market which took place at the Canadian Bible Society conference in Toronto in 1904 provide a candid lens into the tension between the religious and business goals of the organization at the turn of the twentieth century. How the Bible Society ought to behave within a fiercely competitive Bible trade, and how it wielded its enormous purchasing power as a mass distributor presented weighty questions about its impact on other booksellers and wholesalers. These questions caused BFBS leaders in Canada to reflect on the broader significance of its work in society. At the heart of these reflections, however, was the belief in the urgency and necessity of the BFBS's Bible distribution in order to maintain the

Christian character of Canada in light of the waves of immigration that threatened to undermine the Anglo-Protestant heritage that for many of the Bible Society's leaders marked Canada as a Christian nation. The Bible, it was believed, would provide the Christianizing influence for immigrants whose backgrounds were not of a British or Western-European origin, and the BFBS's enterprise was all the more crucial to the fabric of Canadian society.

In considering the material production and distribution of bibles in Canada, the predominance of the BFBS's enterprise in supplying the country's demands for the bibles provides some explanation for the lack of domestic publishing of the Bible. William Lyon Mackenzie's attempts to produce a domestic edition of the Bible, and his ultimate failure in doing so, reveal the importance of the material requirements for producing a book of the size of the Bible. Historians of the book have given much attention to the legal and political conditions that hindered the development of a robust domestic publishing industry, but Mackenzie's failed Bible edition demonstrates the importance of the material realities in book production. This case reveals the close relationship between the material resources of media and the cultural expressions they presented, and the enormous impact that economic conditions had on cultural development and the creation of the tools that fostered a national identity.

This examination of the BFBS's distribution enterprise raises new questions in historians' understanding of the history of religion, book culture and society in Canada. The geographical and temporal breadth of this study has sought to examine the origins and patterns of Bible distribution in Canada in the nineteenth century, and regional differences were a crucial part of the Bible Society's work in this period. The distance of the BFBS's work in British Columbia from its more established jurisdictions in central and eastern Canada suggest powerful regional differences, as do the local contexts which each had very different experiences in their own

management and structures. In addition, the local contexts in which they operated shaped the challenges and opportunities that they faced. In certain parts of the country, French-Canadian communities in which Roman Catholicism was predominant required different resources from the auxiliaries, most notably French-speaking allies who were sympathetic to the Bible cause. The particularities of local Bible distribution provide an extraordinary opportunity to understand the breadth of religious experiences across Canada in the nineteenth century.

The enormous reach of the Bible Society's branches and auxiliaries and the vast number of bibles and testaments that its agents, depositories, colporteurs, Biblewomen, and branches distributed reveals the immense cultural influence of evangelicalism in Canada in the nineteenth century. The Bible's profound influence in Canadian society and the popularity of evangelical Protestantism was a result of an enormous effort espoused by evangelical clergymen, business leaders, and lay professionals who threw their energies into making the Bible available to anyone who wished to purchase it.

**APPENDIX 1: LAWS AND REGULATIONS OF THE
BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY**

- I The designation of this Society shall be the BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY of which the sole object shall be to encourage the wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment the only copies in the Languages of the United Kingdom to be circulated by the Society shall be the Authorized Version
- II This Society shall add its endeavour to those employed by other Societies for circulating the Scriptures through the British Dominions and shall also according to its ability extend its influence to other countries whether Christian Mahometan [sic] or Pagan
- III Each Subscriber of One Guinea annually shall be a Member
- IV Each Subscriber of Ten Guineas at one time shall be a Member for Life
- V Each Subscriber of Five Guineas annually shall be a Governor
- VI Each Subscriber of Fifty Pounds at one time or who shall by one additional payment increase his original Subscription to Fifty Pounds shall be a Governor for Life
- VII Governors shall be entitled to attend and vote at all Meetings of the Committee
- VIII An Executor paying a bequest of Fifty Pounds shall be a Member for Life or of One Hundred Pounds a Governor for Life
- IX A Committee shall be appointed to conduct the business of the Society consisting of Thirty six Laymen Six of whom shall be Foreigners resident in London or its vicinity half the remainder shall be members of the Church of England and the other half members of other denominations of Christians Thirty of the above number who shall have most frequently attended shall be eligible for re election for the ensuing year The Committee shall appoint all Officers except the Treasurer and call Special General Meetings and shall be charged with procuring for the Society suitable patronage both British and Foreign
- X Each Member of the Society shall be entitled under the direction of the Committee to purchase Bibles and Testaments at the Society's prices which shall be as low as possible
- XL The Annual Meeting of the Society shall be held on the first Wednesday in May when the Treasurer and Committee shall be chosen the Accounts presented and the Proceedings of the foregoing year reported
- XII The President Vice Presidents and Treasurer shall be considered ex officio members of the Committee

XIII Every Clergyman or Dissenting Minister who is a Member of the Society shall be entitled to attend and vote at all Meetings of the Committee

