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Brandon College and the
Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, 1919-1926

by

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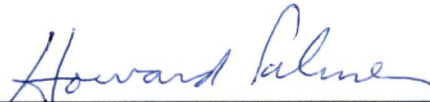
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Brandon College and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, 1919-1926" submitted by Samantha Thompson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

The fundamentalist-modernist conflict that shook Brandon College during the 1920s, and to a lesser degree churches across the Prairies, was part of a larger continent-wide struggle among Christians to re-establish the essential tenets of the Christian faith. While the character of the dispute was deeply rooted in nineteenth century religious traditions, the terms of the battle between fundamentalists and modernists were essentially ideological.

In western Canada, as early as 1919, militant fundamentalists and later pamphleteer, W. Arnold Bennett, accused Brandon College faculty members of subscribing to modernist beliefs regarding the interpretation of the Bible and of undermining the authority of the Bible in their classes. In answer to these charges, the 1923 Brandon College Commission fully exonerated Brandon and its faculty of any wrong-doing and commended the denomination for having an institution the calibre of Brandon College in the West.

The positive outcome of the commission's inquiry did not bring an end, however, to Brandon's theological troubles. Fundamentalists continued to attack the college's hiring practices and its faculty's theological beliefs

throughout the rest of the 1920s. Although the fears of fundamentalists, both urban and rural alike, of liberalizing influences at higher educational institutions and in society and Christianity in general may have initially been legitimate, their persistent criticisms revealed a desperate need to maintain certain religious traditions and beliefs against the tide of change. Fundamentalists' unrelenting suspicions of Brandon, even in the face of evidence to the contrary, further showed that the leading critics were willing to see enemies anywhere to justify their overriding fear that Christianity and society as they knew it was degenerating.

Although fundamentalists should be faulted for their tendency to paint all higher educational institutions with the same modernist brush, Brandon College must also acknowledge some of the blame for prolonging doubts about the institution and the conflict over its objectives. In the end, however, Brandon College could not be labelled as a modernist institution. Rather, it sought the dual objective of being both an academic institution that attempted to keep in touch with the latest findings of modern scholarship and a theological institution that maintained a firm commitment to Biblical and evangelical principles.

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INTRODUCTION

In January 1922, a Baptist minister from Vancouver, W. Arnold Bennett, published a pamphlet that vehemently attacked the first and only Baptist college on the Prairies. The widely distributed pamphlet, entitled "Facts Concerning Brandon College," which addressed the concerns of some British Columbia Baptists, accused Brandon College and two of its professors of unorthodox and anti-Biblical teaching. More specifically, the pamphlet accused Brandon College, "an institution which stood for the Inspiration and Integrity of the Bible," the president and the faculty of the college and the leaders of the denomination of modernism and of "perpetrating the reprehensible crime of sowing the seeds of rank infidelity in the minds of the young, ... and plunging them into the abyss of mental and spiritual darkness."¹ Bennett's accusations of modernism so alarmed the Baptists that the Baptist Union of Western Canada appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate the charges.

After an intense year of interviewing faculty and students, in January 1923, the commission exonerated the college and its faculty. It found the accusations in the

¹W. Arnold Bennett, "Facts Concerning Brandon College," 28 January 1922, Canadian Baptist Archives, 1-2.

pamphlet "both false and unchristian," and congratulated the Baptist Union of Western Canada in having "an educational institution in its midst, of the character of Brandon College."² Although the outcome of the inquiry was a positive one for the college, charges of modernism still haunted them. This was the most vehement clash between fundamentalists and modernists in Prairie Baptist history.³

The commission inquiry and conflict at Brandon College in essence was only one of many other similar conflicts taking place across North America in the 1920s as Christians of opposing sides battled over the essentials of belief and practice of the Christian faith. Traditional evangelical Christianity in the late nineteenth century was confronted by a rapidly changing world in the area of the sciences, society and culture, and Biblical studies. Amidst these changes emerged a new religious liberalism which sought to address some of these changes by presenting a new approach to Christianity. For example, this new liberalism saw the Kingdom of God manifest through the progress of man in society, equated morality with religion and viewed the supernatural as no longer separate from but integrated with

²Report of the Brandon College Commission, January 1923, pp. 16, 20, Brandon College Administrative Records 1923, Brandon University Archives.

³J.E. Harris, The Baptist Union of Western Canada - A Centennial History 1873-1973 (Saint John, NB: Lingley Printing Co., Ltd., 1976), 75, 79; Margaret E. Thompson The Baptist Story in Western Canada (Calgary: The Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1974), 155.

the natural.⁴ Modernists in particular more importantly believed in the adaptation of Christian ideas and values to modern society. They also believed that God was immanent or pervading in human society and revealed through it, and that society was moving towards realizing the Kingdom of God on earth.⁵ Modernists, in their opinion, were only attempting to create a new interpretation of the Gospel that would address society's problems, and did not see their efforts in any way as out to destroy or betray Christianity. Modernists, however, felt that belief in the Bible did not require belief in verbal inspiration or Scriptural inerrancy and infallibility.⁶

These new or "modern" ideas, however, met with much resistance from some conservative Christians. These Christians, who later became known as fundamentalists, were evangelical Christians who, like other evangelicals, believed the Bible to be the Word of God and Christ to be the Son of God and man's key to Salvation. However, unlike

⁴George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture - The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 21, 24; Clark H. Pinnock, "The Modernist Impulse at McMaster University, 1887-1927," Baptists in Canada - Search for Identity Amidst Diversity, ed. Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington, ON: G.R. Welch, Company, Limited, 1980): 194, 195; Ramsay Cook, The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 8-9, 17, 24.

⁵William R. Hutchison, The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 2.

⁶Pinnock, 195.

other evangelicals, these fundamentalists believed strictly in verbal inspiration, the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture and in its literal interpretation, and did so with a strong and militant conviction. These beliefs held by fundamentalists, along with their fierce opposition to modern theology were the main characteristics that differentiated them from other evangelical Christians.⁷ Fundamentalists were outraged by the ideas and beliefs expounded by modernists because they felt they eroded the foundations of the Christian faith and were outraged at such. They not only believed that modernists threatened to jeopardize the foundations of Christianity but also society as they knew it.

In the 1920s, fundamentalists found themselves confronted by a society that was becoming increasingly secularized. In contrast to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, God was no longer viewed as important to life. This increasing secularism made them all the more fierce in their opposition to attempts by modernists to adapt Christianity to modern culture. Fundamentalists accused modernists of destroying the fundamentals of the Christian faith which they felt had previously been more highly valued in society.⁸

⁷Marsden, 3-4; Pinnock, 194-195.

⁸Ibid.

This struggle between fundamentalists and modernists over issues such as verbal inspiration, Biblical inerrancy, the theory of evolution, and modernism in society, tore apart numerous denominations across North America. In the United States, the Northern Baptists, the Northern Presbyterians and, to a lesser extent, the Disciples of Christ were most profoundly divided within their churches. Other denominations, among them the Southern Baptists, Southern and Northern Methodists, Pentecostals and Church of the Nazarene, experienced only minor internal disagreements, none of which led to an irreconcilable split.⁹ Despite these differing denominational experiences, the underlying conflict remained the same. It was an ideological conflict that cut across denominational lines.¹⁰

In Canada, some Baptist churches were also divided by the issues of the debate, particularly in Ontario and in British Columbia. Baptist conventions in these regions split over the issues, and two Baptist educational institutions, McMaster University in Ontario and Brandon College in Manitoba, were attacked by some members within their respective conventions for allegedly teaching modernist views. Presbyterians in Canada, though aware of

⁹See James J. Thompson, Jr., Tried As By Fire: Southern Baptists and the Religious Controversies of the 1920s (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982).

¹⁰Ibid., 102-103; Ferenc Morton Szasz, The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930 (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1982), xii, 106.

the issues, were not directly involved in the debate, unlike their counterparts in the United States. Canadian Presbyterians were involved in a more pressing conflict within their own ranks between those within the church who wanted the Presbyterian Church to join in a proposed union with the Methodist and Congregationalist churches and opponents to this church union movement.¹¹ There has been little investigation of fundamentalism within Canadian religious historiography. Nevertheless, the ideological nature of the conflict suggests that other denominations were also influenced by the increasing secularization of society, if only indirectly.¹²

Canadian Baptist history has only recently received scholarly attention, mostly in regional studies.¹³ As

¹¹N. Keith Clifford, The Resistance to Church Union in Canada 1904-1939 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 4. See Clifford for more detail regarding the Presbyterian resistance to church union in Canada.

¹²W.E. Mann in Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955) states that groups such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Nazarenes, Church of Christ and Free Methodists expanded largely as a result of the controversy which may suggest that some denominations may have been losing members over these issues. Mann, 55.

¹³A handful of regional histories have been written such as George A. Rawlyk's Ravished By The Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists and Henry Alline (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984) about Maritime Baptists, C.C. McLaurin's Pioneering in Western Canada - A Story of the Baptists (Calgary: published by the author, 1939), Margaret E. Thompson's The Baptist Story in Western Canada (Calgary: The Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1974) and John Richards' Baptists in British Columbia: A Struggle to Maintain "Sectarianism" (Vancouver: Northwest Baptist Theological College and Seminary, 1977).

historian G.A. Rawlyk has pointed out, the absence of more indepth study on Baptists in Canada reflects the general tendency of English-Canadian historians to avoid religious questions in their work, a tendency which may be due to their own uneasiness with spiritual issues. This tendency downplays the critical importance of religion in history.¹⁴

Nevertheless, more recently, scholars have begun to study the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and its affects upon Baptists in Canada. To date, studies have focused largely on the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and on McMaster University, paying only brief attention to conflicts in other regions of the country. For example, Charles M. Johnston's history of McMaster University outlines and analyzes the events in which McMaster was accused of hiring faculty holding modernist views who passed on those views to their students. Johnston's history only briefly mentions the conflicts of a similar nature that were taking place in the Prairies at Brandon College, or reactions to the issues from Baptists in the Maritimes or the Prairie provinces. Other studies have also concentrated on Central Canada. Walter Ellis, Mary B. Hill and Ronald Sawatsky have all limited the scope of their research to Ontario.¹⁵

¹⁴G.A. Rawlyk, "Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists in the 1920s and 1930s," Acadiensis XVIII, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 3.

¹⁵See Walter Ellis, "Social and Religious Factors in the Fundamentalist-Modernist Schisms Among Baptists in North America, 1895-1934" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh,

Several scholars including Leslie K. Tarr, C. Allyn Russell, John Dozois and George Rawlyk have written about T.T. Shields, the conservative fundamentalist pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto and outspoken opponent of modernism, particularly at McMaster University.¹⁶ Here again, however, only Rawlyk has examined Shields' influence beyond central Canada, looking at Shields' impact upon Maritime Baptists. Other writers have ignored Shields' campaign against modernist influences in other regions of the country, particularly in western Canada.¹⁷

While the writing of Maritime Baptist history has become more prolific in recent years, and more particularly the conflict between fundamentalists and modernists within the Maritimes has received more attention,¹⁸ the same does

1974), Mary B. Hill, "From Sect to Denomination in the Baptist Church in Canada" (Ph.D. diss., S.U.N.Y., Buffalo, 1971) and Ronald George Sawatsky, "Looking For That Blessed Hope: The Roots of Fundamentalism in Canada, 1878-1914" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Toronto, 1985).

¹⁶See Leslie K. Tarr, Shields of Canada - T.T. Shields (1873-1955) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), John Dozois, "Dr. Thomas Todhunter Shields (1873-1955) In The Stream of Fundamentalism" (B.D. thesis, McMaster Univ., 1963), and C. Allyn Russell, "Thomas Todhunter Shields, Canadian Fundamentalist," Ontario History, LXX, no. 4 (December, 1978): 263-280.

¹⁷See Rawlyk's chapter entitled "In Search of T.T. Shields' Impact on the Maritime Baptists in the 1920s and 1930s" in Champions of the Truth - Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 76-102.

¹⁸See Rawlyk, 3-33.

not apply for the Prairies. There still exists a lack of a significant comprehensive study on how people on the Prairies were influenced by this conflict or grappled with it. General church histories on western Baptists have only discussed this conflict in passing. Instead, they focus largely on British Columbia where, like Ontario, the conflict between fundamentalists and modernists led to the breakaway of a number of Baptist churches from the provincial convention to form their own organization. However, even the limited treatments of the Prairies differ on how Baptist congregations reacted to the debate. Some church historians, such as J.E. Harris, argue that Baptist churches on the Prairies were only slightly influenced by the debate, while other church historians argue that discussions and dissensions existed within Prairie Baptist church, as elsewhere across the country.¹⁹

The charges of modernism that surrounded Brandon College, like that of McMaster University, has received some study and analysis by historians. However, most accounts focus only on the years 1922-23 when allegations of modernism at the college were brought to public attention through a pamphlet published by some Baptists in British Columbia. Most accounts begin and end their analysis of the controversy at Brandon College here.²⁰ However, evidence

¹⁹See Harris, 81; Thompson, 158; Ellis, 235.

²⁰See for example Johnston, 171-172, Harris, 80, C.G. Stone, F. Joan Garnett, Brandon College - A History, 1899-1967 (Brandon, MB: Brandon University, 1969), 97-98 and

indicates that suspicions of modernist teaching at Brandon College arose long before and continued long after the 1922/23 commission inquiry. Still, no comprehensive study has been undertaken on events during those years both before and after the inquiry, nor on the significance of these events and their relationship to McMaster University or the broader fundamentalist movement.

Thus, the purpose of this thesis is primarily to bridge a gap in the understanding of Brandon College with regard to the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. In addition, this thesis will examine a small number of local Baptist churches in Alberta and their reaction to the controversy.

Difficulty in accessing local church records necessitated this restriction. For brevity's sake, this study is limited to the Baptist Union of Western Canada churches, as opposed to other Baptist groups such as the North American (German) Baptists. Individual study would be required on each in order to do justice and proper analysis of the several branches. This limitation along with the availability of sources has necessitated this confinement. In addition, this thesis is also limited geographically. The focus is primarily upon Alberta, although events in British Columbia are integral to the story. Sources are few for information on fundamentalism in the Prairies, and lack of access to

Walter E. Ellis, "What Times Demand: Brandon College and Baptist Higher Education in Western Canada," Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education, ed. G.A. Rawlyk (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 77.

primary sources for information on Manitoba and Saskatchewan has necessitated the focus on Alberta.

This thesis will also attempt to answer some questions regarding fundamentalism in the Prairies. Were the charges of modernism faced by Brandon College and its theological faculty merely an isolated incident or an offshoot of events at McMaster University and thus part of a larger phenomena across North America? Were Baptists on the Prairies concerned about the issues of the controversy? Why or how did the Prairie conventions of the Baptist Union of Western Canada escape a split over the same issues that caused a split in the Ontario/Quebec and British Columbia conventions?

Chapter One will begin with an examination of the issues that sparked the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in North America. It will examine the influences behind the fundamentalist movement arising out of the nineteenth century, particularly on the Canadian scene. Chapters Two, Three and Four will examine the details of the controversy at Brandon College beyond the 1922/23 commission inquiry and discuss its significance in relation to the broader context of events at McMaster University and across North America. Chapter Two will begin at 1919 and examine the years leading up to the commission inquiry, Chapter Three will focus on the inquiry and Chapter Four will continue the story from 1923-1926.

CHAPTER 1

The Rise of the Fundamentalist Debate in Canada

Although historians differ as to the origins and relationship of the fundamentalist movement to other traditions in Christianity, most agree that the rise of the fundamentalist movement in North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a profound and lasting impact upon North American society. By the end of World War I, the fundamentalists' battle against those who attempted to bring Christianity in line with modern society was at the forefront of North American Christianity. The Baptist denomination across North America, partly due to its local self-governing church structure and its allowance for freedom of an individual belief, was most vulnerable to this conflict.

Since the thesis focuses on Brandon College, this chapter will begin with a brief outline of the Baptist history in Canada to understand the religious roots out of which Brandon College emerged. The remainder of the chapter will trace the rise of the fundamentalist movement in North America and examine the central issues of the fundamentalist controversy. Analysis of the fundamentalist movement is based upon recent historical scholarship, most notably George Marsden and Ernest Sandeen. This background will

provide an understanding of the issues and events that touched and shaped events at Brandon College and elsewhere on the Prairies.

The Baptist tradition in Canada owed its beginnings to the influence of Baptists from Britain and the United States. Baptists arrived in British North America in the 1760s with the migration of Puritan Congregationalist settlers from New England to western Nova Scotia. These settlers had recently experienced the religious revivals in New England from 1740 onwards known as the Great Awakening. Deeply influenced by this revival movement, many became thoroughly convinced that the Second Coming and the End Times were quickly approaching. This millennial spirit, evident in what became known as the "New Light Stir," a revival which swept over many parts of northern New England between 1779 and 1781, helped to accelerate the spread of revivals throughout New England and into Nova Scotia. These revivals also encouraged the growth of the Baptist movement in the Maritimes.¹

Also of great influence on the Maritime Baptist movement was the intense charismatic preacher, Henry Alline. Known as the "Whitefield of Nova Scotia," Alline himself never became a Baptist. However, his preaching,

¹Stuart Ivison, "Is There a Canadian Baptist Tradition?" The Churches and the Canadian Experience, ed. J.W. Grant (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1963), 56-57; George A. Rawlyk, Ravished by the Spirit - Religious Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), 39, 44-45.

particularly with the New Light movement, was very instrumental in the shaping and development of the Baptist movement in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, even many years after his death. Alline's theological writings and hymns, infused with his deep sense of pietism and nineteenth century emphasis upon optimism and sense of mission, helped to shape both the Free Will and Calvinist Baptist movements in the Maritimes. Even in its early years, the Baptist denomination was prone to diverging views within the same religious group.² Other preachers followed in Alline's footsteps, such as Nova Scotia preacher Harris Harding. Harding was influential in Nova Scotia's "Second Great Awakening" and was an important link between Alline's New Light movement and the development of the Baptist Church in Nova Scotia. He succeeded in applying Alline's theology to a new generation of believers.³

Unlike in Nova Scotia where the growth of the Baptist movement there was initiated from within the region, Baptist United Empire Loyalists who came to Ontario and Quebec during and shortly after the American Revolution initiated the beginnings of the Baptist church in these provinces. These Baptist Loyalists established links with Baptist

²Rawlyk, 39-42, 45, 67-68. See Rawlyk for more detail on Alline, the New Light movement, and Maritime Baptists.

³G.A. Rawlyk, "From Newlight to Baptist: Harris Harding and the Second Great Awakening in Nova Scotia," Repent and Believe - The Baptist Experience in Maritime Canada, ed. Barry M. Moody (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1980), 1-2, 25-26.

mission societies in New York and Boston, thus encouraging the flow of itinerant preachers and missionaries across the border until the War of 1812. By 1819, all formal association or sponsorship ties that had developed with the United States ended, and the Canadian churches formed their own associations. Baptists in the Ottawa Valley region owed their beginnings to Scottish Baptist immigrants. A small group of French-speaking Protestant missionaries from Switzerland, including Henrietta Feller and Louis Roussy, established French and bilingual Baptist churches in the nineteenth century between Ottawa and Quebec City. Grande Ligne, Quebec, became the central base, with the formation of "The Evangelical Society of La Grande Ligne" in 1855, and a union of nine French-language Baptist churches in 1868, along with the founding of two educational institutes.⁴

Baptist missionary efforts from Ontario resulted in the establishment of churches on the Prairies. In 1869, two Baptist ministers, Thomas Davidson and Thomas Baldwin both of Ontario, came West under the auspices of the Baptist Missionary Convention of Ontario to explore the region with the possibility of establishing a Baptist mission or church. They travelled through Winnipeg and the surrounding areas, and met ministers of other denominations. However, they found no Baptists in the area and concluded that although there was great need for revival and "vital godliness" in

⁴Iverson, 57-58; W. Nelson Thomson, "Witness in French Canada," Baptists in Canada, ed. Zeman, 47-51.

the region, the population was still too small to support a Baptist mission. They urged instead that such efforts be delayed until immigration increased.⁵

Within two years, the preachers' advice was heeded. Ontario Baptists began raising funds and searching for a suitable candidate to begin a Baptist mission in Manitoba. Alexander McDonald met the qualifications and accepted the offer to go West. A forty-year old widower with three years' experience as a pastor for Baptist churches in Sparta and Yarmouth Ontario, McDonald arrived in Winnipeg on 30 May 1873.⁶ Although more settlers had arrived since Davidson and Baldwin's first visit, McDonald still found relatively few Baptists. Fortunately, however, he met a Baptist couple named Mr. and Mrs. W.R. Dick who lived thirteen miles northeast of Winnipeg. The Dicks provided McDonald with vital support in his struggle to establish Baptist churches on the Prairies.

During McDonald's first two months in Winnipeg he held services in a run-down school with twenty to thirty people in attendance. Weekly prayer meetings attracted up to sixteen people. With these tenuous beginnings, funding from the Ontario Baptists and a donation of land from the Dicks,

⁵J.E. Harris, The Baptist Union of Western Canada - A Centennial History 1873-1973, (Saint John, NB: Lingley Printing Co. Ltd., 1976), 1-3; Margaret E. Thompson, The Baptist Story in Western Canada (Calgary: The Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1974), 7-12, 14-16.

⁶Harris, 3-4; Thompson, 18-19.

McDonald began in 1873 to build a chapel for Sunday worship and mid-week prayer meetings. Two years later, a Baptist fellowship was organized in Winnipeg. The first service was held on Sunday February 7, 1875 with a formal church building dedication held June 20, 1875.⁷

In addition to the Winnipeg church, McDonald organized new churches in Emerson, Stonewall, Shoal Lake, Strathclair, Brandon and Portage la Prairie. Much of the work was accomplished with the help of pioneer families. During the remaining quarter of a century, Baptist missions spread across the Prairies, establishing churches in communities throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta.⁸

The formation of the Baptist Union of Western Canada in 1907 was the joining together of Baptist associations on the Prairies. Provincial associations were formed in Alberta in 1899, Saskatchewan in 1905 and Manitoba in 1907. In 1907, these conventions amalgamated together with the British Columbia Convention⁹ to form the Baptist Convention of

⁷Harris, 7-11.

⁸The earliest churches began in Saskatchewan in 1883 and in Alberta in 1888. Harris, 7-11; Thompson, 22-29. See Thompson, 31-53 for more detail on the early spread of Baptist church work through the Prairie provinces.

⁹Baptist churches in British Columbia had developed links with the American Baptist associations as opposed to Eastern Canadian associations, following the natural North-South ties, and had almost been entirely dependent financially upon the resources of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. However, when they were informed by the American Baptists that they would no longer be receiving support due to financial constraints, British Columbia Baptists were forced to look to Eastern Canada to provide financial support. Harris, 14-15; Thompson, 54-76. See

Western Canada, with the individual provincial associations existing under its authority. Two years later, in 1909, the decision was made to change the name to the Baptist Union of Western Canada (BUWC) in order to distinguish it from the four provincial conventions.¹⁰

The fundamentalist-modernist conflict that emerged, in the 1920s was most intense within the Baptist denomination. It was the particular nature of Baptist church structure that may in part explain the reason why the Baptists experienced such conflict. The Baptist denomination in general operates with a greater autonomy within the local church than most other denominations. In the words of J.L. Gilmour, professor of church history at McMaster University during the early 1920s, Baptists hold strongly in their polity to "independence and voluntarism, so that any encroachment on the autonomy of the individual church is met with prompt and decisive opposition."¹¹ Baptists place no religious authority in church creeds or declarations,

also Gordon H. Pousett, "A History of the Convention of Baptist Churches of British Columbia" (M.Th. thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1982), and John B. Richards, Baptists in British Columbia: A Struggle to Maintain "Sectarianism" (Vancouver: Northwest Baptist Theological College and Seminary, 1977).

¹⁰For more background on the forming of the provincial conventions see Harris, 14-15, 26, 55-56, and Thompson, 54-76, 92-93, 100, 119, 121.

¹¹Quoted in Samuel J. Mikolaski, "Identity and Mission," Baptists in Canada - Search for Identity Amidst Diversity, ed. Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington, ON: G.R. Welch, Company, Limited, 1980), 1.

believing the Bible to be the supreme authority. In keeping with these policies, Baptists have tended to establish confessions of faith, such as the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, as a means of expressing their belief in the New Testament, and expressing their "faith through relating doctrinal ideas to one another in a systematic and comprehensive fashion," not as a final decree.¹² These factors combined with others, such as their respect for freedom of interpretation of Scripture and the broad doctrinal diversity within the denomination, may have contributed to a greater vulnerability within the denomination to the influences of varying beliefs, and thus a greater susceptibility to conflict and controversy.¹³

To understand this often vehement fundamentalist-modernist conflict, one must trace the roots of the fundamentalist movement in North America. Fundamentalism as a movement was shaped by many religious traditions from the nineteenth century. Dwight L. Moody and his influences upon late nineteenth century revivalism and evangelicalism, the influence of the Holiness movement within American Christianity and the influence of British dispensational

¹²Mikolaski, 15; L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, Baptists and the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 371, 393.

¹³Marsden, 104-105; Clark Pinnock, "The Modernist Impulse at McMaster University, 1887-1927," Baptists in Canada, ed. Zeman, 196.

theology and millenarianism, among other traditions, laid the foundations for the movement.

Dwight L. Moody's contribution to the emerging fundamentalist movement was, perhaps, the single most significant and influential factor. Moody was a popular American evangelist during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Although the primary focus in Moody's ministry was evangelism, his personal beliefs in Biblical infallibility and premillennialism, and his promotion of and emphasis on ethics and Holiness teaching were later adopted by many who became part of the fundamentalist movement.¹⁴ Moody introduced many of the views that later characterized the fundamentalist movement. He saw society as full of vice and temptation. He described the world as a "wrecked vessel" and preached that the greatest threats to society were the theatre, disrespect for the Sabbath, newspapers on Sundays and teachings about evolution.¹⁵ Moody also attacked such vices as drunkenness, the sale of liquor, "telling vile stories," "worldly amusements," "disregard for parents," "pandering the lusts of the body," and jealousy and envy, among others. He condemned such activity as "evidences of loving the world or worldly pleasures," and told his listeners that "a line should be drawn ... between

¹⁴George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture - The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 33.

¹⁵Ibid., 35, 38.

the church and the world and every Christian should get both feet out of the world."¹⁶ Close to half a century later, Moody's negative attitude towards worldly pleasures was later adopted by many fundamentalists in their struggle against modernism in society and attempts to maintain orthodoxy within Christianity.

In contrast, Moody's ambivalent view of society and culture similarly was adopted by many fundamentalists. Although he hoped that society was not getting worse, Moody insisted that revival was "the only hope for our [American] republic, for I don't believe that a republican form of government can last without righteousness."¹⁷ As one historian has stated, fundamentalism, however, was a mixture of very different traditions that often could not be integrated.¹⁸ Like Moody, its followers often simultaneously advocated conflicting positions that reflected an ambivalent attitude towards society. This attitude towards culture and society is best described in the words of historian George Marsden:

Sometimes its advocates were backward looking and reactionary, at other times they were imaginative innovators. On some occasions they appeared militant and divisive; on others they were warm and irenic. At times they seemed ready to forsake the whole world over a point of

¹⁶Quoted in Marsden, 36.

¹⁷Quoted in Marsden, 38.

¹⁸Marsden, 39, 43.

doctrine; at other times they appeared heedless of tradition in their zeal to win converts. Sometimes they were optimistic patriots; sometimes they were prophets shaking from their feet the dust of a doomed civilization.¹⁹

This tension between belief in separation from the world on the one hand, and a concern for revival and salvation of souls on the other hand, became central to the fundamentalist movement during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Moody's influence also spread to Canada. Moody's International Sunday School Association, a lay organization established in the United States in the early 1870s, began attracting interest and participation from Ontario through its Sunday School conventions by the 1890s. Previous to that, Moody himself visited Canada, holding a three-day campaign in Toronto in 1884. His down-to-earth, informal preaching and call to a simple moral code set an example for many other professional evangelists. Moody's practice of teaming up with singer/hymn writers such as Ira Sankey on his evangelistic campaigns influenced Canadian evangelists to do the same. One such Canadian pair was the Methodist team of Hugh T. Crossley and John D. Hunter. In the late nineteenth century, Crossley and Hunter conducted many successful evangelistic services throughout Canada.²⁰

¹⁹Ibid., 43.

²⁰John Webster Grant, A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto/Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 171, 182; S.D. Clark, Church and

Although Hunter preached and promoted a very strict lifestyle for the Christian, advocating abstinence from dancing, theatre, card playing, alcohol and slander, his sermons were very practical and did not reflect an inherently fundamentalist attitude or belief. He believed that Christians should study the Bible intently, carefully and prayerfully on a daily basis. He also believed that faith was a gift from God available to all, that Christ was the object of faith and that the Christian's duty or goal in life should be to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever."²¹

The Holiness movement, which emerged during the latter part of the nineteenth century out of Methodism, also made a significant contribution to the fundamentalist movement. It brought to the fundamentalist movement an emphasis upon Biblical literalism, emotionalism, puritanical mores, the influence of Holy Spirit in the Christian's life, belief in the victorious life and commitment to Christian service. The Holiness movement also attempted to re-establish traditional values within the Church and the larger society. In doing so, many within the movement hoped to resist the surge of social and intellectual forces of theological liberalism, higher criticism, and Social Gospel, which

Sect in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), 406-407.

²¹H.T. Crossley, Practical Talks on Important Themes to Young Converts, Older Christians and the Un-converted (Toronto: William Briggs, 1895), 3-4, 62-63, 152, 213, 246, 250, Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (hereafter cited as CIHM) microfiche #02136.

Holiness people felt were bringing values into the Church incompatible with traditional ones. In this desire to maintain traditions, the Holiness movement had a common foundation with the fundamentalist movement.²²

Similarly, premillennialism and dispensational theology were significant factors in the shaping of the fundamentalist movement before 1900. Millennialism first came to the United States from Britain in the early nineteenth century, but was not widely embraced until the mid-1800s.²³ In Canada, the belief in the millennium became increasingly popular during the latter half of the nineteenth century.²⁴ Some of the new Canadian converts

²²For further detail on the Holiness movement, see Marsden, 72-80 and Robert Mapes Anderson, Vision of the Disinherited - The Making of American Pentecostalism (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 28-33.

²³Dispensation theology refers to the theory of the Second Coming of Christ and the prophesy outlined in the Book of Daniel regarding the church age. Millennialism refers to an avid interest in prophetic Scripture, particularly Scripture dealing with the millennium or the prophesied one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. Marsden, 51-54; Ernest R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism - British and American Millennialism 1800-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 9, 38, 42-43, 62-70.

²⁴During the mid to late nineteenth century, there were many active millennial groups in nineteenth century Ontario, including the Irvingites, Millerites and Plymouth Brethren. Interest in eschatological questions and belief in the imminent return of Christ was very popular. Millennialism also had a successful following in nineteenth Ontario because of its many similarities with revivalism. For further detail on pre- and post-millennial thought in Canada, see William Westfall, Two Worlds - The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 159-190.

were influenced by John Nelson Darby, originator of dispensationalism. Darby, a nineteenth century Irish clergyman, broke away from the Church of Ireland in 1827 and later became leader of the Plymouth Brethren group, a separatist group formed in Britain in the early nineteenth century in efforts to revive interest in millennarianism. Darby visited Canada several times between 1862 and 1877, spreading his teachings about dispensationalism and winning new converts to the Plymouth Brethren movement.²⁵

Millennarianism was divided into two groups of ideologies. Postmillennialism was the more popular view held in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Postmillennialists among other things believed that Christ would return after the final millennial age on earth, hence the prefix "post", thereby ending history. They were generally optimistic about how society was progressing, and saw history as reflecting the ongoing battle between the forces of good and evil with the forces of good assured victory. The downfall of Satanic forces was, they believed, imminent.²⁶ To the majority of postmillennialists, signs were evident of the approaching millennial age. The increase and success of revivals, advances in science, technology and education and the growth of reform movements

²⁵Darby's travelling was restricted mostly to the area between Toronto and London, Ontario, although he also visited Montreal, Ottawa and Halifax. Sandeen, 29-32, 71; Marsden, 46; Grant, 215.

²⁶Marsden, 49.

to end war and oppression were all seen as indications that the end times were near at hand.²⁷ In their general optimism and belief in progress, postmillennialists in essence were liberals.

By contrast, premillennialism gained a wider acceptance during the late nineteenth century as exemplified by the increased organization and participation of Christians in premillennial conferences. Premillennialists believed in a literal fulfillment of Scripture's prophecies and in Christ's return to earth before the millennium. Premillennialists were less optimistic than postmillennialists about the progress of society. They held that the world was becoming corrupt and warned that final judgement was imminent.²⁸

Dispensational premillennialism developed in North America in the late nineteenth century through the views of John Nelson Darby.²⁹ Darby's dispensational theology was essentially a complex interpretation of the prophecy found in the Book of Daniel concerning the "seventy weeks" or seven dispensations of the church age.³⁰ Darby particularly believed that the Jews' refusal to accept Christ disrupted

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 51; Sandeen, 39.

²⁹Sandeen, 60-61, 70-71.

³⁰Dispensations refer to the seven divisions of the history of the church as outlined in the Bible. Marsden, 52,54.

the progression of dispensations. However, this progression, he believed, would resume again in human history. Darby further taught that the tribulation would precede the final Judgement and Christ's millennial reign during which time Christians would be taken away to meet their Lord.³¹

Many Canadians came to embrace Darby's dispensational theology. Prominent church leaders such as Elmore Harris, pastor of Walmer Road Baptist Church in Toronto, Bishop Maurice Baldwin of Huron, Henry M. Parsons of Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto and later on, William Aberhart of Westbourne Baptist Church in Calgary, espoused premillennial dispensationalism. This varied collection of people indicates that dispensational theology appealed to people across denominational lines. However, all of the leaders mentioned above, including Darby, held strong Calvinistic views, which included a firm belief in Divine Sovereignty and Predestination and gave little value to human capability.³²

The Darbyite view also gained prominence in Canada through the Prophetic and Bible Conferences held at Niagara-on-the-Lake in Ontario from 1883 to 1897. Although these conferences were organized primarily by American millenarianists, many Canadians, including Elmore Harris and

³¹Grant, 215.

³²Ibid.; Marsden, 46.

Henry M. Parsons actively participated in many aspects of conference activities such as on planning committees, as conference speakers or in establishing companies to publish dispensational and premillennial literature. These conferences became an important way of bringing like-minded people and the millenarian movement together. It provided a place to encourage and reinforce orthodox Christian beliefs and for disseminating information including Darby's premillennial dispensationalism.³³

Dispensationalists interpreted the Scriptures literally especially with regard to the Church Age and prophecies about the Second Coming. They defended this literalistic approach as common sense and insisted that it was "the only proper way to interpret Scripture ... unless the text or the context absolutely demands otherwise."³⁴ All prophecies were to be interpreted exactly as they were written. For example, references to "Israel" in the Bible signified the Jews and not the Christian Church. References to specific numbers in prophecies were also seen to signify exact periods of time, and predictions, though recorded imagery,

³³Grant, 215, 234; Sandeen, 132-135, 141-142; Ronald George Sawatsky, "Looking For That Blessed Hope: The Roots of Fundamentalism in Canada, 1878-1914" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1985), pp. 45, 49, 56, 131. The Prophetic and Bible Conferences were begun in 1875 and held each summer in different locations before settling in Niagara which became synonymous with the conferences. See Sandeen and Sawatsky for more detail on these conferences.

³⁴Marsden, 60.

were believed to be accurate descriptions of future events.³⁵

Finally, premillennialists believed in the imminent return of Christ, which they maintained was clearly outlined in Scripture. As papers read at an 1885 Prophetic Bible Conference held at Niagara, Ontario entitled "The Second Coming of Our Lord" indicate, the imminent return of Christ was one of the most urgent concerns. The purpose of this conference was to study the Scriptures with respect to the Second Coming. Conference papers, some of which were given by Canadians including H.M. Parsons, Maurice Baldwin, John Mutch and T.C. Desbarres of Toronto, addressed a wide variety of topics such as belief in the Second Coming of Christ as real and personal and taking place before the millennium, and belief in the first and literal resurrection of the dead in Christ to take place at the beginning of the millennium. As the the organization of this conference indicates, the existence of premillennialist thinking, and as such a precursor to fundamentalist thinking, was present in Canada from as early as the nineteenth century.³⁶ These characteristics - strict adherence to a literal "common

³⁵Ibid., 54, 60-61.

³⁶Examples of papers read at the Conference included "Second Coming of Christ, The Everpresent Hope of the Church," "Practical Power of the Hope in the Formation of Christian Character," and "Second Coming of Christ as Related to Israel." See The Second Coming of Our Lord: being papers read at a Conference held at Niagara, Ont. July 14th to 17th 1885 (Toronto: S.R. Briggs, Toronto Willard Tract Depository, 1885), CIHM microfiche #35569.

sense" interpretation of Scripture, and a firm belief in the imminence of the Second Coming - later became identified with the fundamentalist movement.³⁷

In the late nineteenth century, however, ideas previously held about the role of Providence in society and culture were gradually abandoned by liberals. They began to question the belief that history was predetermined and that the forces of good (God) and evil (Satan) were involved in a "cosmic struggle" which might intervene into history or the natural world at any time. Instead they saw the Kingdom of God, not as something that belonged to the supernatural or another world of the future, but as something that belonged to the "here and now." Liberals based this new interpretation on Christ's teachings in the Gospels about eternal life. As a result, these liberals saw indications of spiritual progress in the everyday events of life as well as in the supernatural world, which lay beyond the understanding of humans. This approach to interpreting events around them became for liberals the way of understanding the spiritual circumstances of life. Such an interpretation stood in sharp contrast to the views of conservative evangelicals earlier in the century who believed the Bible to be the principal guide to understanding culture and society.³⁸ In many ways, liberals

³⁷Marsden, 54, 60-61.

³⁸Marsden, 50-51; G.A. Rawlyk, "A.L. McCrimmon, H.P. Whidden, T.T. Shields, Christian Education and McMaster University," Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher

simply reflected the change in general religious attitudes at the time.

The growing influence of science, higher criticism and theological liberalism exacerbated this drift away from traditional Christianity and in turn diminished the church's dominance.³⁹ Higher criticism, or Biblical criticism as it was also known, challenged many orthodox precepts. Higher criticism involved the critical study of the literary structure, source, date and authorship of the books of the Old and New Testaments. Developed by scholars in Germany at the Tubingen School, higher criticism questioned the authority, inerrancy and the historicity of the Gospels.⁴⁰

In Canada, higher educational institutions were adopting the precepts of higher criticism by the 1870s. Professors like George C. Workman of Victoria College, George Paxton Young of Knox College, G.M. Grant of Queen's University, and I.G. Matthews and George Cross of McMaster University advocated the scientific and objective approach of higher criticism and espoused and defended these views of

Education, ed. G.A. Rawlyk (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 38-39.

³⁹Ramsay Cook, The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 62, 175-176, 194.

⁴⁰Marsden, 17-18; "Higher Criticism," The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. F.L. Cross (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 105; "Biblical Criticism," New Dictionary of Theology, eds. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 93.

Biblical criticism in their lectures.⁴¹ The ideas purported by these scholars in essence represented the very beliefs conservatives feared were threatening the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Out of these modern ideas emerged a more social orientation to Christianity which emphasized the corporate rather than individual salvation of man. This new approach made the primary goal of Christianity to reform society and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Although most orthodox Christians at the time would have believed that social action was part of a Christian's responsibility, they would not have put it ahead of individual salvation. However, in the following decades, the emerging Social Gospel movement posed a challenge to this traditional emphasis on the individual. By the end of the nineteenth century, theological liberalism and the Social Gospel movement laid the groundwork for the debate that was later to emerge in the following century.⁴²

Between the late 1870s and the beginning of World War I, serious theological differences began to develop between conservatives and liberals within almost every North American denomination. The differences at first were not necessarily over theological issues, but arose more out of

⁴¹Grant, 213-214; Cook, 17-19, 21; D.C. Masters, Protestant Colleges in Canada - A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 90-92.

⁴²Cook, 62, 175-176, 194.

the concerns of conservatives who wanted to maintain their own distinct traditions. The core issues later became theological and often focused on the authority of Scripture and its scientific accuracy, and on the importance of the work and person of Jesus Christ. Nearly every major denomination in North America wrestled to some degree with these issues.⁴³

With the emergence, by the late nineteenth century, of the theological rift between conservatives and liberals two distinct positions on Scripture had developed. The liberal position, arising out of influences from German scholars at the Tübingen school, rejected the infallibility of Scripture, emphasizing instead an objective validation of Christian truth based upon critical inquiry. Conservatives, on the other hand, maintained that Scripture was divinely inspired and thus inerrant, both in word and in doctrine.⁴⁴ The debate between these two positions continued to intensify throughout the nineteenth century. Liberal teachings and philosophy filtered into many North American seminaries and universities, and by 1900 was well-represented in many schools. By the beginning of World War I, many strict conservatives had disappeared from institutes of higher learning. Seminaries, such as the divinity school at the University of Chicago, Colgate Theological Seminary

⁴³Marsden, 103.

⁴⁴Marsden, 105.

and Rochester Theological Seminary, became by the turn of the century leading institutes for theological liberalism.⁴⁵

In Canada, although the older conservative theological ideas did not at once disappear from the universities, signs were evident that there was a move towards adoption of liberal theological ideas. William Newton Clarke, professor of New Testament interpretation at Toronto Baptist College, the forerunner of McMaster University, embodied many of the ideologies of liberal theology. Clarke believed that religion was innate within each person and that the test of truth was the Spirit at work in humanity rather than in an infallible Bible. He would also allegedly often attempt to modify the ideas his more conservative students held about the Bible. McMaster professors and former students of Clarke, I.G. Matthews and George Cross, also allegedly espoused modernist theories of the Old Testament to their classes for which they were later investigated at the 1910 meeting of the BCOQ.⁴⁶ Conservatives feared that orthodoxy as they knew it was losing ground. Theological views were changing at many Canadian educational institutions, from the traditional view that man could only be saved from eternal damnation by God's grace, to the view that man was essentially good and his purpose was to imitate the example

⁴⁵Ibid.; Stewart Cole, The History of Fundamentalism (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), 42.

⁴⁶Pinnock, 197-198.

set by Christ. Little sympathy was shown for the traditional belief of man as a sinner saved by grace.⁴⁷

By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, lay protest to this increasing liberal influence was gaining more widespread public attention. In 1910, a series of paperback volumes entitled "The Fundamentals" was launched and financed by California oilman and millionaire Lyman Stewart and his brother Milton.⁴⁸ Although the pamphlets initially aroused little interest, some historians point to them as a catalyst to fundamentalist movement. Whatever their influence, the pamphlets' intense attack on modernism foreshadowed the tone conservatives later adopted in the controversy.⁴⁹

The volumes were a twelve-part series published between 1910 and 1915 as a great "Testimony to the Truth" and as a way of re-establishing the conservative evangelical position in American culture.⁵⁰ Lyman Stewart was concerned that something be done to re-establish the importance of Christian truth and support those Christians whom he believed were being led astray by biblical criticism and modern day ideas.⁵¹ The volumes consisted of a collection

⁴⁷Grant, 22-23; Masters, 138.

⁴⁸For more information on Lyman Stewart and his involvement in The Fundamentals series, see Sandeen, 189-194.

⁴⁹Marsden, 119; Sandeen, 189.

⁵⁰Quoted in Marsden, 118; Cole, 52.

⁵¹Sandeen, 188.

of articles written by various American, British and Canadian conservative scholars and popular writers, and were edited by such well-known conservatives as A.C. Dixon, evangelist and pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, and Reuben Torrey, dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles.⁵² Over three million copies were distributed free in the United States to pastors, missionaries, theological professors and students, YM/YWCA secretaries, college professors, Sunday School superintendents and editors of English-speaking religious magazines. Whether or not there was any circulation in Canada, however, is unknown.⁵³

The majority of the articles within the series were apologetic in nature, that is, they focused on defense of the Christian faith. One third of the articles concentrated on defending Scripture by attacking what the authors perceived to be the weaknesses of higher criticism. Another third focused on issues such as the nature and role of the Trinity and the doctrines of Original Sin and Salvation, and criticized the "isms" of the day - Russellism, Mormonism, Spiritualism, Romanism, and Modernism among others. The

⁵²Six of the sixty-four authors chosen to submit articles to the series were from Canada. During his time as editor, from 1909-1910, Dixon chose to work with a committee of equal-numbered laymen and clergy, one of which included Canadian Baptist minister Rev. Elmore Harris of Toronto. Sandeen, 196, 199-200; Sawatsky, 312-313.