XIV The Secretaries for the time being shall be considered as Members of the Committee but no other person deriving any emolument from the Society shall have that privilege

XV At the General Meetings and Meetings of the Committee the President or in his absence the Vice President first upon the list then present and in the absence of all the Vice Presidents the Treasurer and in his absence such member as shall be voted for that purpose shall preside at the Meeting

XVI The Committee shall meet on the first Monday in every month or oftener if necessary

XVII The Committee shall have the power of nominating such persons as have rendered essential services to the Society either Members for Life or Governors for Life

XVIII The Committee shall also have the power of nominating Honorary Members from among the Foreigners who have promoted the objects of the Society

XLX The whole of the Minutes of every General Meeting shall be signed by the chairman

REGULATIONS

Adopted at the Annual General Meetings of the Society in 1826 and 1827

- I That the fundamental law of the Society which limits its operations to the circulation of the Holy Scriptures be fully and distinctly recognised as excluding the circulation of the Apocrypha
- II That in conformity to the preceding resolution no pecuniary aid can be granted to any Society circulating the Apocrypha nor except for the purpose of being applied in conformity to the said resolution to any individual whatever
- III That in all cases in which grants whether gratuitous or otherwise of the Holy Scriptures either in whole or in part shall be made to any Society the books be issued bound and on the express condition that they shall be distributed without alteration or addition
- IV That all grants of the Scriptures to Societies which circulate the Apocrypha be made under the express condition that they be sold or distributed without alteration or addition and that the proceeds of the sales of any such copies of the Scriptures be held at the disposal of the British and Foreign Bible Society

APPENDIX 2: COLPORTEURS' REGULATIONS

- Article I As a Colporteur of the British Columbia Bible Society you are to carry on sale for cash from house to house under the direction of the Committee at New Westminster such Bibles and Testaments as shall be instructed to your charge and for which you are held responsible. In effecting sales there will be occasion for all your skill and talent while you make it manifest that the mere sale of the Book for the sake of gain is not your object, it is proper that every consideration relating to the value and usefulness of the word of God, and its benefit to young and old should be urged to induce families to possess what in thousands of instances has brought salvation to individuals and households.
- II. You shall keep an exact account of stock received, and of sales effected by you, being careful to note in your account book each sale on the spot; and as soon as you return from the Upper country report personally to the Secretaries, or in their absence to the Depositary.
- III. You shall keep a journal in which you enter each evening after your labors are completed a summary of your sales, the number of families visited, the name of the locality in which you have labored together with a brief note of any interesting conversation or incident tending to show the need or usefulness of the system of colportage This journal shall be the property of the Society.
- IV. At the end of each month if practicable you are to send to be read in Committee a short account of the months' labors, being a summary extracted from your journal, and to consist chiefly of such facts or incidents as you may consider to be most interesting or useful to the committee.
- V. Once a quarter or oftener, if required, you are to take an inventory of your stock, and balance your accounts and render a statement of the same to the Depositary.
- VI. As opportunity may present itself you are to lay the claims of the Society before the benevolent and solicit and receive donations in aid of its funds. Carefully keep a list of donors, which transmit and the money, if practicable, with your accounts.
- VII You are particularly requested to note in your journal and monthly report, the names and residence of every person desirous to obtain a copy of the Scriptures, but whose extreme poverty may render them unable to purchase the same. Such cases you are authorized to supply according to your own discretion.
- VIII You are to traverse your field of labor systematically, omitting no house which may be reached. You will often be dissuaded from going to particular houses because of their occupants are notorious opposers of the gospel, but you will generally find that "the lion in the way "exists in the imagination of our adviser, and that those supposed to be most hardened are accessible to humble affectionate approaches.

- IX Keep the young much in view in your labors and press upon Parents the necessity of providing each of their children with a copy of the Bible and the great advantages of reading a portion every day.
- X. You are to bear in mind that the Society you serve is not a Missionary Society employing men to go forth simply to converse or preach, but a publishing institution, and that its great work and the prominent work of all connected with it and must be to circulate printed truth. The sale of the Bible not for the Society's sake, but for the sake of souls is the leading characteristic of your work.

Nevertheless as opportunity offers you will feel it to be your duty to engage in personal religious conversation with those you meet, especially with the unpenitent :- and by way of caution it is suggested—

- 1st That you do not obtrude remarks unseasonably.
- 2nd That you avoid harsh and censorious expressions
- 3rd That your spirit should be meek and humble.
4. That you abstain from unnecessary controversy and restrict yourself to the matter of personal salvation.
5. That you be silent on political agitation.
6. That you put far away sectarian prejudice which would belie the very nature of your work. Receive every friend of the Lord Jesus Christ and your friend, and be ready always to press home the consideration that after all the great question is not, are we nominally in a visible church, but are we in Christ Jesus?¹

¹ Minutes of the New Westminster auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Provincial Archives of British Columbia Q/R/B77n, 23-27.

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