⁵³Marsden, 118-120; Norman F. Furniss, The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931 (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1963), 12.

remaining third of articles included personal testimonies from the authors, discussion on current issues such as the relationship between science and religion, and appeals for increased efforts in evangelism and missions. This section showed an overwhelming concern for more practical issues such as reaching the unsaved, and placed great emphasis on personal experience and individual prayer. Little attention was devoted to social or ethical issues. Political issues such as prohibition were avoided altogether.⁵⁴

The central argument throughout the series dealt with the authority of Scripture over the authority of modern science and higher criticism. The majority of the authors in the series were not opposed to true science or higher criticism but rather to what they termed as its "illegitimate, unscientific and unhistorical use." Possibly, the authors felt that higher criticism was valid only when it was used to enhance one's understanding of the Bible. One author even praised the use of historical criticism as "not only a legitimate but a necessary method for all Christians, for by its use we are able to discover the facts and the form of the Old Testament Scriptures."⁵⁵ In addition, the series also played an important role in establishing the fundamentalist movement by expounding the five beliefs which eventually became synonymous with

⁵⁴Ibid., 119-120; Sandeen, 204.

⁵⁵Ibid.

fundamentalism. These beliefs, which became known as the "five points of fundamentalism," were Scriptural inerrancy and infallibility, the Virgin Birth of Christ, Substitutionary Atonement, the Resurrection and the Second Coming.⁵⁶

Following the publication of the series, there was increased interest among some conservatives to defend the essentials of the faith. This determination steadily developed into a voice of dissent, a "conservative coalition," against the increasing infiltration of liberal ideas.⁵⁷ The efforts of this emerging anti-liberal movement were interrupted, however, by the onset of World War I. Although immediate concerns were focused on the war at hand, the anti-liberal, anti-modernist campaign did not die out. Rather, it only lay dormant during those years as attention was turned to the pressing needs of the war.⁵⁸

World War I itself also helped shape the emerging fundamentalist movement. By the end of the War, what appeared to be an unexpected and sudden outcry against liberalism and modernism in society had in reality been simmering during the years leading up to the War. Many factors contributed to the movement's shift from a moderate interest in social concerns to a militant attempt to drive modernism out of the Church and society at large. Many

⁵⁶Furniss, 13.

⁵⁷Ibid.; Marsden, 124.

⁵⁸Furniss, 10, 13.

church leaders began changing their views about Christianity and culture and about important theological issues. Many ministers, on the whole, were becoming more liberal in their views while their congregations tended to remain more conservative. People became aware that the beliefs they had always taken for granted as accepted truth were no longer held in value by their pastors and other church leaders.⁵⁹ In the period immediately following the War, conservatives experienced, justified or not, an overwhelming sense of cultural crisis. This sense of crisis in turn created a greater sense of urgency with regard to the fight against modernism in society. They attributed this perceived crisis to the influence of World War I and the increase of modernism in society.⁶⁰

In the view of many fundamentalists at the time, World War I posed a cultural threat to North American society which helped to both precipitate and intensify the militant spirit of the controversy. They believed that modernism, higher criticism and the theory of evolution were all manifestations of the same German philosophy which had caused the War.⁶¹ Up until World War I, North Americans had always believed that, even with its faults, European culture was improving and progressing. With the war, however, that

⁵⁹Ibid., 14-15; Marsden, 141.

⁶⁰Furniss, 15; Marsden, 141, 153.

⁶¹Furniss, 25, 26.

view was shattered and many believed that Germany was headed towards self-destruction. In connection with this, many fundamentalists, particularly premillennialists, believed that German theology was linked to German militarism, and was the cause of the moral collapse of German civilization. It was feared that this "new theology ... [had] led Germany into barbarism and will lead any nation into the same demoralization."⁶² This fear had great implications for the fundamentalist movement in the 1920s where the key argument between fundamentalists and modernists had not only to do with theological issues, but with the "whole moral course of civilization."⁶³

This fear of German militarism in conjunction with the fight against the threat of the theory of evolution and modernism in society became the distinctive characteristic identifying the fundamentalist movement. Fundamentalists believed that the theory of evolution and threat of modernism in society would "destroy Christianity as a moral force ... through its questioning of traditionally valued doctrines."⁶⁴ In their minds, modernism and the belief in evolution and Communism were all "secret agents of Satan," working together to "subvert the good." They also believed that new ideas developing in science and theology after 1900

⁶²Marsden, 148.

⁶³Ibid., 146, 148-149.

⁶⁴Furniss, 17.

were equally responsible for the rise in agnosticism, atheism and communism, and thus must be stopped.⁶⁵

In the view of some historians, however, and accurately so, fundamentalists misunderstood the meaning of the theory and findings of evolution. They were closed to any discussion or explanation of evolutionary theory. Instead, they believed that evolution referred only to man's direct descent from apes and refused to grasp the concept of a gradual development of the species.⁶⁶

By 1920, while most North Americans were recovering from the disruption of the War and were settling back into normal life, fundamentalists found themselves wanting a return to a society that held the Christian values they esteemed. They saw the post-war period as the beginning for such a campaign. Between 1920 and 1925, fundamentalism, in the words of historian George Marsden, "took shape as a movement distinct from its antecedents and representing more than just the sum of the sub-movements that supported it."⁶⁷

Canadians at this time were also settling back into life from the disruption of the War. Leaders in the Social Gospel movement such as J.S. Woodsworth and William Irvine and organizations such as the Social Service Council advocated a broader more progressive and co-operative

⁶⁵Ibid., 18-19, 26

⁶⁶Ibid., 19-20.

⁶⁷Marsden, 164.

approach to achieving the Kingdom of God on earth and combatting what they believed to be the evils of individualism as a means of addressing society's ills. Canadian Baptists were also concerned about social reform. Students at McMaster University's 1919 commencement exercises were told not to fear the modern social movement because it was "born of the Gospel of Christ."⁶⁸ Some Baptist leaders such as D.R. Sharpe, superintendent for the Saskatchewan Convention of the BUWC, A.L. MacCrimmon of McMaster University and M.F. McCutcheon of the First Baptist Church in Montreal also advocated a greater concern for a social ministry. Although, in the view of one historian, Baptists collectively showed little concern for human rights or social issues, individually they were aware of and sensitive to the ideas of the Social Gospel movement, and were involved, whether by individual action or through concern for practical Christianity as voiced through the pages of the Canadian Baptist.⁶⁹ Despite this growing acceptance of the Social Gospel, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in Ontario and in the West may have kept many liberally-minded Baptists from openly voicing

⁶⁸Quoted in Richard Allen, The Social Passion - Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 69.

⁶⁹See Paul R. Dekar, "Baptists and Human Rights, 1837-1867," Baptists in Canada, ed. Zeman, 107-135, and John S. Moir, "The Canadian Baptist and the Social Gospel Movement, 1879-1914," Baptists in Canada, ed. Zeman, 147-157.

their interest in social concerns, possibly for fear of being labelled as modernists.⁷⁰

As in the United States, conflicts between fundamentalist and modernist positions during the 1920s were most evident in Canada within the Baptist denomination.⁷¹ Baptists in central Canada in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ) and in British Columbia experienced schisms within their conventions. In central Canada, events at McMaster University, then located in Toronto, determined to a great extent how the controversy unfolded in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.⁷²

Acutely aware of the conflict taking place at McMaster University, Brandon College at this time was also experiencing tensions over similar issues. As the next two chapters will show, throughout most of the 1920s, Brandon College was the centre of theological debate within the BUWC over its teaching and hiring practices.

⁷⁰See Allen for a more detailed analysis of the influence of the Social Gospel movement in Canada.

⁷¹See G.A. Rawlyk, "Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists in the 1920s and 1930s," *Acadiensis* XVIII, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 3-33 for more information on the effect of the controversy on Maritime Baptists.

⁷²For detailed information on the controversy at McMaster University and in the BCOQ, see Charles M. Johnston, McMaster University Volume 1/The Toronto Years (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

CHAPTER 2

Stirrings of Controversy at Brandon College

Brandon College, established in Manitoba at the turn of the century, was to be the Baptist educational institution in the West for the training of young people. The college's idyllic pursuit of those goals, however, was soon to be overshadowed by accusations of modernism. Throughout the early years of the decade of the 1920s, questions from within the Baptist Union of Western Canada regarding the orthodoxy of the college and two of its faculty members surfaced and haunted the college. In particular, the publication of these charges by one Baptist from British Columbia eventually prompted a commission to inquire into the charges.

The founding of Brandon College, in 1899, was the culmination of years of efforts to establish a Baptist educational institution in the West. Attempts to build such an institution began with the founding of Prairie College, the first of Brandon College's predecessors. In 1879, John Crawford of the Canadian Literary Institute in Woodstock, Ontario went to Manitoba to establish a Baptist school to train ministers. Although he did not receive any financial

support from the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ), he was permitted to seek financial support from local Manitoba churches. C.C. McLaurin, then pastor of an Ontario church, also helped Crawford in raising funds from local Ontario churches to help cover initial expenses.¹

In 1880, Crawford enlisted the help of G.B. Davis, a young minister and graduate of Woodstock, Ontario and Morgan Park (Chicago) Colleges, to help finance the proposed school. In the spring of that year, Davis, and nine prospective students arrived in Rapid City, Manitoba, about twenty miles north of Brandon, and began to construct the two-story structure that would house the college. The building consisted of a dining room in the basement, three classrooms and living quarters for the Crawford family on the main level and twelve rooms for students on the second level. Prairie College opened in the fall of 1880 with fifteen students. Crawford and Davis acted as principal and vice-principal, respectively, and carried out most of the teaching responsibilities. Both men also contributed most of their personal income to the college. Despite this, the college faced many difficulties including a change in the proposed CPR line from Rapid City to Brandon, lack of

¹C.C. McLaurin, Pioneering in Western Canada - A Story of the Baptists (Calgary: Published by the Author, 1939), 289-290; J. Brian Scott, "Brandon College and Social Christianity," Costly Vision: The Baptist Pilgrimage in Canada, ed. Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing Company Inc., 1988), 140-141; C.G. Stone and F. Joan Garnett, Brandon College: A History, 1899-1967 (Brandon, MB: Brandon University, 1969), 5-6.

financial support expected from the East and competition for support from the proposed establishment of Toronto Baptist College. Prairie College was forced to close its doors after only three years.²

Despite this first unsuccessful attempt, Davis continued to believe that the community needed a Baptist educational institution for young people, and in 1883 constructed another building for that purpose. Soon after, however, Davis left Rapid City to organize and pastor a church in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. He asked his brother-in-law, Samuel J. McKee, a former professor at the Canadian Literary Institute in Woodstock, Ontario, to run the school. McKee operated the academy in Rapid City until 1890 when he moved the school to Brandon. Brandon was a growing community, benefitting from the construction of the nearby CPR line. McKee's decision to relocate the academy proved sound - enrollment increased as a result, although exact figures are unknown.³

As settlement in the West was increasing, McKee was convinced of the need for a Baptist college in Manitoba to provide a Baptist educational institution, along the lines of McMaster University, for young people in the West. McKee tried on several occasions to convince the Baptist

²Ibid.

³Stone and Garnett, 10; J.E. Harris, The Baptist Union of Western Canada - A Centennial History 1873-1973 (Saint John, NB: Lingley Printing Co., Ltd., 1976), 28.

Convention of Ontario of this need. Many prominent Baptist individuals were supportive of the idea of establishing a Baptist educational institution in the West. Among them, A.J. Vining, superintendent of missions for Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, was most strongly persuaded of the idea. Together with Vining's fund-raising efforts from eastern churches and a substantial endowment, the Baptist Convention of Manitoba approved the establishment of a college. The new college, known as Brandon College, was established July 1, 1899. Professor McKee's academy was amalgamated with the new college and classes began that fall.⁴

The college's curriculum was initially divided into four departments - arts, theology, academic and music and expression. The college aimed not only to develop the student's intellectual abilities but also to develop "right character."⁵ Admitting both men and women, the college particularly sought to train men for the ministry within a Christian environment. As the college calendar stated, the school was committed to "surrounding the student during the period of college life with positive Christian influences and of keeping before him distinctly Christian ideals."⁶

⁴Toronto industrialist Mr. William Davies and his wife, and Vining's sister-in-law, Mrs. Emily Davies made endowments totalling \$5,000 per year for five years. McLaurin, 293-294; Scott, 140-141; Stone and Garnett, 10-14.

⁵Brandon College Calendar, 1922-23, Brandon University Archives (hereafter cited as BUA), 12.

⁶Ibid.; Stone and Garnett, 14.

This philosophy was similar to that of some other denominational educational institutions establishing on the Prairies around the same time, and to older established institutions in the East. Like McMaster University which was founded as a "Christian school of learning,"⁷ and Acadia University which sought to provide a place where "young people could be educated under Christian influences,"⁸ Manitoba and Wesley Colleges, the founding colleges of the University of Winnipeg, were similarly established as institutions of higher learning to provide Christian values to its students. This founding philosophy differed greatly, however, from institutions such as the University of Saskatchewan which was established as a state-supported, self-governing institution, independent of religious affiliation.⁹

In 1906 and 1907, Brandon College's first president, A.P. McDiarmid, attempted to obtain a charter from the Manitoba government giving Brandon College university status

⁷G.A. Rawlyk, "A.L. McCrimmon, H.P. Whidden, T.T. Shields, Christian Higher Education and McMaster University" Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education, ed. G.A. Rawluk (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 40-41.

⁸A.C. Chute, The Religious Life of Acadia (Wolfville, NS: Acadia University, 1933), 238.

⁹A.G. Bedford, The University of Winnipeg: A History of the Founding Colleges (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 7-8, 25; Michael Hayden, Seeking a Balance - The University of Saskatchewan 1907-1982 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 3, 45.

with power to grant degrees. However, failure to receive a charter amendment along with pressure from the Baptist community, in keeping with Baptist philosophy that denominational schools should not receive state support, prompted the college to seek affiliation with McMaster University. This affiliation was achieved in April 1910.¹⁰

Brandon College, from its inception, suffered from confused priorities. Some Baptists wondered about the need for an independent full arts and theology college, feeling, rather, that the college should specialize in theological education under the control of the Baptist Union of Western Canada (BUWC) and encourage students in other disciplines to attend the provincial institutions. McDiarmid, on the other hand, wanted the ambitions of the college to centre on being an independent institution, not only a theological seminary. "Our goals," he maintained, "differ from those of a state institution and therefore whatever the course our Provincial Institutions may take in future, we ought to push for an independent university."¹¹ This conflict plagued the college for many years. McDiarmid resigned in 1911, largely

¹⁰Walter E. Ellis, "What Times Demand: Brandon College and Baptist Higher Education in Western Canada," Canadian Baptists, ed. Rawlyk, 69-70; Stone and Garnett, 61-68.

¹¹Quoted in Ellis, 70. For more detail on the Brandon College-Baptist Union of Western Canada conflict over educational interests, see Walter E. Ellis, "Organizational and Educational Policy of Baptists in Western Canada, 1873-1939" (B.D. thesis, McMaster Univ., 1962).

over conflict with the denomination regarding the educational interests of the college.

In 1912, Howard P. Whidden was hired as McDiarmid's successor.¹² Whidden accepted the position with assurances that "the Arts department would be continued."¹³ Such a statement give hint that Whidden's priorities from the outset were more than likely not with the theological department. The years leading up to World War I were difficult ones for the college with preoccupations upon meeting its financial obligations. With the onset of the War, the energies of many at Brandon College, as with many Baptists and others across the continent were focused on helping in any way they could with the war effort. Over 300 of Brandon College's students went to serve overseas, as did many others from universities across the country. Many returned to their studies following the end of the War, increasing enrollment to a peak of 418 students for the 1919-1920 academic year.¹⁴

¹²Whidden was a native of Antigonish, Nova Scotia and a graduate of Acadia and McMaster Universities and of the University of Chicago. He pastored churches in Morden, Manitoba and Galt, Ontario before going to Brandon College in 1900 as professor of Biblical literature and English. In 1903 he left Brandon to pastor at First Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio. Ellis, 73.

¹³Quoted in Stone and Garnett, 79; Ellis, 73.

¹⁴Brandon College students served with the 196th Battalion, Western Universities. Many women at Brandon College formed patriotic societies to hold bazaars to send supplies overseas. Stone and Garnett, 84-85, 90, 93.

Following the end of the War, Brandon College, like its sister institution McMaster University in the East, became the centre of theological controversy and debate. What appeared to be sudden outcry against liberalism and modernism in reality had been seething in the years leading up to the War. At McMaster University, intimations of controversy first appeared in 1904 when the university senate appointed I.G. Matthews, a McMaster graduate, to replace Calvin Goodspeed following his retirement from the chair of systematic theology. Matthews was accused by Elmore Harris, a graduate of Toronto Baptist College and prominent pastor of Walmer Road Baptist Church in Toronto, of lacking spirituality.¹⁵ Concerns regarding Matthews' orthodoxy were eventually brought by Harris before the university senate at their May 1909 meeting. In writing, Harris stated that:

the views of Professor Matthews are ... purely destructive of the historicity, truthfulness and integrity of the Word of God. It will be found that they are wholly occupied with discrepancies and contradictions in the OT which have no real existence apart from the rationalistic method of dealing with the Word of God.¹⁶

¹⁵Charles M. Johnston, McMaster University Volume 1/The Toronto Years (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 90.

¹⁶Quoted in W. Gordon Carder, "Controversy in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1908-1928," Foundations 16 (1977): 356.

Harris' charges were based upon observations of Matthews' course in "Old Testament Introduction" between October 3 and November 27, 1907. A committee was established to look into Harris' charges against Matthews but in its report to the university senate in May 1909, found that the charges of unorthodoxy against Matthews could not be proven, and that Matthews "held firmly to [the] inspiration and supernatural character of the Old and New Testaments." To remove Matthews from the "Chair of Old Testament would be an injustice to him, a grief to his colleagues and an injury to the University."¹⁷ In the eyes of Harris and other ardent fundamentalists, justified or not, the action of retaining Matthews gave the appearance that McMaster was condoning modernism within its ranks.¹⁸

Eastern Canadian Baptists were also caught up in a post-War squabble at this time regarding the editorial policy of the Canadian Baptist. In an October 1919 issue, an anonymous editorial entitled "The Inspiration and Authority of the Scripture," written by a guest editor, attributed the continuance in Canada of the conflict over the authority of Scriptures to the fact that "some crude theological views still prevail."¹⁹ The editorial offended many, including the fundamentalist pastor of Toronto's

¹⁷Quoted in Carder, 355-356.

¹⁸Johnston, 105-107.

¹⁹Quoted in Johnston, 156.

Jarvis Street Baptist Church, T.T. Shields. Shields felt that the article degraded the beliefs held by himself and many others, and he made his intentions known that he planned to have the article brought before the next BCOQ Convention meeting.²⁰

Shields' outspoken and militant opposition to the Canadian Baptist article was characteristic of his fight against modernism throughout his life. Shields, born in Bristol, England in 1873, migrated with his family to Canada in 1888 where his father assumed the pastorate of a Baptist church in Plattsville, Ontario near Woodstock. Without any formal college or seminary training, Shields began preaching at the age of twenty-one, holding several pastorates in Ontario before arriving at Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto in 1910. Throughout his lifetime, Shields greatly admired English preacher Charles Spurgeon and often coveted the prestigious pastorate at Spurgeon's Tabernacle in London, England.²¹

Shields, remained throughout his career, staunchly loyal to the Baptist church, even despite his many inter-denominational involvements. Shields was also a man of great influence, both positive and negative. In addition to

²⁰Johnston, 156.

²¹C. Allyn Russell, "Thomas Todhunter Shields, Canadian Fundamentalist," Ontario History LXX, No. 4 (December, 1978), 264; Leslie K. Tarr, Shields of Canada - T.T. Shields (1873-1955) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), 11-14, 18-21, 33-41.

his lengthy career at Jarvis Street Baptist Church, from 1910-1955, Shields also, among other things, served as president of the Baptist Bible Union for seven years, edited his own newspapers, the Gospel Witness, sat on the Board of Governors of McMaster University, established the Toronto Baptist Seminary and served as the chairman of the Board of Governors of Des Moines University in Iowa. Shields however, was particularly known for being strong-willed, dogmatic, independent and single-minded in his denunciation of modernism. This controversial spirit characterized his theological battles with McMaster University and the BCOQ, the climax of which was the forming of his own denomination in 1927 after being voted out of the union. Although Shields was not the cause of the denominational struggles, he certainly could be viewed, given his character, as a lightning rod.²²

It was within this larger context that questions regarding the orthodoxy of Brandon College and its faculty first surfaced in April of 1919. A letter from Thomas Underwood of the Alberta Convention of the Baptist Union of Western Canada to Howard Whidden, then college president and Member of Parliament for Brandon in the Borden Union Government, requested that Whidden issue a statement regarding the theological position of the college and its faculty. Underwood felt a statement was necessary in order

²²Ibid., 263-265, 269, 272, 277-278.

to "counter-act considerable talk and gossip that has been going on all through the Province, in reference to the Doctrine taught at the College."²³ He did not elaborate, however, on the source of the concern over the doctrines of the college, although part of it may have arisen from a few members at the Crescent Heights Baptist Church in Calgary, a church that would later voice concerns regarding the teaching at Brandon College. Not much is known about Crescent Heights or its members other than that it was an urban church located in a middle-class area in north Calgary. Underwood also made it clear to Whidden the importance of the Board of the Alberta Convention receiving such a statement before they could begin raising financial support for the college.²⁴

A few days later, Whidden also received a letter from George Hilton a member of the First Baptist Church in Calgary. In his letter, Hilton stressed the importance of Underwood's request to consider making a statement to the Board of the Alberta Convention that none of his staff denied the Deity of Christ privately or in the classroom. Allegations had been made by H.L. Kempton, a member of the Board of Crescent Heights Baptist Church in Calgary, that H.L. MacNeill, a professor at Brandon College, denied the

²³Thomas Underwood, Letter to Howard Whidden, 5 April 1919, Brandon College Administrative Records (hereafter cited as BCAR) 1919, BUA, box 1, file 1.

²⁴Ibid.

Divinity of Christ and passed this belief on to his students. Hilton, like Underwood, warned Whidden that lack of a clear statement regarding the theological position of the college and its faculty could mean the withdrawal of Alberta's financial support for Brandon College.²⁵

Concerns from Alberta about the orthodoxy of Brandon College and its teachers continued to surface in 1919. In July, Whidden received a letter from L.S. Haynes on behalf of the Board of Crescent Heights Baptist Church in Calgary. The letter requested that Whidden submit a statement to the board regarding his position on statements allegedly made by H.L. MacNeill at the June 1919 meeting of the Alberta Convention in Edmonton.²⁶ According to the board, MacNeill had stated that he did not believe in the Virgin Birth nor consider it essential to the doctrine of the Incarnation. The board further charged that MacNeill denied Christ's Bodily Resurrection, the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ, the theory of verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and the Bible as the absolute authority for Christians.²⁷ The charges, in essence, accused MacNeill of not holding to the five fundamentals of the faith. The Crescent Heights

²⁵George Hilton, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 8 April 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 1.

²⁶L.S. Haynes, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 23 July 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 1.

²⁷Ibid.

Board specifically charged MacNeill to have stated the following:

- I. I believe in the Incarnation, but the Virgin Birth is not essential to that theory.
- II. I believe that Jesus is an existant, living Person but not in the physical bodily resurrection. The disciples thought they saw a body of flesh and bones, but were mistaken.
- III. I do not believe in the Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement of Christ.
- IV. I do not believe in the Verbal Theory of the Inspiration of the Scriptures as being the very Word of God, and the only authority of the Christian in faith and practice.
- V. As a result of the previous statement, the fact that the Disciples could be mistaken in the matter of the Second Coming of Christ, in no way interferes with the theory of the Progressive Revelation of the Bible.
- VI. There are errors and mistakes connected with every age in the revelation of the Word of God.²⁸

Who recorded these statements or the accuracy of their content is unknown. If MacNeill in fact actually made these statements, he would have been denying what conservatives considered the very essentials of the Christian faith and thus be considered a heretic.

Justified or not, however, Haynes insisted that Whidden, as college president, make clear whether he endorsed MacNeill's alleged position. Haynes further argued that an unequivocal public statement from Whidden would prevent any withholding of the church's financial support

²⁸Ibid.

for the college. According to Haynes, this was the "inevitable issue we will have to face unless these matters are cleared up beyond all doubt immediately."²⁹ Carl Lager also advised Whidden that the Alberta Convention had reportedly withdrawn its support of Brandon College following the 1919 convention meeting in Edmonton because of MacNeill's alleged denial of the Divinity of Christ.³⁰

Whidden's response to Haynes was one of disbelief. He felt that MacNeill must have been misunderstood or his statements misinterpreted. He assured Haynes, however, that he would immediately give MacNeill a copy of the accusations and personally ask him about the contents of his address given at the convention meeting in Edmonton.³¹

Whidden, however, failed to appease the Board of Crescent Heights Baptist Church. In September 1919, the board sent yet another request to Whidden for a clear statement of his personal religious views as well as the position of the college and the teaching staff on the Divinity of Christ and the authority and authenticity of the Scriptures. The board felt that "these matters are the very thing that is dividing Church Life to-day," and once again,

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰C. H. Lager, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 11 August 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 1.

³¹H.P. Whidden, Letter to L.S. Haynes, 7 August 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 1.

threatened to discontinue financial support for the college unless this issue was resolved.³²

Whidden continued to insist that MacNeill must have been misunderstood by those at the convention. As proof, he included a copy of the statements MacNeill believed he made at the June 1919 meeting.³³ On the first point regarding the Virgin Birth, MacNeill informed Whidden that at no time had he ever denied the Virgin Birth though belief in that doctrine was not crucial to belief in the Incarnation. On the second point regarding the Resurrection, Whidden stated that MacNeill desired to say that "I believe in Jesus as a living active personality, but I am not convinced as to the nature of the risen body." On the third point, MacNeill clarified the statement saying "I believed in the atonement of Christ as cosmic, universal, fundamental, but am uncertain as to the theory of it." On the fourth point he said that the statement should read "I believe in the Inspiration of the Scriptures as the Word of God and the sufficient authority of the Christian in faith and practice, but do not accept the verbal theory of Inspiration." On the fifth point, MacNeill did not recall making a statement regarding the Disciples interpretation of the Second Coming, and on the sixth and final point, he stated that he believed

³²L.S. Haynes, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 22 September 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 2.

³³H.P. Whidden, Letter to L.S. Haynes, 8 October 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 2.

God to have "revealed Himself to men on their level as they were able to receive His Word in the midst of their times, traditions, customs and light." "The Revelation of God," MacNeill stated, "is progressive, culminating in Jesus Christ."³⁴ MacNeill's responses were cautious and reflected a more liberal evangelical position that held commitment to both modern and Biblical evangelical views.

However, the board saw no difference between the statements MacNeill was alleged to have made at the convention meeting and his qualifications given in Whidden's letter. Both were seen as an outright denial of fundamental Christian doctrines. They continued to insist that Whidden define his and the college's position on MacNeill's alleged denial of fundamental Christian beliefs.³⁵

Whidden continued for some time to refuse to answer Crescent Heights' request until, in his words, they could "distinguish between [their] own statement and those of Dr. MacNeill's." Only then was he willing to address their concern.³⁶ G. Fred McNally, of the Alberta Department of Education and a prominent Baptist, had been at the convention meeting in Edmonton and felt that MacNeill had clearly stated his views on many points to the satisfaction

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵L.S. Haynes, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 3 November 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 2.

³⁶H.P. Whidden, Letter to L.S. Haynes, 21 November 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 2.

of many at the convention, "with the exception of perhaps two or three persons who were representatives of Crescents Heights Church."³⁷ He advised Whidden to answer Crescent Heights' request by explaining that he was satisfied with the statements made by MacNeill. In McNally's view, the Crescent Heights Church delegation were known to cause controversy, and in his opinion, they likely would not be easily appeased or agree to a more moderate position.³⁸ Why Crescent Heights took this firm position, however, is unknown. McNally did not give any evidence to support his statements regarding Crescent Heights Baptist Church.

In late December 1919, Whidden finally answered the church's request for a comment on his position regarding MacNeill's remarks. Whidden stated that while he personally did not agree fully with MacNeill, he had no doubt that MacNeill believed in Substitutionary Atonement, the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, the Divinity of Christ and the Resurrection of Christ. Whidden believed that if anyone believed in "these essential truths," then he had no right to question that individual's faith or demand that they believe as he did. His understanding and faith was based only on his own intellectual reasoning of the facts and on his own "inner experience of the reality behind the fact."³⁹

³⁷G.F. McNally, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 8 December 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 2.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹H.P. Whidden, Letter to L.S. Haynes, 18 December 1919, BCAR 1919, BUA, box 1, file 2.

Whidden may have been alluding that he considered himself a liberal evangelical and thus would view Christianity with a different perspective than Brandon College's opponents.

Whidden's support for MacNeill was reiterated to the board:

I do not have to accept everything Dr. MacNeill or any other Christian brother gives as an explanation of the fact but I know I can accept Dr. MacNeill's Christian experience which is most vital and evangelical. His thinking, his preaching and his prayers center very much in Christ as Saviour and Lord. These, I take it, grow out of a vital experience of the Saving grace and power of the same divine Saviour that you and I both trust and whom we try to serve.⁴⁰

In Whidden's opinion, Christians did not have to hold exactly to the same views or attain them in the same manner as long as the end goal, that of serving Christ, was the same. This view would have been heretical to a generation of fundamentalist Christians who held that if you didn't believe certain doctrines, then you didn't believe at all. Whidden was suggesting to the Crescent Heights Board that, in essence, MacNeill's beliefs regarding the foundations of the Christian faith were no different from theirs.

Whidden later assured MacNeill that following a meeting with members from Crescent Heights Baptist Church, and from the Alberta and British Columbia Conventions, misunderstandings were clarified regarding the charges

⁴⁰Ibid.

against him. However, Whidden's efforts to resolve the controversy seemed to grow more out of his concern for the college as a whole than out of a desire to defend the reputation of a single scholar. He feared that the charges of modernist teaching brought against MacNeill and Brandon College would interfere with the more important task of "building the newer Brandon College."⁴¹ Whidden wanted to deal with these criticisms as quickly and quietly as possible to avoid any possible loss of financial support for the maintenance and expansion of the college.

The criticisms raised by Crescent Heights Baptist Church against MacNeill and Brandon College indicate that fundamentalism in Alberta was not strictly a rural phenomena as sociologist W.E. Mann posits. While Alberta in the 1920s, as elsewhere on the Prairies, was experiencing a proportional decline in the rural population and subsequent increase in the urban population, fundamentalist views did have a base of support in the urban areas as the protest from Crescent Heights shows, and was not solely imported into the cities through increased rural migration as Mann argues.⁴² In Mann's view, the fundamentalist-modernist

⁴¹H.P. Whidden, Letter to H.L. MacNeill, 19 March 1920, BCAR 1920, BUA, box 1, file 2.

⁴²In the Prairie Provinces in 1911, 858,699 lived in rural areas and 469,422 lived in urban areas while in 1926, 1,312,155 lived in rural areas and 755,238 lived in urban areas; in Alberta in 1911, 236,633 lived in rural areas and 137,662 lived in urban centres while in 1926, 373,751 lived in rural areas and 233,848 lived in urban centres. Across the Prairies, the percentage of those living in rural areas declined from 64.7 in 1911 to 63.5 in 1926 while the

controversy was particularly intense and bitter in rural areas and small-town communities in Alberta where fervent evangelical religious views dominated. Understandably, areas of deep-seated traditional religious values and commitment to the literal interpretation of the Bible were more likely to resist the views of modernism. As Mann explains, rural fundamentalists felt that modernists were "watering down orthodox doctrines of the Atonement, ... undermining the authority of morality and the Bible," and weakening the tenets of the Christian faith at a time when it could least be afforded.⁴³ Fundamentalists, urban and rural alike, across North America held this same negative view toward modernism. The view that modernism was weakening the Christian faith clearly was not limited to rural Albertans.⁴⁴

In his final analysis, Mann criticized the fundamentalist movement as a "reactionary and decentralizing

percentage of those living in urban areas increased from 35.3 in 1911 to 36.7 in 1926. Similarly in Alberta, the rural population dropped from 63.2 percent in 1911 to 61.5 in 1926 and increased in urban areas from 36.8 percent in 1911 to 38.5 percent in 1926. Census of Prairie Provinces, 1926, x, xi. William E. Mann, Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), 32. For further analysis of this Prairie rural/urban phenomena, see Paul Voisey, "The Urbanization of the Canadian Prairies, 1871-1916," The Prairie West - Historical Readings, eds. R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), 383-407.

⁴³Mann, 54, 55.

⁴⁴Historians such as George Marsden, Ernest Sandeen, Stewart Cole among others also put forward this view with regard to American fundamentalists.

influence in Alberta's community life."⁴⁵ The movement, he concluded,

constituted a reaction against the forces of urbanism, cultural maturity, and centralization both economic and religious, and a defence of past traditions and mores, of the rural against the urban and of the cultural independence of immigrant ethnic groups.⁴⁶

In Mann's view, this reactionary response to new religious ideas and "modern amusements" resulted from the movement's strong rural support. Fundamentalism's most significant influence Alberta, Mann posits, was its attempt, in a time of rapid social change, to "freeze certain traditional religious values and meanings within a thoroughly rural ideology and hence defend the province's slowly retreating rural society."⁴⁷ Mann unconvincingly argues that the fundamentalist movement was a reaction against the forces of urbanism and a battle of rural against urban, and downplays the strong fundamentalist support in urban areas. However, his more general conclusion remains solid: fundamentalism, in fact, did attempt to hold constant certain religious traditions and values against the tide of change. In many ways, such resistance to modern ideas could be said to characterize fundamentalism across North America.

⁴⁵Mann, 157.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

Fundamentalist criticism of MacNeill's theology was not limited to Alberta nor to a few outspoken critics at Crescent Heights Baptist Church in Calgary. In March 1920, the Baptist Ministerial Association of Greater Vancouver submitted four questions to MacNeill relating to his teaching at Brandon College. The association asked MacNeill if he believed and accepted the Virgin Birth; Christ's Bodily Resurrection as taught by Scripture; Christ's Death on the Cross as essential for Salvation; and man's accountability to God and to the teachings of Scripture, that is, the Bible as the final authority on one's life.

MacNeill's answers, submitted through the board of directors of Brandon College, were affirmative to all four questions. MacNeill stated on the first point that he did accept and teach the Scriptures' teaching on the Virgin Birth and firmly and positively believed in and taught the Incarnation of God in Christ, although he found difficulty in thinking it through to his own mind's satisfaction. On the second point, he affirmed that he also believed in and taught the Scriptural account of Christ's Resurrection and that Christ was living and triumphant over death and thus believed in the Resurrection. However, he again had difficulty in satisfactorily conceptualizing the form of Christ's Resurrection body because while the Gospels emphasized the physical body, Paul's account in I Corinthians emphasized the spiritual body. On the third point, he agreed with the doctrine that Christ's Death on

the Cross was necessary for Salvation. And on the fourth and final point, MacNeill affirmed that he believed that God held man accountable for obedience to the teachings of the Bible when properly interpreted, and that the Bible was the final and binding authority for the Christian. In conclusion, MacNeill pointed out that he should not be placed in the same category, and as such refused to associate with, "those destructive critics who either deliberately or through religious indifference seek to undermine the fundamentals of Christianity."⁴⁸ MacNeill's statements were not a blasphemy against the fundamentals of Christianity but in essence an honest acknowledgement of what he believed and of what he was further seeking to understand.

The association, satisfied with MacNeill's answers, passed a resolution in March 1921, declaring their support for MacNeill and Brandon College and promising "to do what we can to restore the full confidence of our people in our work at Brandon, and to lead them to its hearty and generous support."⁴⁹

Before submitting his responses to the association, MacNeill explained to Whidden that he would no longer

⁴⁸Questions Submitted to Professor MacNeill by the Baptist Ministerial Association of Greater Vancouver, March 1920, Hillhurst Baptist Church, Calgary, Correspondence and Records, 1910-1968, Glenbow-Alberta Institute, box 1, file 4.

⁴⁹Ibid.

respond to such requests unless they came directly from the board of directors of the college or from the denomination. He argued that these "isolated attacks" against himself and the college would end if the denomination would deal with them in a "wise constructive way."⁵⁰ What MacNeill meant exactly by this statement is unknown, however one might infer that he meant for the denomination to respond firmly and directly to the attacks regarding the Christian integrity of the college and its faculty.

In this letter to Whidden, MacNeill also candidly talked about his views regarding verbal inspiration and the infallibility of Scripture:

To me the fact is plain that sound spiritual Christianity is not tied up to the literal, historical and scientific Infallibility of the Bible and I feel that it is highly desirable that people should see that especially young people.⁵¹

Shortly afterwards, MacNeill elaborated on his view of Scriptural infallibility:

The root of the whole trouble lies in the idea and conviction held by many sincere Christians that sound evangelical Christianity requires the literal, historical and scientific Infallibility of the Bible. Such a view is an anachronism today. The plain facts are dead against it. I

⁵⁰H.L. MacNeill, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 23 April 1920, BCAR 1920, BUA, box 1, file 2.

⁵¹Ibid.

feel that it is highly desirable for all and especially for young people to come to see that Inspiration does not mean Infallibility, that the facts do not support Biblical Infallibility and that sound evangelical Christianity does not require it.⁵²

MacNeill's views on the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture were reflective of the views of Biblical criticism influencing North American theology since the nineteenth century. MacNeill likely would have been familiar with this genre of Biblical criticism and exposed to such thinking at the University of Chicago Divinity School where he completed Ph.D. studies in 1910. The University of Chicago Divinity School, founded in the early 1890s by the Northern Baptist Convention, was well known for its liberal theological views, and included on its faculty such prominent 'modernists' as Shailer Mathews, Gerald Birney Smith and Shirley Jackson Case. Mathews in particular was known for outlining a comprehensive definition of the modernist position in his book entitled The Faith of Modernism. In it he characterized fundamentalists as theologically dogmatic and outlined the real meaning of modernism as, among others things, the use of science and history to understand and apply evangelical Christianity to the needs of everyday society. In short,

⁵²H.L. MacNeill, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 6 May 1920, BCAR 1920, BUA, box 1, file 2.

modernists, he claimed, were evangelical Christians who used modern methods to meet modern needs.⁵³

Although MacNeill was exposed to the liberal philosophy of the University of Chicago, one cannot assume that he automatically fits into the modernist school of thought. MacNeill's correspondence to Whidden does not give the impression that he was out to destroy the foundations of the Christian faith, but rather, that he was concerned with maintaining focus on the essentials of a sound evangelical faith. MacNeill may have more likely fallen into the liberal evangelical camp, also given his views as outlined earlier on the Virgin Birth, Christ's Death and Resurrection and the authority and inspiration of the Bible. While on one hand, liberal evangelicals firmly believed in the foundational principles of Christianity and the Bible, particularly that Christ is the Son of God and the key to Salvation, on the other hand they also held a modern outlook on the interpretation of Scripture, in the hope of making the Gospel relevant to their contemporary society. Liberal evangelicals, like fundamentalists, believed in the inspiration of the Scriptures, but like modernists, they did not believe that such inspiration was given to the writers

⁵³Quoted in Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., Controversy in the Twenties - Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Evolution (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 16-17, 55-60; Marsden, 105.

of the books of the Bible word for word and therefore inerrant and infallible.⁵⁴

MacNeill made several suggestions to Whidden on how to handle the attacks against Brandon College. They included the college taking a more active role in evangelism by sending out an evangelistic team to the surrounding communities; encouraging the faculty to be more actively involved in the local church and the denomination; placing a stronger emphasis within the college on its religious and moral fibre. MacNeill's objective was to convey to opponents that the college's mandate was to maintain a "sound evangelical Christianity based on spiritual fundamentals," and thereby no different in principle from their objectives.⁵⁵ MacNeill's advice indicated a genuine concern that the college focus on the fundamentals of evangelical Christianity. This concern could be viewed as striving for the same goals as sought by the fundamentalists. Though MacNeill's theological views cannot be judged solely on the basis of one letter, his suggestions indicate that many were too quick to label him a modernist. His only crime may have been that his challenges were to

⁵⁴William R. Hutchison, The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 2; Rawlyk, 39; Clark H. Pinnock, "The Modernist Impulse at McMaster University, 1887-1927," Baptists in Canada - Search for Identity Amidst Diversity, ed. Jarold K. Zeman (Burlington, ON: G.R. Welch Company, Limited, 1980), 195.

⁵⁵H.L. MacNeill, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 6 May 1920, BCAR 1920, BUA, box 1, file 2.

look at Scripture in a new light, and thus misunderstood by others as heretical.

MacNeill was not the only professor from Brandon College to face criticism for his views on the authority of Scripture. Carl Lager, professor of Swedish, Hebrew and Latin, also confronted such charges. The Scandinavian Mission Covenant of Canada was offended by the opinions of Carl Lager when his beliefs on the authority of the Bible were questioned in a local Scandinavian paper, Canada Posten. In a letter to Whidden on the issue, A.J. Iiljengren, editor of Canada Posten and Secretary of the Scandinavian Mission Covenant, pointed out that Lager became enraged when his arguments were challenged and he made critical remarks against those who challenged him in another paper, Svenska Canada Tidningen. Iiljengren was shocked by Professor Lager's actions and threatened to withdraw support from the college's Swedish department, as well as ban Lager from speaking at Scandinavian churches in western Canada.⁵⁶ However, at no time in the correspondence was it outlined what Lager's opinions were on the authority of Scripture or on what issues he was challenged. The contention seemed to mainly centre around Lager's reaction to being challenged.

Charges of modernist teaching at Brandon College also came from BUWC local church members. In September 1921, a Baptist minister from Midale, Saskatchewan, wrote to Whidden

⁵⁶Rev. A.J. Iiljengren, Letter to Dr. H.P. Whidden, 24 November 1920, BCAR 1920, BUA, box 1, file 1.

inquiring whether teachers at Brandon College were required to subscribe to a Confession of Faith before they were allowed to teach. His question arose out of concerns brought to him, presumably by his church constituents, regarding, "where the Theological Department of Brandon College stands as to their teaching on the Fundamentals."⁵⁷ Whidden assured the minister that each member of Brandon College's faculty believed in "the essential Baptist views of all generations."⁵⁸ However, he pointed out that no Baptist institution in Canada, nor in the Northern Baptist Convention of the United States required its professors to subscribe to a creed or statement of faith, though there was a general acceptance of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Rev. Ole Larson, Letter to Dr. H.P. Whidden, 5 September 1921, BCAR 1921, BUA, box 1, file 1.

⁵⁸H.P. Whidden, Letter to Rev. Ole Larson, 13 September 1921, BCAR 1921, BUA, box 1, file 1. Although Whidden did not specify what the "essential Baptist views of all generations" were, they likely referred to traditional Baptist beliefs in freedom creedal or confessional structures, commitment to Biblical Inspiration, recognition of the Bible as sole authority for Christian faith and practice and respect for freedom of individual interpretation of the Bible. Pinnock, 196; L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, Baptists and the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 16.

⁵⁹H.P. Whidden, Letter to Rev. Ole Larson, 13 September 1921, BCAR 1921, BUA, box 1, file 1. The New Hampshire Confession of Faith is a declaration of faith, first drafted in 1830 by the Baptist Convention of New Hampshire to express in general the theological views of Baptist churches in the Convention. Though Baptists do not abscribe to an authoratative creed, this confession of faith has generally been recognized, especially for new churches, as a guideline for belief though not binding. It essentially outlined that Baptists believed the Bible to be divinely inspired, to

The 1920s saw the fundamentalist movement experience a complete turnaround in its importance in society. Up until 1921, fundamentalism had yet to become a distinct movement. That year, however, fundamentalist premillennialists, conservative Baptists, Presbyterian traditionalists and militants of other denominations began to gain a sense of common purpose in their opposition to modernism. This emerging cohesiveness transformed what had simply been an amorphous and informal, though widespread, collection of discontented people who felt it was "their duty to contend for faith" into a distinct and organized movement.⁶⁰

Within this larger context of the transforming fundamentalist movement, Professors MacNeill and Lager continued to face criticisms regarding their beliefs and their teaching at Brandon Collège. In 1921, W. Arnold Bennett, a Vancouver minister and former Brandon College student, began accusing MacNeill and Lager for their views on Scripture which Bennett felt were not in keeping with orthodox Christian beliefs. In January 1922, he published the charges in a pamphlet entitled, "Facts Concerning Brandon College." The pamphlet which addressed the concerns of British Columbia Baptists, was distributed to Baptist

reveal the principles by which God will judge man and to be the true and only standard by which all human activity is measured. Bush and Nettles, 324, 326, 378.

⁶⁰Marsden, 169.

churches across Canada.⁶¹ It criticized the financial policies of the Baptist Union of Western Canada,⁶² as well as accusing Professors MacNeill and Lager of ascribing to modernist views.⁶³ More specifically, Bennett accused the college of unorthodox, anti-Biblical teaching that was, "decidedly injurious to the moral and spiritual welfare of the young people in attendance."⁶⁴ He also stated that the leaders of the denomination, and the president and faculty of Brandon College, were responsible for "sowing the seeds of rank and infidelity in the minds of the young, ... and plunging them into the abyss of mental and spiritual darkness."⁶⁵ According to Bennett, British Columbia Baptists were justifiably concerned about what was happening at Brandon College, thus the reason for the writing of the pamphlet.⁶⁶

⁶¹Margaret E. Thompson, The Baptist Story in Western Canada (Calgary: The Baptist Union of Western Canada), 155.

⁶²The writers of the pamphlets accused the union of favouring the Prairie Convention over British Columbia in financial support. They were particularly concerned that Baptists in British Columbia received no funding for their missionary and evangelistic work among non-English speaking groups whereas, in their view, the Prairie provinces did. Harris, 75, 79.

⁶³Ibid., 79. Although Lager was included in the charges made, most of the attention focused on MacNeill.

⁶⁴W. Arnold Bennett, "Facts Concerning Brandon College: Un-Orthodox and Faith-Wrecking Teaching," 28 January 1922, Canadian Baptist Archives, 1.

⁶⁵Ibid., 2.

⁶⁶Ibid.

The pamphlet also included statements from three ministers, including Bennett himself, who were former students at the college. Each detailed their own experiences, or those they were aware of, while students at Brandon College regarding MacNeill's teaching. In his account, Bennett outlined how on one occasion he and some other students, including John Linton and James Rowell, the other contributors to the pamphlet, made an appointment with the college's president, H.P. Whidden, regarding MacNeill's teaching of the Bible on its integrity and inspiration. Bennett noted that he and the other students were assured by Whidden that he would interview MacNeill about their concerns. However, Bennett claimed that nothing was ever heard on the matter again. Bennett also noted that on another occasion, after he had delivered an address on the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible to a group of men and women from the Orange Order, MacNeill, who had been in the audience at the time, later challenged him on his address, stating that such a position was no longer tenable given modern knowledge and research. Bennett also alleged that Carl H. Lager, professor of Hebrew and Latin at Brandon College, used a text-book in his class, entitled The Hebrew Prophets, which allegedly discredited the Old Testament. This book allegedly set out that the last twenty-seven chapters of the Book of Isaiah were written by

a different person and that by some confusion, someone had joined these two distinct books together into one.⁶⁷

The other contributors to the pamphlet, J.B. Rowell of Kamloops Baptist Church and John Linton of Point St. Charles Baptist Church in Montreal, also gave accounts of situations they were aware of, regarding MacNeill's teaching, while students at Brandon College. Rowell gave accounts of students from the college who, once they had studied under MacNeill, no longer believed in the validity and inspiration of the Scriptures. These students, Rowell pointed out, attributed their beliefs to the teaching and influence of MacNeill and Brandon College. Linton also recounted incidents of MacNeill teaching students not to believe in the Bible, including one incident in which MacNeill told students in a 1916 Arts class that one should not believe the sayings of Jesus literally because He did not mean or in some cases actually say what is attributed to Him. Linton alleged MacNeill to have declared that Christ did not know that He was dying for the world for He was only a man and a Jew and therefore bound by human limitations and Jewish prejudices. Nor did He tell his disciples to preach the Gospel into all the world.⁶⁸

The pamphlet's purpose was to show that MacNeill was responsible for leading his students to distrust the

⁶⁷Ibid., 2-5.

⁶⁸Ibid., 6-9.

authority and authenticity of the Scriptures and the foundations of Christianity. The pamphlet's authors recounted that MacNeill told his students that Jesus was only a man and because of that, the spiritual insight and prophecy ascribed to him was unfounded. They allegedly quoted MacNeill as saying that the Old Testament stories had no prophetic value. They also claimed they had evidence to show that MacNeill had not changed in his views since 1916. Bennett blamed modernist teaching at Brandon College on the "Menace of German Theology ... in our own midst."⁶⁹ This fear of German influences was in keeping with the same fears held by many fundamentalists across North America that German militarism was linked to modernism, the theory of evolution and the development of higher criticism by German scholars. Bennett thus advised British Columbia Baptists to

withhold all financial support until the Professors at Brandon are soundly converted to God, and His Word, or else removed, and Brandon is re-staffed with men of God who know the Truth, both Living and Written. Then and then only may Brandon issue a clean Bill of Health.⁷⁰

Bennett's scathing denunciation of MacNeill and Brandon College seriously jeopardized the college's reputation across the country. W.J. Sparks, field secretary for Brandon College, found, in his travels across the Prairies,

⁶⁹Ibid., 9, 12, 14.

⁷⁰Ibid., 14.

that people were disillusioned with the college because of the pamphlet and therefore less willing to financially support the college. Sparks, writing to Whidden from Saskatchewan on the subject, noted an example of one family in Saskatchewan who refused to contribute because they felt that, "since Brandon did not deny the charge we came to the conclusion that it must be true."⁷¹ On another occasion, Sparks noted that people refused to donate because of the "Bad Influences" at Brandon College.⁷² He also wrote that he often had to spend many hours convincing people that Bennett's accusations were false before he could get a pledged subscription. Even those, he said, who gave because of their loyalty to the college, did so with reservation.⁷³ Sparks feared that the widespread damage of Bennett's pamphlet would decrease not only donations to the college, but also, and more importantly, Baptist student enrollment.⁷⁴ He advised Whidden to counter Bennett with a pamphlet, to be distributed across the Prairies, outlining the strong position of the college and its faculty and including endorsements from prominent Baptists of the college's strong Christian character.⁷⁵

⁷¹Walter J. Sparks, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 25 March 1922, (I), BCAR 1922, BUA, box 2, files 6-8.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Walter J. Sparks, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 25 March 1922, (II), BCAR 1922, BUA, box 2, files 6-8.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Walter J. Sparks, Letter to H.P. Whidden, (I).

The fallout from Bennett's pamphlet was felt as far away as Central Canada. Reacting to the charges against MacNeill in the pamphlet, Annette Street Baptist Church in Toronto, queried Whidden on the validity of the accusations, and asked what action had been taken to rectify the situation.⁷⁶ Likewise, the Montreal Baptist Ministers Association quickly wrote to investigate the criticism against MacNeill, particularly those made by Montreal minister John Linton.⁷⁷ The most important consequence of Bennett's pamphlet, however, was the appointment by the BUWC of a commission to investigate the charges laid against MacNeill and Lager, and against Brandon College. As the next chapters will show, however, the lengthy commission inquiry did not bring an end to Brandon College's theological troubles.

⁷⁶Harry E. Coe, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 18 December 1922, BCAR 1922, BUA, box 1, file 1.

⁷⁷M.F. McCutcheon, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 3 April 1922, BCAR 1922, BUA, box 1, file 6.

CHAPTER 3

The Brandon College Commission

The Brandon College Commission, prompted by the charges of modernism outlined in the W. Arnold Bennett pamphlet, investigated the college and Harris MacNeill for more than a year. Comprised of prominent ministers and church leaders from western Canada, the commission held meetings and conducted in-depth interviews with Brandon Arts and Theology graduates, officials from other Baptist theology schools and independent critics of Brandon College. They found the college and its controversial professor innocent of promoting modernism, as charged by Bennett in the first and a later pamphlet. The commission did, however, recommend some changes to the college's theological department. College officials, however, only feebly attempted to carry out the commission's recommendations.

In January 1922, the Baptist Union of Western Canada (BUWC) held its annual meeting in Vancouver. At that meeting, the executive board of the union passed a resolution condemning the Bennett pamphlet's attack on the financial policies of the union and the theological teaching at Brandon College. The board dismissed the pamphlet as "despicable, unchristian and immoral ... propaganda." The

union concluded that as such the pamphlet was a "direct contradiction of fundamental Baptist principles and that those using them have no rightful place in any Baptist church."¹

The board further recommended that a special commission be formed to investigate the charges of modernism and examine the structure of the theology program at Brandon College. The board wanted this commission to make a "thorough review of the curriculum and methods of instruction in its theological department and to consider and recommend ways and means of enabling the college to attain an increasingly influential place in the work of the Baptist Churches in Western Canada."² Following the board's suggestion, the union appointed eleven ministers and laypersons from various Baptist churches across western Canada to a commission, soon known as the Brandon College Commission.³

¹C.C. McLaurin, Pioneering in Western Canada - A Story of the Baptists (Calgary: Published by the Author, 1939), 200.

²"The Report of the Brandon College Commission," Yearbook, Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1922, 55.

³The commission comprised of William C. Bentall of Vancouver, H.H. Bingham of Calgary, W.G. Carpenter of Edmonton, A.S. Lewis of Regina, G.R. Maguire of Vancouver, W.E. Matthews of Winnipeg, D.R. Sharpe of Regina, E.J. Tarr of Winnipeg, W.C. Smalley of Winnipeg, L.N. Wolverton of Nelson, B.C. and F.W. Patterson of Winnipeg. A.S. Lewis was later replaced by Archibald Ward of Saskatoon, and William Bentall was replaced for the last session by A.F. Baker of Vancouver. Ibid.

In March 1922, shortly after the commission's appointment, Bennett published a second pamphlet entitled "Jesuit Methods Used by Baptist Union of Western Canada." In this pamphlet Bennett accused the leaders of the college and the union of pursuing a "hushing up" policy by ignoring the charges outlined in his first pamphlet.⁴ He also adamantly denounced the union's condemnation of his first pamphlet. In Bennett's opinion, the union's report confirmed his suspicion that college and union officials were trying to cover up the "facts" about Brandon College and the influence of modernism there. Bennett disputed that the charges against MacNeill and Brandon College were not unfounded but were based upon the experiences of former students of MacNeill who testified to the doubt and scepticism he allegedly espoused toward the Scriptures. Bennett argued that if these statements were in fact unfounded, MacNeill and Whidden should have openly refuted them to "clear forever these charges, and tell the Baptist people who are supplying them with funds the whole truth."⁵ Bennett added that the union blatantly failed to acknowledge that the pamphlet was not anonymous but was in fact signed and published by Bennett himself, and that those who contributed to the pamphlet did so openly.⁶

⁴W. Arnold Bennett, "Jesuit Methods Used By Baptist Union of Western Canada," March 1922, Canadian Baptist Archives, 2.

⁵Ibid., 2-3.

⁶Ibid.

Bennett did not confine his criticisms to the college but expanded them to the whole of the BUWC. The union, Bennett charged, wielded power over the western conventions, hindered and manipulated "the work of Christ and the Baptist cause in Western Canada," and condoned extreme modernism in its denominational hierarchy. In the meantime, Bennett accused, the average Baptist church member in western Canada was kept in the dark, unaware of what was taking place within the church.⁷

Amidst this criticism, however, Bennett was encouraged by the appointment of the Brandon College Commission. He hoped that this commission would "discharge its duty to the whole Baptist Constituency of Canada by making [a] thorough and candid investigation."⁸ Bennett warned that modernism had been allowed to take hold in Baptist colleges and that "believers have been far too lenient towards this enemy of God and His Truth, and not aggressive enough in attacking it"⁹

Bennett's pamphlet and campaign against Brandon College was part of the growing fundamentalist movement. In 1922, the movement gave the overwhelming appearance of advancing, and in fact, gaining victory over the modernists. Fundamentalists were entering full force into the conflict,

⁷Ibid., 6-7.

⁸Ibid., 6.

⁹Ibid.

and into intense campaigns with their opponents. In the spring of 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick gave his most famous sermon entitled, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" In it he pointed out that fundamentalists were intolerant conservatives who tried to force those with contrary views out of the churches. To counteract this dangerous trend, Fosdick urged liberals and traditionalists alike to remain tolerant. In response to Fosdick's criticism, fundamentalist minister, Clarence E. Macartney, in a sermon entitled, "Shall Unbelief Win?", denounced the liberal pastor's support for natural historical processes and alternatives to fundamentalism as destructive to traditional Christianity. Therefore, he believed, conservatives must be prepared to defend the faith.¹⁰

In the months following the appointment of the commission, amidst this intense battle between fundamentalists and modernists, Baptists anxiously awaited the outcome of the Brandon College investigation and its possible effects on the college. President Whidden, however, remained optimistic about the inquiry and expected it to be beneficial for the college, particularly for the upcoming fund-raising campaign. He regarded the criticisms

¹⁰George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture - The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925 (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 171-173.

against the college as "miserable propaganda ... being pushed by ... misguided people in B.C."¹¹

In a letter to W.J. Sparks, field secretary for Brandon College, Whidden acknowledged Sparks' concern that Bennett's pamphlet was casting a negative impression of the college, but replied that the college could do nothing until the commission had retrieved all the evidence it needed and made its final report. Whidden strongly believed that Bennett's statements were libelous and would not influence the commission's decision. In his view, what Bennett needed was "a good spanking more than anything else."¹² Moreover, he also believed that Bennett's accusations were leveled by those in British Columbia who had "never taken an Arts or Theological course."¹³ Though condescending, Whidden's comments reveal that he did not believe the charges were serious enough to significantly affect the outcome of the inquiry.

Whidden's optimism was helped by the encouraging support received from advocates of Brandon College. I.B. Fulton, a Vancouver accountant and member of Bennett's church, shared Whidden's optimism. However, Fulton warned

¹¹Howard P. Whidden, Letter to Peter Cameron, 30 March 1922, Brandon College Administration Records (hereafter cited as BCAR) 1922, Brandon University Archives (hereafter cited as BUA), box 1, file 6.

¹²Howard P. Whidden, Letter to W.J. Sparks, 28 March 1922, BCAR 1922, BUA, box 2, files 6-8.

¹³Howard P. Whidden, Letter to Rev. M.F. McCutcheon, 11 April 1922, BCAR 1922, BUA, box 1, file 6.

Whidden that the inquiry would not satisfy all of the agitators in British Columbia.¹⁴ Fulton most likely knew the temperament of those British Columbia critics and realized that they would not be easily satisfied until MacNeill was dismissed from the Brandon College faculty.

Whidden's optimism was boosted still further when, at the October 1922 meeting of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ), delegates denied the allegations made by T.T. Shields against Frank Sanderson, a member of the McMaster University Board of Governors. Like Bennett, Shields had accused Sanderson of questioning the validity of the Scriptures. The Convention dismissed the charges and called upon churches within the BCOQ to "continue their full moral support of [McMaster] University."¹⁵ The board of governors of McMaster had hoped that the Brandon College Commission would have made its final report before the October meeting of the BCOQ so that delegates would have seen how Brandon College successfully met charges of modernism, assuming that the report cleared the college. Nevertheless, the delegates of the BCOQ proved capable of dismissing the allegations of modernism made by T.T. Shields.¹⁶

¹⁴I.B. Fulton, Letter to Dr. H.P. Whidden, 23 May 1922, BCAR 1922, BUA, box 1, file 5.

¹⁵Charles M. Johnston, McMaster University Vol. 1/The Toronto Years (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 171-172.

¹⁶Ibid., 171.

To Whidden, however, the BCOQ's decision regarding McMaster University provided an important precedent for the West. He confidently embraced it as a "victory won for true Baptist principles."¹⁷ He was further convinced that "now, it will be possible for the great majority of our people who are middle-of-the-road Baptist to go on with their work".¹⁸ Whidden was naively convinced that the decision made at the BCOQ Convention meeting removed any doubt in the minds of many Baptists in the East about McMaster University. He hoped that this decision would have the same influence upon Baptists in the West with regard to Brandon College.

Although it is difficult to assess the mood of all local Alberta Baptist churches at this time, there is some evidence to indicate that some Alberta Baptists were voicing quiet yet significant fears on the local level regarding the threat of modernism infiltrating into their local churches and into their way of life. Local Baptist churches in Alberta were not torn apart by the controversy to the same extent as churches in Ontario and British Columbia, although Alberta was by no means an island of religious tranquility. General Baptist church histories downplay the fundamentalist reaction to modernism in Prairie Baptist churches, however, according to one church historian, modernists and

¹⁷H.P. Whidden, Letter to D.E. Thomson, 30 October 1922, BCAR 1922, BUA, box 1, file 2.

¹⁸Ibid.

fundamentalists existed with every Prairie church.¹⁹

Despite the differences that emerged during this debate, the Prairie conventions of the BUWC, like the Maritime Baptists, were able to escape a split. Unlike Ontario or British Columbia, fundamentalist and anti-Brandon College forces never became strong or discontented enough in the Prairie conventions to seek separation.²⁰

¹⁹Margaret E. Thompson, The Baptist Story in Western Canada (Calgary: The Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1974), 158.

²⁰Although in Alberta, William Aberhart and some members of his church, Westbourne Baptist Church, withdrew from the Alberta Convention of the BUWC around 1927, the reasons for the separation, for those who remained within the convention, were more likely connected to conflict with Aberhart's personality rather than conflict over fundamentalist principles. See David R. Elliott and Iris Miller, Bible Bill: A Biography of William Aberhart (Edmonton: Reidmore Books, 1987), 30-33, 75-95. George Rawlyk, in his study on the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and the Maritime Baptists, attributes the lack of division in the Maritime Baptist convention to the relative lack of Americanization of Maritime culture and resistance to fundamentalist and modernist influences from the United States and other outside influences; the fundamental difference in the Baptist culture of the Maritimes that stressed a more personal experience rather than doctrinal ideology; and finally the lack of an influential and controversial Baptist leader from within the Maritimes comparable to that of T.T. Shields. The Prairie conventions could, in some respects, be likened to the Maritime Baptists' experience. Prairie Baptists also tended to place more emphasis upon personal and experiential, rather than doctrinal religion, as evidenced in W.E. Mann's example of the structure of evangelical worship services, which emphasized liveliness and a sense of urgency for personal salvation. Prairie Baptists also lacked a controversial leader from within the region, which similarly may account for their escape of a split. See W.E. Mann, *Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), G.A. Rawlyk, "Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists in the 1920s and 1930s," Acadiensis XVIII, no. 1 (Autumn, 1987): 3-33, and G.A. Rawlyk, "In Search of T.T. Shields' Impact on the Maritime Baptists in the 1920s and 1930s," Champions of the Truth:

No consistent pattern emerges as to when conflict between the two sides erupted within local Baptist churches in Alberta, though this inconsistency does not negate the importance or existence of both positions. For example, although details are unclear, it appears as though theological troubles were brewing in the local Baptist church in Medicine Hat in 1922. The exact nature of the conflict is unknown, but intermittent correspondence suggests that a difference of opinion occurred over fundamental beliefs. This resulted in a split within the First Baptist Church of Medicine Hat. The disaffected members formed a separate church under the name of the Fellowship Baptist Church. One minister from the First Baptist Church it appears, was forced to resign, perhaps over allegedly subscribing to modernist beliefs.²¹

While these conflicts disrupted local church life, the Brandon College Commission carried on its investigation into the allegations of modernism made against the college. The first of three meetings was held in Vancouver in January 1922, immediately following the union meetings. At this opening meeting, the commission agreed to divide their task into four areas: 1) examination of the curriculum structure of all Baptist theology schools in North America, to

Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists, ed. G.A. Rawlyk (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 76-102.

²¹T.U. Underwood, Letter to W.H. Ellis, 2 June 1922, Thomas Underwood Papers, Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

determine the methods used to attain their mandate or goals; 2) examination of Brandon College's curriculum and internal organization structure, and obtaining of statements from members of the theology faculty regarding their theological beliefs; 3) conducting of interviews, through questionnaires, with all Brandon College arts and theology graduates to find out their views about the teaching and atmosphere at the college, and any suggestions they might have for changes or improvements; 4) collection of any written and signed statements from anyone with criticisms against the theological teaching at Brandon College. Each area was assigned to a separate sub-committee which would later report back to the whole commission.²²

At the second meeting, held in Brandon in May 1922, reports from each sub-committee were presented and discussed. These reports included statements on the curriculum structure for other Baptist theology schools in North America, the questionnaires sent to the Arts and theology graduates, and the letters of criticism from former students and others.²³

At the commission's third and final meeting in Calgary in January 1923, all the evidence was collected and evaluated. The final report was compiled and presented at the January 1923 BUWC meeting. The report was nothing short

²²"The Report of the Brandon College Commission," Yearbook, Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1922, 56.

²³Ibid., 56-57.

of glowing praise for the college. The commission fully exonerated the college and lauded the union for "having an educational institution in its midst, of the character of Brandon College."²⁴ Taken as a whole, the commission's evaluation of the questionnaires received from Brandon College graduates, the letters and statements of criticism about the college, including the pamphlets published by Bennett, and the statements submitted to the commission by MacNeill and their examination of his teaching, shed a very positive light on Brandon College.

The commission asked arts graduates to describe the spirit encountered during their studies at Brandon College, to suggest how the arts department could be strengthened, and to explain the influence their term at Brandon College had on their life. The majority of the students who responded praised the spirit and teaching at Brandon College and found their time at the college helpful to their own personal lives. However, at least one graduate, John Linton, who later co-authored the pamphlet "Facts Concerning Brandon College," criticized the college for not allowing "those who teach God's word believe it to be such." Probably Linton was making a thinly-veiled reference to MacNeill.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., 72.

²⁵Ibid., 59.

Theology graduates were asked about the teachings and influence upon their lives of individual instructors in the college's theological department. They were also queried on the effect such instruction had on their appreciation of the Bible as the Word of God and the extent to which Brandon College had prepared them for their role as a pastor or preacher. Their opinions regarding the theological department and the influence of Brandon College upon the Christian life and ideals of its students were questioned as well. Again, the majority of the students responded with great appreciation for the college and felt that their time at Brandon College had strengthened their knowledge of the Bible and commitment to the ministry.²⁶

On examination of the questionnaire responses, the commission discovered that Brandon College had not "wrecked the faith of its students," but instead, through its teaching and influence had "strengthened the faith, quickened the religious life and developed the spiritual purpose, revitalized the Word of God."²⁷ They found the college and its faculty loyal to the teachings of Christ and the Gospel, they found the existence of a devout Christian atmosphere within the college, and they found a high regard for developing a strong Christian character in men and women. The commission's conclusions were based upon the

²⁶Ibid., 60-61.

²⁷Ibid., 60-61.

graduates' responses. One typical respondent noted that the "practical demonstration of Christianity in the college life in general and in the faculty in particular could not but strengthen one's faith in and stabilize one's experience in the Christian life."²⁸ Another wrote that he left the college "much stronger in faith and positive in trust." Another similarly found "his faith in Christ and His Kingdom strengthened and [I] am a much more intelligent Christian because of my College Course." Yet another wrote that the "life and faith of teachers helped me to find firm footing."²⁹

While the general responses commended the college for its teaching, the graduates also singled out and defended MacNeill for his exemplary teaching. About MacNeill, one student noted that he "is one of the men I would choose as a model of Christian character both in his teaching and in his life and in his relations to fellow men." Another commented that MacNeill "gives one of the finest courses in Brandon College ... there is nothing radical in his teaching." Clearly these students felt that Brandon College, and MacNeill in particular, had strengthened their Christian faith, their understanding of the Bible and their commitment to Christian service and ministry.³⁰

²⁸Ibid., 61.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 60-62.

With regard to other Baptist theology schools, the commission discovered that, without exception, all presented the findings of modern Biblical scholarship fully and honestly in the classroom. Students were also allegedly guarded against errors and were strengthened in their defence of the Bible. The commission also gleaned that these theological schools held textbooks and reference books of relatively less importance than the beliefs of the professor instructing the students. However, the commission also found that all the schools considered held the Scriptures to be God-given, inspired and the final authority. These schools believed and taught the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, the Deity of Christ, the Resurrection of Christ and the Resurrection of believers, and Christ as the embodiment of all truth, authority and hope for the individual and for the world.³¹

In its evaluation of the Bennett pamphlets, the commission concluded the accusations to be "both false and unchristian," and condemned the unchristian way in which Bennett and his co-authors attacked the college and its

³¹The eight theological schools studied by the Brandon College Commission were the Theological Department of Colgate University in Hamilton NY, Rochester Theological Seminary in Rochester NY, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville KY, Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester PA, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago IL, Berkeley Baptist Theological Seminary in Berkeley CA, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Seminary Hill TX, and the Theological Department of McMaster University. College calendars and correspondence with the presidents or deans of the theological faculties were used to examine the colleges' curricula. Ibid., 57-58.

faculty.³² The commission uncovered no evidence to substantiate Bennett's charges that Brandon College faculty were "sowing seeds of rank infidelity in the minds of the young," and concealing from or misleading the public about what was really happening at Brandon College.³³

As for MacNeill, the commission confirmed his Christian character to be sound, based on both their evaluation of his statements of faith and those given to the Baptist Ministerial Association of Greater Vancouver, and on the views of those who knew him. They also perceived MacNeill to be an honest man who always sought to clearly express himself to others. The commission believed, however, that the important factor was not how MacNeill phrased his statements, but that the basic truths were expressed. As they explained: "while there are frank differences in the modes of expression, ... the essential spiritual facts at the heart of the statements are frankly and devotedly accepted, and it would seem at times that the difference is not as to the fact but is a matter of phraseology."³⁴ The commission's explanation, did little to satisfy those who questioned MacNeill's orthodoxy. For them, the differences were more than a matter of semantics. The way in which the ideas were expressed were as important, in their view, as

³²Ibid., 68.

³³Ibid., 64, 68.

³⁴Ibid., 69.

the ideas themselves. The commission was confident, however, that MacNeill believed in all of the essentials of the Christian faith - Inspiration of the Scriptures, the Incarnation and Deity of Christ, Christ's Resurrection, Atonement, Redemption and Second Coming.³⁵

Among its conclusions, the commission recommended that Brandon College appoint a professor to teach practical theology (although they failed to define what they meant by this vague term), that the theological department expand its program to offer more courses as well as a degree program, and that the teaching content of Bible courses be strictly factual rather than critical and interpretive. They also strongly recommended that MacNeill remain in his position at Brandon College.³⁶ The college attempted to implement these recommendations, but their efforts failed. In the matter of Carl Lager, who had been criticized for his alleged use of the textbook, The Hebrew Prophets, the commission decided that because no charge was made directly against Lager's teaching but criticisms had arisen only from within the Swedish Conferences, it bore no direct relation to Brandon College and they would recommend that the situation be referred to the executive board of the union for action.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., 71-72.

³⁶Ibid., 73-74.

³⁷Ibid., 73.

In making these recommendations, particularly those regarding the structure of the theological department, the commission may possibly have felt compelled to make a compromise. While they supported MacNeill, and Brandon College and could find no tangible evidence to substantiate the allegations against the two, they still had to proceed cautiously with respect to the views of the average Baptist constituent. The members of the commission may have believed that it would be within the best interests of the college to upgrade and strengthen the theological department, not only for the sake of students attending, but also for the continued support of the average Baptist layman who provided financial support. This increased commitment to basic Biblical training would show that Brandon College was serious about its theology program.

The exoneration of the college came as welcomed news to many of the college's supporters. E. Scott Eaton, a Vancouver businessman, applauded the commission's positive report. He hoped that there would be an end to "this seemingly endless strife as far as B.C. is concerned," and "that at some not too far distant date we may have the hearty co-operation of all the participating units, even B.C."³⁸ Similarly, G.A. Clark of the First Baptist Church in Edmonton, told Whidden that he planned to announce to every member of his church that the commission's report had

³⁸E. Scott Eaton, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 22 February 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 1.

cleared Brandon College of the charges against it. He was especially anxious to have financial contributions to the college become a regular part of his church's giving.³⁹ Even the Board of Crescent Heights Baptist Church in Calgary, who had initially raised protests about MacNeill's orthodoxy, unanimously accepted the report of the Brandon College Commission. They commended the college for its work and promised the prayerful support of its congregation.⁴⁰

The clearing of charges of modernism against Brandon College also made way for a more concentrated effort in the college's financial campaign. Whidden was particularly concerned that the inquiry would have a detrimental effect upon fund-raising. Following the publishing of the commission's findings, Whidden sent out a form letter to the college's regular supporters, informing them of the positive outcome and encouraging them to continue their support for the school.⁴¹

Attempts were made by the board of directors of the college to implement the commission's recommendation regarding the appointment of a professor of practical theology. M.F. McCutcheon, minister of the First Baptist

³⁹G.A. Clark, Letter to Dr. Whidden, 28 February 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 1.

⁴⁰Crescent Heights Church Board Minutes, Regular Monthly Business Meeting, 29 March 1923, Crescent Heights Baptist Church Records, Crescent Heights Baptist Church.

⁴¹H.P. Whidden, general financial campaign letters, 6 February 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 1.

Church in Montreal, was offered the professorship as well as the position of Acting Lecturer in Philosophy. McCutcheon declined, however, since he felt that neither subject was his area of speciality (his areas being sociological studies and systematic theology) and he would consequently have to spend too much time acquainting himself with those subjects. Thus, he argued, he "could not begin to do justice to the work especially during the first year."⁴²

Whidden, however, refused to accept McCutcheon's reply so easily. He tried to convince McCutcheon that the teaching load would not be as difficult or as foreign as anticipated, and that he could incorporate his own experiences as a pastor into the courses as he saw fit. Whidden also assured McCutcheon that the board desired someone of his experience and background on the college's faculty because he would be able to bring a certain understanding to the ministerial students that other faculty would not be able to give. Whidden also made it clear, however, that the board offered the position in hopes of meeting the commission's recommendation to appoint a professor of practical theology to the Brandon College faculty.⁴³ Although Whidden tried very diligently to

⁴²M.F. McCutcheon, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 30 April 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 2.

⁴³H.P. Whidden, Letter to M.F. McCutcheon, 4 May 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 3.

encourage McCutcheon to accept the position, he was unsuccessful.

Whidden's years at Brandon College were soon to draw to a close as he went on to McMaster University to accept the position of chancellor of that university. With the successful conclusion of the Brandon College Commission, many, including Whidden, thought that Brandon College's theological difficulties were past. His hope, however, was disappointed. Fundamentalist scrutiny continued.

CHAPTER 4

Aftermath: Controversy Continues at Brandon College

Brandon College's theological difficulties did not end with the positive report of the Brandon College Commission. The college and its faculty continued to face accusations of modernism, particularly from British Columbia Baptists. Like president Howard Whidden, his successors, Franklin Sweet and David Bovington, were both forced to publicly defend their theological views before the union.

In May 1923, Howard Whidden resigned as president of Brandon College to accept the position of chancellor of McMaster University. Franklin Sweet, pastor of the Church of the Master Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, was appointed to succeed the outgoing president.¹

As Sweet began his term as president of the college, the problem of finding a suitable candidate for the professorship in practical theology remained unresolved. Sweet, however, unlike Whidden, hesitated in offering the position to McCutcheon from Montreal for fear that bringing

¹Sweet was a graduate of Rochester Theological Seminary and had pastored churches in Adrian, MI and Minneapolis, MN, in addition to his pastorate in Cleveland before going to Brandon College. C.G. Stone, Brandon College - A History, 1899-1967 (Brandon, MB: Brandon University, 1969), 67.

someone new and unknown to Brandon College's faculty would only raise suspicions and invite another fundamentalist attack. Sweet, therefore, proposed that the position be offered to D.A. Stewart, then a current member of the college's faculty. Stewart could be relieved of his teaching responsibilities in the arts department and thus be able to concentrate on theology. Sweet felt that having Stewart as professor of practical theology would not "augment theological discussion" because he was known and well-liked by all, and therefore less likely to be questioned or to pose a theological threat.² Apparently, however, Stewart was never hired for the new position.

While Brandon struggled to avoid further conflict, McMaster University faced its most difficult theological battle with T.T. Shields. In November 1923, McMaster University conferred an honorary degree upon William H.P. Faunce, president of Brown University, the oldest Baptist institution of higher learning in North America. Fundamentalist, T.T. Shields protested the honour accorded Faunce, accusing the respected educator of being a modernist, and McMaster, in its granting of the degree, of "thereby approving of and moving in the company of

²F.W. Sweet, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 23 November 1923, Brandon College Administrative Records (hereafter cited as BCAR) 1923, Brandon University Archives (hereafter cited as BUA), box 1, file 2; F.W. Sweet, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 11 December 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 1.

modernism."³ Whidden assured Shields that "Faunce's degree had been recommended in good faith and had nothing to do with his supposed modernism; rather it had been conferred as a tribute to the distinguished sister institution."⁴ J.L. Farmer, dean at McMaster University, supported Whidden's reasoning. As he told Whidden, "conferring the degree did not necessarily carry an endorsement of Dr. Faunce's educational policies or theological views any more than it did in the case of other recipients of honorary degrees."⁵

Shields, however, was not satisfied with these explanations. Shields justifiably questioned whether the university should not "enquire into the respectability of a candidate's credentials before they put their imprimature upon him?"⁶ Shields believed that Faunce's open criticism of those who fought against higher criticism in the universities was enough to oppose McMaster's decision. Shields accused the university of using its powers to "honour a man who dishonours Christ," and called upon the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ) not to endorse McMaster's choice.⁷

³W. Gordon Carder, "Controversy in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1908-1928," Foundations 16 (1977): 360.

⁴Johnston, 175.

⁵Quoted in Ibid.

⁶Quoted in Ibid.

⁷Johnston, 175; Carder, 360-361.

The Faunce affair became the main topic of discussion at the 1924 annual BCOQ meeting in London, Ontario. A committee appointed to review the whole question of conferring honorary degrees, returned to the delegates with a resolution that:

without implying any reflection upon the Senate, this Convention relies upon the Senate to exercise care that honorary degrees be not conferred upon religious leaders whose theological views are known to be out of harmony with the cardinal principles of evangelical Christianity.⁸

The resolution, motioned by Shields and seconded by Whidden, was carried unanimously by the convention. The proposal in fact was a defeat for McMaster University, and prompted Whidden to caution his colleagues against conferring any honorary degrees in the near future, "for fear of making unwise moves."⁹

As Ontario fundamentalist Baptists seemed to be winning victories over the liberals within their denomination, continent-wide the fundamentalist movement, towards the end of 1923, also seemed on its way to driving the liberals out of the denominations. J. Gresham Machen, one of the movement's outspoken allies, denounced liberalism as "simply un-Christian," and advocated forcing the liberals out of the churches. As he stated in his book, Christianity and

⁸Carder, 361.

⁹Quoted in Johnston, 180.

Liberalism: "separation between the two parties in the Church is the crying need of the hour."¹⁰ Even publications that normally allied with the liberals, such as the Christian Century, the Nation and the New Republic, supported the fundamentalists' request that the liberals withdraw from the denominations.¹¹ In historian George Marsden's view, these journals believed that the fundamentalists

were not denying the rights of the modernists to think as they pleased. They were only claiming that if the modernists wanted to think thoughts which contradicted the creeds that denominations had always affirmed, then it would be only gentlemanly to withdraw and found denominations on some other basis.¹²

Much to the distress of the fundamentalists, however, modernists were by no means ready to acknowledge defeat. As editor Charles Clayton of the Christian Century described the conflict, it was as though two worlds or two religions had met in combat and "the clash between them was as profound and as grim as that between Christianity and Confucianism."¹³

¹⁰George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture - The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925 (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 174-175.

¹¹Ibid., 175.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Quoted in Marsden, 175.

Meanwhile at Brandon College, although Sweet received letters of welcome and support from people such as A.S. Lewis, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Vancouver, some British Columbia Baptists once again leveled charges of modernism against Brandon College in general and against Sweet in particular.¹⁴ A Vancouver layman by the name of Short allegedly sent a telegraph to American fundamentalist William Bell Riley inquiring into Sweet's background, whereupon Riley wired back that Sweet was an ardent modernist and an enemy of fundamentalism.¹⁵ Sweet, though concerned that the issue of modernism within Brandon College had once again been raised, was confident that there would be no serious repercussions following these accusations, particularly at the upcoming Baptist Union of Western Canada (BUWC) meeting in Calgary in January 1924. The telegraph, however, did lead Arthur I. Brown, a Vancouver layman who called himself a fundamentalist, to write a letter to Sweet questioning him as to his theological beliefs on certain issues. Among his questions, Brown wanted to know whether

¹⁴Arthur S. Lewis, Letter to Rev. Franklin S. Sweet, 11 October 1923, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 10. Sweet had recently made a trip to Vancouver where he received favourable support from the First Baptist Church in Vancouver and other Baptist ministers in Vancouver. F.W. Sweet, Letter to M.L. Orchard, 3 December 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 1.

¹⁵F.W. Sweet, Letter to Rev. G.A. Clark, 20 November 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 2; F.W. Sweet, Letter to Howard Whidden, 23 November 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 2; F.W. Sweet, Letter to M.L. Orchard, 3 December 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 1.

Sweet believed that the Bible was supernaturally inspired and inerrant; that Genesis was the literal and actual account of creation and that man had been created directly in God's image, not evolved from other species; and that man, though created in innocence by God, voluntarily sinned, condemning all of mankind to sin and damnation.¹⁶

Brown also wanted to know if Sweet believed that Jesus Christ was born of a Virgin and is the Son of God; if the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments were events of supernatural intervention by God, temporarily suspending the laws of nature and of God for certain purposes; and if Christ's physical and bodily resurrection was a proven and literal fact as attested to by those who saw him after His resurrection. Brown made it very clear to Sweet that his responses to these questions were crucial and that he would take a lack of response as a negative reply.¹⁷ J. Willard Litch, a superintendent with the BUWC, forewarned Sweet that according to the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Vancouver, his answers to the questions posed by Brown could be used against the college.¹⁸

Sweet responded that his faith as a Christian and as a Baptist was firmly rooted in obedience to Jesus Christ,

¹⁶Arthur I. Brown, Letter to Dr. F.W. Sweet, 12 November 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 2.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸J. Willard Litch, Letter to Rev. F.W. Sweet, 10 November 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 2.

which he believed to be the "root principle of our Baptist tree of practices."¹⁹ In reply specifically to Brown's questions, Sweet gave an affirmative response to essentially each of the questions asked of him. Some of his answers, however, were somewhat elaborate and indirect explanations rather than a simple yes or no response. For example, on the question of his belief in the Virgin Birth and Divinity of Christ, Sweet replied that this was a question of "God's method in Creation. The gospel transcends my reason but commands my reverence."²⁰ Sweet may have responded as such to show that while he did not understand everything in Scripture, he was no less faithful to it. Sweet concluded his letter with the hope that his responses had shown Brown his Christian devotion and loyalty to the Baptist faith. Sweet also asked of Brown, for the sake of Baptist education, that a greater co-operation take place amongst Christians, dependant "not upon exact agreement in all details of thinking, but upon common love for Him and a common devotion to His kingdom."²¹

Brown, however, was not thoroughly pleased with Sweet's response. Although he did not doubt Sweet's faith in "our common Lord," he found Sweet's statements incomplete and evasive. Brown went so far as to infer that Sweet was

¹⁹F.W. Sweet, Letter to Dr. Arthur Brown, 21 November 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 2.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

therefore a "theistic evolutionist." Despite this strong criticism, Brown nonetheless wished Sweet much success as president.²²

Again there is some evidence to indicate that similar individual protests against modernist influences, although not specifically directed at Brandon College, surfaced in some areas of Alberta throughout 1923.²³ In High River, the minister of the local Baptist church wrote to C.C. McLaurin, a prominent member of the First Baptist Church in Calgary, that while a person of an "evangelistic nature would be welcome at the church, a modernist would have a hard row to hoe, and no sympathy."²⁴

On a visit to Nanton, McLaurin found the Baptist church there to be in a "serious condition of affairs," which would "certainly ... hinder our work there." The "Christian work's hard enough when we have the unanimous support of the church," McLaurin noted in a letter to the minister, "but when we cannot have their co-operation, it seems to me useless to undertake anything. I would personally advise

²²Arthur I. Brown, Letter to Dr. F.W. Sweet, 30 November 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 2.

²³The difficulty of accessing sources of information regarding local Alberta Baptist churches restricted the opportunity to present a more complete and conclusive picture on the mood of Alberta Baptist fundamentalists and their fear of the threat of modernism.

²⁴E.L. Leeman, Letter to Dr. McLaurin, 5 April 1923, C.C. McLaurin Correspondence, 1922-1924, First Baptist Church Records, First Baptist Church Calgary.

you to just drop the contention altogether."²⁵ Although no details were given, the tone of McLaurin's letter suggests that a split was starting to emerge within the church, probably over the same issues that were causing fundamentalist discontentment elsewhere. The local Nanton newspaper, on two different occasions, confirmed such a conflict, with reports that the minister of the Baptist church was leaving to form his own congregation, the Baptist Mission.²⁶

Meanwhile, in Medicine Hat, the First Church unsuccessfully attempted to heal the fundamentalist-modernist rift that had torn the church apart. Problems at the First Baptist Church in Medicine Hat resurfaced in 1923. C.C. McLaurin, along with Thomas Underwood, another prominent member of the First Baptist Church in Calgary and active member of the BUWC, advocated that the First Baptist reconcile its differences with the splinter Fellowship Baptist Church. McLaurin strongly encouraged members from the First Baptist Church in Medicine Hat to reconcile their differences. He reprimanded them for the gossip, maliciousness and animosity toward each other that

²⁵C.C. McLaurin, Letter to Rev. F.C. Bancke, 15 November 1923, C.C. McLaurin Correspondence, 1922-1924, First Baptist Church Records, First Baptist Church Calgary.

²⁶Nanton News, 8 November 1923: 3; Ibid., 15 November 1923: 3.

threatened to destroy the church.²⁷ Apparently, some members of the First Baptist Church also wanted reconciliation of the two churches but were unable to agree on conditions for union.²⁸ Other members of the Fellowship Baptist Church similarly saw no need for separate organizations working towards the same goal. "It was with a feeling of great regret," stated one member from the Fellowship Baptist Church, "that we felt called upon to sever our relationship with the parent Church, and proceed to organize in order to hold our people and save them to the Denomination."²⁹ Again, details about the split are unknown but one can only speculate that fundamentalist unrest was a factor.

While local churches in Alberta struggled against fundamentalist discontent, Brandon College officials continued their own defensive actions against British Columbia Baptists. In January 1924, at the annual BUWC meeting in Calgary, President Sweet was forced to defend himself before the union against accusations of modernism. A few British Columbia Baptists at the meeting allegedly

²⁷C.C. McLaurin, Letter to Rev. R.J. Garrett, 24 January 1923, C.C. McLaurin Correspondence, 1922-1924, First Baptist Church Records, First Baptist Church Calgary.

²⁸John Currie, Letter to Rev. C.C. McLaurin, 20 September 1923, C.C. McLaurin Correspondence, 1922-1924, First Baptist Church Records, First Baptist Church Calgary.

²⁹J.H. Tabor, et. al., Letter to First Baptist Church, Medicine Hat, 1 October 1923, C.C. McLaurin Correspondence, 1922-1924, First Baptist Church Records, First Baptist Church Calgary.

wired former acquaintances of Sweet regarding his stand on doctrinal issues. The replies to the wires allegedly claimed that Sweet sided with modernists on such issues as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Christ, and on the historical accuracy of Genesis. Sweet denied ever seeing these letters, nor was he aware of their contents. These documents, according to some delegates, undermined Baptist confidence in Sweet's abilities to carry out his duties as president. On the floor of the convention, one member, W.H. Shears of British Columbia, openly accused the college of not properly carrying out its duty of educating students for the ministry. Shears declared he would not consider sending his children to Brandon College, based upon certain letters he had read and that were in his possession. The letters were not read before the convention because Shears felt that he could not read them without questioning Sweet personally which the other convention delegates prohibited him from doing. However, other wires and telegraphs were read which charged Sweet with holding modernist beliefs.³⁰

Sweet defended himself before the convention, stating that "I am in every sense a fundamentalist." He added that influential church leaders in the Northern Baptist Convention "believe in my devotion to Jesus Christ - believe in my evangelical fervor - believe in my fundamentalist integrity, and devotion to our Baptist convention."³¹

³⁰Calgary Daily Herald, 28 January 1924: 11.

³¹Ibid.

Although Sweet may have shared the evangelical fervour and commitment to Christ held by fundamentalists, he may not have shared their militancy and opposition to modernism.

Sweet agreed that the convention had a right to know about his past, on which he proceeded to inform them - the colleges he attended and training he received, and the churches he had pastored. However, he condemned his critics for the unfairness with which they made accusations against him, asking if it was "fair to send a telegram a thousand miles for a man to read a message to damn another man whom you can trust as soon as you look into his face?"³² Sweet also scorned the convention for its skepticism towards MacNeill, stating that if such unfounded accusations continued, it would be very difficult to hire a qualified theologian for Brandon College in the future. He concluded that he would no longer answer any theological inquiries and asked that he be allowed to continue his task as president of Brandon College.³³ At the end of Sweet's speech, the convention unanimously passed a vote of confidence for the beleaguered college president and vindicated him of the charges of modernism.³⁴ Several newspapers across western Canada reported Sweet's victory and endorsement by the

³²Ibid.; Speech by Rev. Franklin W. Sweet to the annual Baptist Union of Western Canada Convention, 26 January 1924, Calgary Alberta, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 1.

³³Franklin W. Sweet speech.

³⁴Ibid.

convention although none of the papers called it a defeat for the militant fundamentalists.³⁵

Despite this overwhelming approval of Sweet, some British Columbia Baptists continued to call for MacNeill's removal. At the same convention meeting, A.F. Baker, one of the British Columbia delegates and a member of the Brandon College Commission, argued that he would not have signed the inquiry's final report if it meant that MacNeill would remain on faculty at Brandon College. Wolverton, another British Columbia delegate, agreed that he too would not have signed the report had he known otherwise. MacNeill, they held, did not believe in the Virgin Birth, nor in the Resurrection of Christ, a view which Baker held to even in the commission's final report.³⁶ Oddly enough, the commission's recommendation in no way implied that MacNeill should or would leave Brandon College, but in fact clearly recommended the exact opposite: that he remain on the faculty.

This confusion over the commission's recommendations extended to rank-and-file Baptists as well. Even before the

³⁵See for example Calgary Daily Herald, 28 January 1924: 11; Lethbridge Daily Herald, 29 January 1924: 7; Brandon Daily Sun, 28 January 1924: 1; Vancouver Sun, 28 January 1924: 1.

³⁶Franklin W. Sweet speech, BUA. In the commission's final report, Baker dissented from the majority view on the section stating the commission agreed that MacNeill believed in the fundamental authority of God in the Christian's life. "Report of the Brandon College Commission," Yearbook, Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1922, 72.

January 1924 meeting, British Columbia Baptists were rumoured to be dissatisfied regarding the implementation of what they wrongly assumed were the commission's recommendations. In October 1923, E. Scott Eaton warned Sweet that some Baptists in British Columbia "will undoubtedly have some questions to ask as to whether or not the findings of the Brandon College Commission have been carried out. Some will want to know if MacNeill is still in Brandon, and if so why, and also when is he likely to leave."³⁷

Following the convention meeting, many Baptists voiced their support of Sweet and congratulated him on the vote of confidence given him and Brandon College. Howard Whidden wrote that he knew "things would come out right," and that a "signal victory has evidently been won."³⁸ Likewise H.H. Bingham, minister of the First Baptist Church in Calgary, and C.C. McLaurin of the Alberta Convention of the BUWC applauded the convention's decision.³⁹

Taking advantage of this renewed support, Sweet used the convention vote as a springboard for a fund-raising

³⁷E. Scott Eaton, Letter to Dr. Franklin W. Sweet, 17 October 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 3; J. Willard Litch, Letter to Rev. Franklin W. Sweet, 8 December 1923, BCAR 1923, BUA, box 1, file 1.

³⁸H.P. Whidden, Letter to F.W. Sweet, 5 February 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 2.

³⁹See H.H. Bingham, Letter to F.W. Sweet, 5 February 1924 and C.C. McLaurin, Letter to F.W. Sweet, 14 February 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 2.

drive for the college's \$25,000 operating budget.⁴⁰ Campaigns in Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, Winnipeg and Brandon, began in late February 1924. By mid-March, the drive was successfully underway with \$13,600 raised towards the \$25,000 goal. Sweet was confident that the full amount could be raised if a few "good brethren in B.C." also contributed to the campaign.⁴¹

Although Brandon College received financial support following the 1924 union meeting, and Sweet received moral support for his role as president of the college, Sweet continued to encounter criticism for retaining MacNeill. Sweet intended to keep MacNeill on staff and, in fact, have him play a more integral role within the theological department. He hoped to hire a full-time professor in systematic theology (why he would consider someone for systematic theology and not practical theology as was recommended by the Brandon College Commission is unknown), so that MacNeill could be relieved of his teaching duties in the arts department to concentrate fully on his studies in classical New Testament Greek and New Testament interpretation. Sweet sought the approval of the college board of directors for this endeavour so that the school

⁴⁰F.W. Sweet, Letter to A.P. McDiarmid, 17 March 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 2, file 2.

⁴¹F.W. Sweet, Letters to Brother Noble and to Rev. C.C. McLaurin, 9 February 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 2; F.W. Sweet, Letter to P.C. Parker, 19 March 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 3.

could present a united front at the upcoming January 1925 BUWC meeting. Sweet worked for an endorsement not only MacNeill but also of the proposed development of the college's theology program of which Sweet considered MacNeill, after twenty-one years of teaching service, to be an integral part.⁴² Sweet later acknowledged that the college board of directors waived in their support of MacNeill. Sweet, however, defended MacNeill as "the backbone of the institution's life ... who, in his quiet, honest way, is a distinguished New Testament scholar, retaining that vital piety without which a modern man is hardly less destructive of the real gospel of Christ than the most rapid literalist."⁴³

At the same time Sweet was coming to MacNeill's defense against fundamentalists, modernists in general were similarly making their own defense. Shailer Mathews, one of the most influential spokesmen for the modernists' position and dean of the divinity school at the University of Chicago, presented one of the best defenses of modernism in his book, The Faith of Modernism. A rebuttal to J. Gresham Machen's Christianity and Liberalism, this book outlined many of the precepts of the modernist movement as seen at its height. Mathews defined modernism as the "use of

⁴²F.W. Sweet, Letter to H.P. Whidden, 8 March 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 3.

⁴³F.W. Sweet, Letter to Shailer Mathews, 8 March 1924, BCAR 1924, Box 1 f.3; Shailer Mathews, Letter to F.W. Sweet, 12 March 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 3, file 8.

scientific, historical, and social method in understanding and applying evangelical Christianity to the needs of living persons."⁴⁴ He believed that human religious experience provided the structure for the objective study of religion, that the Bible was not just an account about God, but "a trustworthy record of a developing experience of God which nourishes our faith," and that the goal of the modernist was therefore "to carry on this process of an ever growing experience of God."⁴⁵ In other words, Mathews believed that God and religion could best be understood only through human experience interacting with society as it changed and developed. Mathews also defined Christianity as "a moral and spiritual movement," arising out of the "experiences of God known through Jesus Christ as Savior," and declared that modernist Christians believed that Christianity would "help man meet social as well as individual needs."⁴⁶

However, despite these defenses from the modernist camp, it was not enough to allay the fundamentalists' opposition. Brandon College continued to be plagued by criticism not only from recalcitrant fundamentalists in British Columbia but also from their militant brethren in eastern Canada, most notably T.T. Shields. In a February 1924 issue of the Gospel Witness, a weekly periodical

⁴⁴Quoted in Marsden, 176.

⁴⁵Quoted in Marsden, 176-177.

⁴⁶Quoted in Marsden, 177.

written and published by Shields, the fundamentalist crusader pointed to the BUWC's recent decision to drop Brandon College from the union's missions budget as proof of the Union's disapproval of the college's alleged liberalism. As Shields put it:

We have little doubt that Brandon was dropped for the same reason that Jonah was thrown overboard. It was difficult to bring the Mission ship to land with Brandon on board ... It is easy to throw a kiss to Jonah after he has been thrown overboard, and to express the hope that he will somehow get to land.⁴⁷

In Shields' view, the union was forced to eliminate Brandon College from its budget in order to get back on course and stay faithful to Baptist principles. Like the men who threw Jonah overboard, the union had to be concerned about their own well-being and could only hope that Brandon College would somehow once again be faithful to the time-honoured principles and foundations of the Christian faith.

Shields was soon criticized for his interpretation of the proceedings at Calgary. In a letter to Shields dated shortly after the editorial appeared, Archibald Ward, pastor of the Saskatoon Baptist Church, pointed out that the original grant to the college of approximately \$5,500 would normally have come from the regular union budget, but because the money amount was considered inadequate for the

⁴⁷Editorial, "The Baptist Union of Western Canada and Brandon College," Gospel Witness 2, no. 4 (14 February 1924): 7.

college, the union voted to accept a separate \$25,000 budget. The union reasoned that the larger budget would thereby give Brandon College more freedom to appeal to the constituency for funding. Ward made it particularly clear that the union had not "dropped" Brandon College from its budget but had granted it "a wider and freer course of action." He noted, for example, that in the few short days since the beginning of the college's fund-raising campaign, \$9,957 had been raised towards the \$25,000 goal, as compared to the \$5,500 given in the previous year from the union budget.⁴⁸

Shields apologized to Ward, stating that he was "exceedingly sorry to misrepresent the situation in the West in the slightest degree," and that he would write to M.L. Orchard, secretary of the BUWC, to get the "official interpretation of the action of the Convention at Calgary."⁴⁹ Shields, letter to Orchard queried whether the union was supportive of Brandon College and its present teaching staff, and was giving money to the college to assist in turning out "preachers holding such views as are held by Dr. McNeil [sic]." If the answer was yes, then Shields warned that his church, Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto, would no longer be able to support the BUWC. In

⁴⁸Rev. Arch Ward, Letter to Rev. T.T. Shields, 25 February 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 2.

⁴⁹Thomas T. Shields, Letter to Rev. Archibald Ward, 1 March 1924, C.C. McLaurin Correspondence, 1922-1924, First Baptist Church Records, First Baptist Church Calgary.

short, he declared to "aid and abet the destructive work of Brandon College is nothing short of treason to Christ and His gospel."⁵⁰ Orchard's reply to Shields affirmed Ward's description of the union's motivation for separating the college budget from the union books. "The basis of this action," Orchard pointed out, "was not theological but missionary and practical."⁵¹

Shields' other criticisms of Brandon College were directed at the theological views of MacNeill and the Brandon College Commission. Shields found each of MacNeill's responses to the commission's questions non-committal on the essential tenets of the Gospel - Salvation, Resurrection and the Virgin Birth - and thus were in keeping with the beliefs of liberals such as Harry Emerson Fosdick and Shailer Mathews. Shields argued that a college who kept a man like MacNeill with such extremely liberal views on its faculty was not "worthy of support of anyone who believes the Bible to be the inspired and authoritative Word of God, and Jesus Christ to be God manifest in the flesh."⁵²

⁵⁰Thomas T. Shields, Letter to Rev. M.L. Orchard, 1 March 1924, C.C. McLaurin Correspondence, 1922-1924, First Baptist Church Records, First Baptist Church Calgary.

⁵¹M.L. Orchard, Letter to Rev. T.T. Shields, 13 March 1924, C.C. McLaurin Correspondence, 1922-1924 First Baptist Church Records, First Baptist Church Calgary.

⁵²Editorial, "The Baptist Union of Western Canada and Brandon College," Gospel Witness 2, no. 4 (14 February 1924): 9.

Along with Shields' criticisms, Brandon College continued to receive criticisms from British Columbia fundamentalists. Several such critics remained angry that MacNeill had not been dismissed from the teaching staff of the college as they wrongly assumed the commission had recommended. J.J. Ross, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Vancouver, was concerned that this resentment regarding the commission's recommendations would harm the college's image in the province. He suggested that releasing "the brother whose name is particularly mentioned in that report [MacNeill] from the teaching staff of Brandon College ... would greatly assist in nullifying a considerable amount of the prejudice that has been created towards the school in this Province." However, he assured Sweet that his suggestion was not a personal judgement against "that brother."⁵³ In all likelihood, Ross was suggesting the only solution he thought feasible to help smooth over the situation in British Columbia.

Sweet too recognized the importance of gaining British Columbia's support for Brandon College. "The great body of our Baptist people throughout Canada," Sweet firmly believed, "are right-minded and forward looking. It is the utmost importance that their counsels prevail in British Columbia."⁵⁴ In other words, Sweet believed that the

⁵³J.J. Ross, Letter to Rev. F.W. Sweet, 4 April 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 4.

⁵⁴F.W. Sweet, Letter to Dr. J.W. Litch, 3 April 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 4.

majority of Canadian Baptists remained supportive of Brandon College and their faith must be used to win over the disaffected fundamentalists in British Columbia. Sweet accepted an invitation to preach at the Sunday morning session of the upcoming 1924 British Columbia Convention meeting in hopes that it might help to alleviate the suspicion of Brandon College and to "create the right religious spirit."⁵⁵

In spite of Sweet's attempts to smooth things over, the efforts of a few members within the British Columbia Convention to discredit Brandon College and secure separation from the union gained momentum. These efforts were carried over into the British Columbia Convention meeting in July 1924. However, succession from the union was defeated seventy-two to fifty-two. Attempts to stir up dissent against the college also met with failure.⁵⁶ Sweet was confident that these antagonistic forces would "disintegrate in British Columbia as they have done in the prairie provinces and elsewhere in our denominational life."⁵⁷ Sweet strongly believed that, apart from the occasional individual criticisms, "the big battle has been

⁵⁵N. McNaughton, Letter to F.W. Sweet, 1 April 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 4; F.W. Sweet, Letter to Rev. N. McNaughton, 7 April 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 4.

⁵⁶F.W. Sweet, Letter to C.F. Richards, 7 August 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 8.

⁵⁷F.W. Sweet, Letter to W.C. Kelley, 5 August 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 8.

won and ... we can go forward with confidence feeling that from 80% to 90% of our constituency in the West are with us in our College work."⁵⁸ However, Sweet was overly optimistic in his assessment of the convention vote, considering that a substantial number of the convention delegates voted in favour of succession. The British Columbia Convention continued to have internal disagreements over its role within the union and its support of Brandon College during the next few years. Eventually, in 1927, seventeen churches, representing one-third of the membership within the convention, separated from the union and formed their own convention known as the Convention of Regular Baptists.⁵⁹

In late December 1924, Sweet passed away suddenly of a heart attack. Upon Sweet's death, MacNeill was appointed to act as interim president until a successor could be found. In the spring of 1925, David Bovington, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, assumed the presidency.⁶⁰

⁵⁸F.W. Sweet, Letter to Dr. H.P. Whidden, 18 September 1924, BCAR 1924, BUA, box 1, file 9.

⁵⁹Margaret E. Thompson, The Baptist Story in Western Canada (Calgary: The Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1974), 157-158. For more information on British Columbia and the split within its convention, see Gordon H. Pousett, "A History of the Convention of Baptist Churches in British Columbia" (M.Th. thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1982), and John B. Richards, Baptists in British Columbia: A Struggle to Maintain "Sectarianism" (Vancouver: Northwest Baptist Theological College and Seminary, 1977).

⁶⁰Bovington, born in Kent, England, attended Spurgeon's College and upon arrival in Canada attended Woodstock College in Ontario. He later graduated from McMaster University and Rochester Theological Seminary. Bovington

Bovington arrived at Brandon College with the intention of strengthening the college's theological program and renewing the attempt to obtain a university charter from the Manitoba provincial government.⁶¹

Soon after his arrival, however, Bovington, like his predecessors, was challenged on his theological beliefs. In the fall of 1925, T.T. Shields allegedly accused Bovington of being a modernist and questioned his qualifications to be president of Brandon College. Disturbed by the criticism, Bovington wrote to Shields, as he told a colleague, "calling his attention to the mis-statements which he made, and asking him, as a matter of simple honesty, that he proceed to rectify impressions which hurt not only me but interests which are larger and far more important than mine."⁶² Bovington described Shields as possessing an "inadequate appreciation of the mischief that may be caused by ill-advised and prejudiced judgments."⁶³

held pastorates in Windsor and St. Thomas, Ontario before going to the First Baptist Church in Cleveland in 1916. Stone, 114-115.

⁶¹Walter E. Ellis, "What Times Demand: Brandon College and Baptist Higher Education in Western Canada" Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education, ed. G.A. Rawlyk (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 79.

⁶²David Bovington, Letter to Thomas E. Underwood, 26 October 1925, BCAR 1925, BUA, box 1, file 3.

⁶³David Bovington, Letter to Rev. Arthur S. Lewis, 2 November 1925, BCAR 1925, BUA, box 1, file 3.

At the same time Shields was firing protests at Bovington, he was also adamantly protesting McMaster's appointment of L.H. Marshall to the chair of pastoral theology, following the death of J.L. Gilmour. Although Marshall had been primarily educated at Rawdon College of Leeds and at the University of London, and held a strong reputation in English Baptist circles as a teacher and theologian, he also received training at the Universities of Marburg and Berlin in philosophy and Old Testament theology, something that would have made fundamentalists who were suspicious of German education all the more wary about his appointment. The Senate's appointment of Marshall came on 25 July 1925, during the famous Scopes "monkey" trial in Dayton, Tennessee. Shields was on a visit out of the country at the time, and upon hearing of Marshall's appointment, immediately insisted that a committee be appointed to look into allegations coming from Britain that Marshall was suspected of modernist teaching. Although a committee was formed, it conducted no new investigation, accepting as satisfactory the previous inquiries made by Whidden into Marshall's ability to fill the position. The committee's conclusion was affirmed at a senate meeting on 15 October 1925. Later that month, at the annual meeting of the BCOQ, Shields again demanded a senate investigation into Marshall's theology. However, Shields' demand was resoundly defeated when the convention approved and commended the McMaster senate and board on their appointment of Marshall.

Shields was clearly condemned for his actions and a victory was won for McMaster University.⁶⁴

Back in the West, despite Shields' criticisms of Bovington, the new president was welcomed into his position by many prominent Baptists. W.P. Freeman, of the BUWC, praised Bovington as being "the right man in the right place."⁶⁵ D.R. Sharpe, former superintendent of the Saskatchewan Convention of the BUWC, offered any help he could in dealing with Shields' criticisms against the new administration. Other prominent Baptists such as H.H. Bingham and Thomas Underwood of the First Baptist Church in Calgary, also added their encouragement.⁶⁶

Even as these expressions of widespread support for Bovington came spilling into the college, Alberta fundamentalists were organizing what may have been the most telling indication of fundamentalist strength in the province. In September and October 1925, ministers and church leaders from Crescent Heights, Hillhurst and

⁶⁴Johnston, 181-184. For Shields' interpretation of the events see T.T. Shields, The Plot That Failed (Toronto: Gospel Witness, 1937).

⁶⁵W.P. Freeman, Letter to David Bovington, 30 October 1925, BCAR 1925, BUA, box 1, file 3.

⁶⁶D.R. Sharpe, Letter to Dr. David Bovington, 18 November 1925, BCAR 1925, BUA, box 1, file 2; Thomas E. Underwood, Letter to Rev. David Bovington, 22 October 1925, BCAR 1925, BUA, box 1, file 3.

Westbourne Baptist Churches organized a week-long fundamentalist conference in Calgary.⁶⁷

The conference focused on the inspiration of the Scriptures and on an investigation of the teachings of modernism. P.W. Philpott, pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago, lectured for the first three days of the conference on topics such as "The Problem That Confronts Us Today, or Can The Church Be Saved?" and "Christ and the Common People, or Is Christianity A Religion for Scholars Only?"⁶⁸ Philpott argued that modernists and their teachings were responsible for weakening the Christian faith, particularly in young people, and for lowering the moral standards of man. Philpott also blamed the increase in crime and the occurrence of World War I on the spread of modernist teachings, which would not have occurred, he argued, had the "Germans retained the faith in God's word that had been bequeathed to them by Martin Luther."⁶⁹

The remainder of the conference's addresses were given by Toronto fundamentalist, T.T. Shields. As one historian

⁶⁷The "Fundamentalists Conference" was held in Calgary from Sunday, 27 September to Wednesday, 7 October, 1925 at the Victoria Pavillion and at Grace Presbyterian Church. The conference executive consisted of Christopher Burnett of Crescent Heights, F.H. Harbour of Hillhurst and E.G. Hansell, H.B. Scrimgeour and William Aberhart of Westbourne Baptist Churches. Calgary Daily Herald, 26 September 1925: 14.

⁶⁸Calgary Daily Herald, 26 September 1925: 14; Ibid., 1 October 1925: 9; Morning Albertan, Calgary, 24 September 1925: 2.

⁶⁹Calgary Daily Herald, 28 September 1925: 9.

has noted, Shields was the western fundamentalists' "powerful eastern ally," and his followers commanded a "sizable audience in the west."⁷⁰ Although one Calgary newspaper advertised Shields' lectures for Sunday, 4 October, as dealing with the "vital questions of the day," unfortunately, little is known about the actual contents of his addresses, other than that he was to criticize modernism.⁷¹ Presumably, Shields offered his often-repeated arguments that modernism was an enemy of Christianity and a menace to the progress of the evangelical faith.⁷²

Attendance at the conference appears to have been fairly strong. Although an exact count for each day of the conference is unknown, local newspapers estimated more than nine hundred people at the opening lectures. Such avid participation indicates that modernism deeply worried many Albertans. The popularity of the conference also clearly demonstrates that fundamentalist protest was certainly not confined to eastern Canada or to the United States.⁷³

⁷⁰Johnston, 171-172.

⁷¹Calgary Daily Herald, 3 October 1925: 16. Shields' newspaper, the Gospel Witness, only made brief mention of Shields' trip to Calgary to speak at the conference, but did not detail the topic nor contents of his speeches in Calgary. See Gospel Witness, 4, no. 20, (24 September 1925): 16.

⁷²Gospel Witness, 2, no. 12, (9 August 1923): 8; Ibid., 2, no. 15, (23 August 1923): 9.

⁷³Calgary Daily Herald, 28 September 1925: 9.

While fundamentalists were banding together in Alberta, Bovington entered into the Brandon College presidency, more than likely aware of fundamentalists' fears, such as expressed through the organization of the conference in Calgary. As such, he was concerned that he not be misrepresented in his theological position. He felt it important that he set the record straight before more criticisms arose. Thus on H.H. Bingham's suggestion, Bovington submitted a short article outlining his personal background and a short statement of his views to both the Canadian Baptist and the Western Baptist magazines.⁷⁴ In the article, Bovington outlined, among other things, his commitment and loyalty to the Baptist faith, his belief in the uniqueness and authority of the Bible and in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, "a sufficient guide for faith and practice."⁷⁵ The article also made it clear at the outset that Bovington was writing to seek the support and acceptance from the Baptist constituency for himself and Brandon College. Bovington, by outlining his beliefs in the essential tenets of the Christian faith, also gave the appearance of setting out to prove his spiritual integrity.

Bovington further elaborated on his religious convictions in a letter to A.J. Vining, former professor of

⁷⁴David Bovington, Letter to Rev. M.L. Orchard, 4 November 1925, BCAR 1925, BUA, box 1, file 2.

⁷⁵Canadian Baptist 71 (3 December 1925): 3; Western Baptist XVIII, no. 10, (November 1925): 5.

mathematics at Brandon College and superintendent of missions for the union:

I am not a modernist, so far as I know my own point of view. Neither am I a fundamentalist, so far as I know the point of view of men of the type of Riley and Shields. I believe I belong to that great middle group of men who are loyal to the essential principles of the Christian faith as they have been delivered to us historically. ... To all that is essential to historical Christianity I am loyal. With regard to the vagaries of opinion which come and go, I claim the right to exercise my own judgment. I may define my position ... as a 'progressive conservative.' That would express, I think, my own point of view. ... Put me down then not as a fundamentalist, neither write me down as a modernist - but put me down as one who believes in Christ, who has accepted him as his Master, and who is trying as best he may to understand the Master he is seeking to follow.⁷⁶

Despite Bovington's intense sensitivity to and concerns over the theological controversy, financial concerns rather than fundamentalist criticism, ultimately overwhelmed him. The immense responsibility of securing monetary support for the college, following the end of the Davies Foundation grants that had contributed twenty-three percent of the college's current income, pressured Bovington into resigning from the presidency in 1926.⁷⁷ In his letter of resignation to the Brandon College Board, Bovington wrote:

⁷⁶David Bovington, Letter to Rev. A.J. Vining, 6 October 1925, BCAR 1925, BUA, box 1, file 3.

⁷⁷Ellis, 79.

I came with little or no knowledge of your problems. They proved to be more difficult than I anticipated ... I am placing my resignation in your hands that you may have freedom in planning for the future. I hope my action may not be interpreted as an attempt to escape tasks and difficulties which I have assumed, but rather readiness to permit you to plan freely for the pressing problems with which you are confronted.⁷⁸

Bovington's resignation came at a time when the fundamentalist movement as a whole was rapidly declining. Tensions were rising, not so much between conservatives and liberals, but between the moderates and the militants within the conservative ranks. The moderates found that while they may have considered themselves fundamentalists on the basis of their doctrinal beliefs, their militancy and desire to rid the denominations of modernism at any cost was far less than their desire to see the Gospel spread. The more militant conservatives, however, felt that the moderates were compromising the objectives and thereby undermining the movement's efforts. Much of the conflict had to do with a difference of opinion over the the goals and objectives of the movement - was the purpose to become sectarian and create a new church, or was it to become part of the establishment and try to work and reform from within.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Stone, 116-117; Ellis, 80.

⁷⁹Marsden, 181-183, 193.

By the end of 1925, the fundamentalist movement, which once held continent-wide support and popularity, waned to the point of ridicule. Events such as the Scopes "Monkey" Trial, in which school teacher, John T. Scopes, was tried for teaching evolution in the classroom, also put the fundamentalist movement on trial and did much to cast a negative image upon fundamentalists.⁸⁰ The fundamentalist movement no longer commanded the respect it once held. As historian, George Marsden, accurately noted: "the more ridiculous it [the fundamentalist movement] was made to appear, the more ridiculous it appeared."⁸¹ The movement failed in part because even its most valid defenses were not acceptable to twentieth century educated people. After 1925, many moderate conservatives disassociated themselves from the cause, out of fear and embarrassment that the movement was becoming too dogmatic and narrow-minded. Realizing that efforts to remove the liberals from the major denominations had failed, fundamentalists turned their attentions towards furthering commitment to traditional beliefs in Bible colleges and mission organizations.⁸²

⁸⁰For more information on the Scopes Trial and its influence upon the fundamentalist movement, see Lyon Sprague DeCamp, The Great Monkey Trial (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), and Rhea County Court, Tennessee, The World's Most Famous Court Trial: State of Tennessee v. John T. Scopes (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971 [Cincinnati, 1925]).

⁸¹Marsden, 191.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 191, 193-194.

With Bovington's resignation from the presidency of Brandon College, MacNeill was again appointed as interim president. The theological controversy that had surrounded MacNeill did not make him an acceptable candidate for the position, particularly in the eyes of some British Columbia Baptists. Two years later, in the fall of 1928, John R.C. Evans, head of the science department and dean of men, was appointed to succeed Bovington.⁸³ Evans was known for his excellent teaching skills and was regarded highly by students such as T.C. Douglas, a student at Brandon College from 1924 to 1930, who in later years went on to become premier of Saskatchewan.⁸⁴

Over the next several years amidst the drought and depression, Brandon College continued to be plagued by

⁸³Evans had been a student at Brandon College, graduating in 1913. He was then appointed as teacher of mathematics and science and later principal of the Brandon Academy, the high school division of Brandon College. He took a leave of absence from 1920-1923 and attended University of Chicago where he obtained his doctorate in geology. In the fall of 1923 he returned to Brandon College as professor of geology. Stone, 123; Ellis, 80.

⁸⁴In addition to being influenced by Evans, Douglas also recalled being influenced, during his time at Brandon College, by MacNeill. Douglas remembered MacNeill as being a type of religious radical for his day, holding to certain religious convictions as a result of his studies and having no fear to state those convictions honestly. In particular, according to Douglas, MacNeill did not believe in the literal interpretation of the Scriptures but thought that each book of the Bible should be interpreted given the purpose for which it was written. Douglas also recalled that MacNeill believed that divine inspiration referred to God speaking to man, but not that the same interpretation should not be applied to every book in Scripture. L.H. Thomas, Recollections of T.C. Douglas (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1982), 50-51.

financial difficulties which took precedent over other concerns including those theological. Various fund-raising campaigns and financial appeals fell short of expected support. In November 1937, the union recommended that unless additional financial support could be secured, the college should be closed. Although closing the college was averted, in the summer of 1938 legislation was passed granting Brandon College affiliation status with the University of Manitoba. Finally on 25 October 1938, all legal connections between the Baptists and Brandon College were severed. Thus ended forty years of Baptist higher education western Canada.⁸⁵

⁸⁵Ellis, 81-84.

CONCLUSION

The fundamentalist-modernist conflict that shook Brandon College in the 1920s, and to a lesser extent churches across the Prairies, was a part of a continent-wide struggle among Baptists and other Christians to redefine the essential beliefs of the Christian faith. Conservative Christians across North America feared that the modernists' denial of what conservatives considered the fundamental tenets of Christianity jeopardized church life, Christianity and even the foundations of society as they knew it. This overriding fear instilled fundamentalists with a profound sense of urgency in their fight against modernism, and ultimately such fear became the key characteristic of the fundamentalist movement. Deeply connected with the fundamentalists' sense of fear that society was eroding, was a longing to return to a society that held Christian values, as they viewed them, in high regard.

Modernists, however, did not feel that they were destroying the fundamentals of the evangelical faith. On the contrary, they firmly believed they were fulfilling and enriching Christianity by making it relevant to the present age. They believed in the adaptation of Christian ideas and values to modern society as a means of addressing the needs

of society through the Gospel. They especially believed that God was immanent in human society and that society was progressing towards realizing the Kingdom of God on earth. Modernists further maintained that the supernatural was not separate from, but integrated with, the natural.

The conflict, therefore, between fundamentalists and modernists was, in essence, ideological. It spanned across denominations as the two sides debated over the authority of Scripture versus the authority of modern science and higher criticism. In the dispute, doctrines such as verbal inspiration of the Scriptures and Biblical inerrancy became so intensely defended that one's entire Christian standing was determined by such views.

If the terms of the fundamentalist-modernist clash were essentially ideological, the character of the historic dispute was nonetheless deeply rooted in nineteenth century religious traditions. The tone and approach adopted by the fundamentalists were drawn directly from the revivals and evangelical influences of Dwight L. Moody, the nineteenth century Holiness movement and the highly popular theologies of dispensationalism and premillennialism. In Canada, Moody's successful tour of Ontario in the late 1800's launched similar Canadian-led revivals. Hugh T. Crossley and John D. Hunter, among other Canadian evangelists, adopted Moody's down-to-earth and informal style of preaching and his call to a simple moral code. They too travelled across Canada conducting evangelistic services.

This informal approach and tendency to reduce the Christian message to very simple precepts, along with Moody's negative and ambivalent view of society, was later embraced by fundamentalists in their struggle to maintain orthodoxy. Fundamentalists such as T.T. Shields typified this attitude and approach in his single-minded and often militant opposition to modernism.

While the fundamentalist movement gained from Moody a simple yet ambivalent approach to the world, it adopted an ideological belief structure from dispensationalism and premillennialism. As early as the nineteenth century, John Nelson Darby, originator of dispensational theology which believed in the division of the Church Age into seven eras and in a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, toured throughout Canada several times spreading the gospel of dispensationalism. Subsequently, many Canadians including prominent church leaders such as Elmore Harris of Walmer Road Baptist Church in Toronto and William Aberhart of Westbourne Baptist Church in Calgary, embraced Darby's dispensational theology.

Premillennialism, which also believed in the literal fulfillment of the Scriptures as well as the imminent return of Christ before the millennium, gained prominence in Canada through the Prophetic and Bible Conferences held at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario from 1883 to 1897. These highly popular conferences brought like-minded people together and provided a place to encourage and reinforce orthodox

Christian beliefs and disseminate information about premillennialist ideologies. Dispensationalism and premillennialism both contributed to the fundamentalist movement a belief in the literal interpretation of the Bible and a sense of urgency which later became hallmarks of the movement.

This emphasis upon Biblical literalism in the fundamentalist movement also had roots in the Holiness movement, which emerged in the late nineteenth century. However, the Holiness movement also brought to the fundamentalist movement an emphasis upon emotionalism and upon puritanical or a simple and practical Christian lifestyle, and a desire to re-establish traditional values within the Church and the larger society.

Simultaneous with this growing fundamentalist movement, liberalism began to emerge as an increasingly powerful intellectual movement, particularly among Canadian universities. As in the United States, Canada's higher educational institutions began to endorse higher criticism and theological liberalism as early as the 1870s. Professors at universities such as Queen's, Knox College, Victoria College and Wesley College advocated a more critical analysis of the Bible and adoption of more liberal theological views. With their own scholars active in the field and in touch with recent developments in Biblical studies in North America and Europe, McMaster University in

Ontario and Brandon College in Manitoba were no less exposed to these liberalizing influences.

While the various emerging movements of the nineteenth century helped to shape the fundamentalist and modernist movements, it was the atmosphere across the continent following World War I that catapulted the conflict between the two sides to the forefront of evangelical life. Following the War, people held a renewed sense of patriotism and continued fear of German militarism. Awareness was raised to the apprehensions held by conservatives prior to the War, and many desired a return to tradition and familiarity. The slightest hint of modernism was enough to make fundamentalists livid. At McMaster, faculty and members of the Board of Governors were often accused by the undaunted fundamentalist crusader, T.T. Shields, of ascribing to modernist views. In the West, W. Arnold Bennett, in the publication of his two pamphlets, similarly lambasted Brandon College and members of its faculty, particularly H.L. MacNeill and Carl Lager, for undermining the authority of the Bible in their classes.

Bennett's tirade was as much against MacNeill as it was against Brandon College. The Brandon College Commission, formed to investigate the charges against the college, scrutinized MacNeill in particular and even surveyed former students for evidence of heresy. Contrary to Bennett's charges, the majority of MacNeill's students lauded the beleaguered scholar's instruction. The commission found

MacNeill, in introducing students to the findings of modern scholarship, was no different than scholars in other Baptist institutions. The commission also found that in these institutions, the beliefs of the instructing professor were considered to be of more importance relative to that of text and reference books. However, all of the schools were found to believe the Scriptures to be inspired by God and to be the Christian's final authority and to teach the doctrines of the Virgin Birth, Deity of Christ and Resurrection of Christ. Even two years before the commission's report, the Vancouver Baptist Ministerial Association added their vote of confidence to MacNeill and Brandon College. After interviewing MacNeill, they exonerated the college and its beleaguered professor of any wrong doing.

While Bennett's charges against MacNeill and Brandon College, and the subsequent Brandon Commission Inquiry gave the appearances of being a one-time occurrence, such charges, in fact, were in no way an isolated event in the college's history. Accusations of modernist teaching arose long before and continued long after the 1922/23 investigation. Even though most historical attention on the fundamentalist-modernist clash at Brandon College has focused on the 1922/23 inquiry, questions regarding MacNeill's religious beliefs and teaching first came to public attention three years earlier. Allegations first arose from the Board of Crescent Heights Baptist Church in Calgary. Such criticism of MacNeill continued long after

the inquiry from both Baptists in British Columbia and T.T. Shields in the East. These attacks even expanded beyond MacNeill to include Howard Whidden's successors, Franklin Sweet and David Bovington. The fact that allegations continued for so long indicates that anti-modernist sentiments in the West may have been stronger than previously thought.

Indeed, the events at Brandon College were in fact related to events going on at McMaster University and to the larger fundamentalist conflict. Across North America, fundamentalists fought against the spread of modernism at institutions of higher learning, and advocated that the traditional views they held of inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture continue to be taught.

Whatever the continent or region-wide strength of fundamentalism, clearly MacNeill became for fundamentalists an important scapegoat for their desperate fear of modernism. Given the milieu of theological liberalism at institutions of higher learning across North America, the fundamentalists' initial fears regarding MacNeill in particular and liberal influences in general at Brandon College may have been legitimate. However, their persistent criticism, even in the face of evidence to the contrary, showed that militant fundamentalists, especially those leading the battle, were willing to create the existence of an enemy anywhere, almost to the point of a witch-hunt, because it justified their alarm and sense of crisis that

society and Christianity as they knew it was changing. The fundamentalists desperately needed to show that MacNeill was a liberal in order to prove their fears right.

This berating of MacNeill was evident in the differences of interpretation that continually existed between what MacNeill stated and what he was believed to have said. From his alleged statements made at the 1919 Alberta Convention meeting of the BUWC, to his responses to the questions from the Vancouver Baptists Ministers Association in 1920, to his replies to questions from the college commission's investigation in 1922, MacNeill was seen by his critics as wavering in his responses when challenged on what fundamentalists viewed as the essential beliefs of the Christian faith. However, MacNeill's ideas and liberal evangelical beliefs more than likely were not understood by his critics and thereby he was automatically labelled as a modernist without further consideration. While MacNeill strongly believed in many of the points that became known as the five fundamentals of faith - the Virgin Birth, the Death of Christ, the Resurrection of Christ, the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ - his denial that inspiration of the Scriptures meant infallibility and that infallibility was necessary for sound evangelical faith, was considered heretical. While clearly there were modernist aspects to MacNeill's thinking, he nonetheless was also deeply concerned about keeping himself and the college focused on the tenets of sound evangelical faith. MacNeill,

like many other Baptists, was torn between modernism on the one hand and his commitment to evangelical Baptist principles on the other.

Although militant fundamentalists considered MacNeill's beliefs liberal, the commission concluded that MacNeill's beliefs were authoritative and thus true to the essential tenets of the Christian faith. In making its conclusion, the commission may have felt compelled to make a compromise between their support for MacNeill and respect for the views of the average Baptist constituent who provided financial support. However, this conclusion failed to satisfy Bennett and other critics. Even following the Vancouver Baptist Ministers Association stamp of approval, and the commission's glowing approval of MacNeill, criticism still followed the theology professor. British Columbia Baptists continued to adamantly demand MacNeill's dismissal, despite the recommendation that he remain on faculty at Brandon College. T.T. Shields remained unconvinced that MacNeill's responses to the commission demonstrated his commitment to the essential tenets of the Gospel. In Shields' misguided view, MacNeill's expression of his beliefs made him no different from other liberals such as Harry Emerson Fosdick and Shailer Mathews.

In spite of the fact that most anti-modernist attacks centered on MacNeill, he was certainly not the sole Brandon College faculty member to receive fundamentalists' disapproval. Similar criticisms were pinned against Hebrew

professor, Carl Lager, although the commission concluded that the criticisms beared no direct relation to his teaching. Criticisms were also directed against Franklin Sweet and later David Bovington, which further indicated that perhaps they too were became scapegoats in the anti-modernist crusade. Both men faced opposition from the same sources as their college, long after the initial accusations of modernism at the college. They were forced to publicly defend their views regarding their theological beliefs and abilities to serve as president of the college.

Bennett and others were too quick to pin the label of modernism on Brandon College, certain that if higher criticism and the adaptation of religious values to modern culture were taught at institutions of higher learning elsewhere across the continent, then Brandon must be equally culpable. Their suspicions were probably increased by the American training of many of the college faculty. Convinced of this guilt-by-association evaluation, these fundamentalists were determined to use all the powers at their disposal, including inflammatory pamphlets, to rid the college of all anti-Biblical influences.

In fact, Brandon College was not a modernist institution along the lines of the University of Chicago. Of course it is impossible to know the individual private beliefs of every faculty member. However, in terms of the teaching, Brandon more likely was a liberal evangelical institution that sought to make its students aware of modern

scholarship while maintaining and presenting a firm commitment to Biblical principles and evangelical Christianity.

Although the fundamentalists should be faulted for their tendency to tar all colleges with the same liberal brush, Brandon College must also accept some of the blame for prolonging doubts about the institution. Brandon College's anxiousness to deal with these voices of protest seemed to arise partly out of self-interest and a desire to pursue their own agenda. At times, the college appeared more concerned with its financial standing than with meeting its theological obligations. Both Whidden and Sweet, following their successful battles with their critics, seemed preoccupied with quickly getting the college back on track regarding its financial campaign.

The college's seeming confusion over its primary education role also likely exacerbated dissatisfaction among fundamentalist critics and perhaps even the average Baptist church member. From its inception, Brandon College was caught in a conflict between being a Christian liberal arts college and a theological institution for the training of ministers. While the founders of Brandon College's forerunner, Prairie College, originally established the school with the sole intention of preparing students for the ministry, when McKee moved the college to Brandon he envisioned it as a Baptist educational institution for young people in the West as McMaster was for Baptists in the East.

Even Brandon College's statement of purpose to develop "right character" and surround the student with positive Christian influences and ideals, immediately cast the school as something more than a seminary.

This growing conflict over objectives became more evident as the years passed. While faculty desired Brandon College to be a full arts college, denominational officials wanted the college to serve various roles including a matriculation academy, ladies', business, arts and theology college, while the average Baptist constituent in all likelihood envisioned the college as primarily a theological seminary. A.P. McDiarmid, Brandon College's first president, wanted Brandon to be independent of denominational control and free to pursue its own goals. From the outset of his tenure, Whidden likewise de-emphasized the theological department. When accepting the presidency, he requested that the arts department remain part of the college structure. The college's continued failure to establish a full fledged, structured theology program is a good indication of this ongoing conflict over priorities for the program and the college. Any move towards making significant changes to the theological department, such as approaches to encourage M.F. McCutcheon to accept the position of professor of practical theology, were initiated only because of the commission's recommendations and were not owned by college officials nor apparently followed through. While this conflict of vision

plagued the college's educational goals, it may have also been part of the problem regarding the college's conflict with its fundamentalist critics who considered Brandon College to be only a theological seminary. Thus, they were offended that college officials were not ensuring that Brandon College remained true to what they believed to be its purpose.

Finally, there is some evidence to indicate that in Alberta, individual protests against modernism surfaced within a few local Baptist churches at the same time as Brandon College was facing fierce opposition from its critics. While these individual protests in High River, Nanton and Medicine Hat, and the organization of the fundamentalist conference in Calgary were not directed at the college, they nonetheless showed that some Albertans also feared the intrusion of modernism into their lives. However, the ability of the Prairie conventions of the BUWC to escape a split like that of British Columbia and Ontario is hard to pinpoint. Clearly, one of the major reasons is that the Prairies, like the Maritimes, which also escaped division, lacked an outspoken and dynamic leader from within the region to lead the anti-modernist campaign. However, in Ontario and British Columbia, Shields and Bennett, respectively, provided such leadership within their respective conventions. Alberta Baptists' reactions to modernism also shows that fundamentalism was not strictly a rural phenomenon nor a reaction against the forces of

urbanism, as W.E. Mann posits. Rather, all fundamentalists, urban and rural alike, were fighting to maintain certain religious traditions against the tide of change.

Indeed this desperate and frantic attempt by militant fundamentalists to maintain the status quo also characterized Brandon College's fundamentalist critics. While the college was more vulnerable to criticisms from within Baptist ranks because of its denominational affiliation, this vulnerability may have been less had Brandon been an independent institution. Brandon College was also caught up in a time when most denominational institutions faced sweeping accusations of modernism, accurate or otherwise, from their fundamentalist criticizers. In the end, Brandon College could not be labelled as a modernist institution. Its only fault was that it tried to be all things to all people. Not only did it seek to be an academic institution that kept in touch with the latest findings of modern scholarship, but also a theological institution that remained firmly committed to Biblical and evangelical principles. It was this dual commitment that in part made it the target of criticism.

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