

“Broad Is the Road and Narrow Is the Gate Leading to the Land of Promise”: Canadian Baptists and Their Voice in Restricting Immigration Policy, 1914 to 1929

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The early summer of 1914 was one of the best in many years, and Canadians generally showed very little concern for the crisis that was brewing in an obscure corner of Europe. The Balkans, it seemed, had always been a region of instability, and Canadians neither appreciated nor sensed that the nations of Europe had embarked upon an uncontrollable march toward one of the most destructive wars in human history. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo triggered a series of events that plunged the major European powers into a state of war.

While Britain was not bound by any formal military obligations to enter the conflict (though Britain was a guarantor of Belgian neutrality), the German refusal to withdraw its troops from Belgium inevitably drew the British empire into the conflict partially for strategic reasons. Consequently, at 8:55 p.m. on 4 August 1914, the governor general of Canada, the Duke of Connaught, received a telegram announcing that the British empire was at war with the German empire. While Canada “had the right and the responsibility to decide the scope of their involvement,” she was nevertheless automatically at war with Germany. On 1 August 1914, even before the formal British declaration of war, Canada’s prime minister Sir Robert Borden promised Britain “that if unhappily war should ensue the Canadian people will be united in a common resolve to put forward effort and make every sacrifice necessary to ensure the integrity and

Historical Papers 2006: Canadian Society of Church History

maintain the honour of the Empire.”¹ Even Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the leader of the Opposition, was unequivocal in his support of both Borden and Canada’s participation in the war.

Thus Canada entered the war as a largely united nation. At the outset there was a great deal of “good cheer and high spirits.” The war was seen to be as much a Canadian war as a British war. The Toronto *Globe* declared on August 3rd:

... of one thing let there be no cavil or question: If it means war for Britain it means war also for Canada. If it means war for Canada it means also union of all Canadians for the defence of Canada, for the maintenance of the Empire’s integrity, and for the preservation in the world of Britain’s ideals of democratic government and life.²

Even the French-Canadian nationalist paper of Henri Bourassa, *Le Devoir*, was “carried along by the wave.” The nation was, therefore, caught up in an euphoria of patriotism and nationalistic fervour from which even its churches were not immune. This alacrity was to have profound consequences for the nation’s recent arrivals, its subsequent immigration policy and the attitude and work of Baptist churches among these newcomers.

The churches of the nation enthusiastically rallied behind the war effort. At their annual convention in 1914, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec passed the following resolution “On the War”:

Resolved, that we herewith put on record our sincere and profound conviction that all the people of the Dominion of Canada should realize the serious duty that we are now facing to do everything in our power to support the cause of Great Britain in the present terrible and deplorable war. We feel that no one should underestimate the seriousness of the present situation, and we desire to emphasize the duty that rests upon [all of] us to put all our resources and our services at the disposal of the Empire . . .³

Baptists were also concerned that the war might have a detrimental effect upon the denomination’s Home Mission Enterprises. In its annual report of 1914 the Home Mission Board warned that

there is a real danger that for months, and even years, the interests of the Kingdom of God may be obscured, and for the time being forgotten. We believe not only that this ought not to be true, but we

firmly believe that if the Christian world will properly relate itself to the war, the thoughts of all our people may be turned towards God as they have not been for many years, and that as a consequence we may and ought to witness a great revival of the church and multitudes of conversions. Let us keep constantly before us that fact that, however much we may think about present world conditions, and however deep our personal interest in the war may be, the interests of the Kingdom of God should occupy the place of supremacy in all our thoughts. The great world war must effect in a very vital way the interest of the Kingdom, and it is for the Church of Christ to determine whether the religious result of the war shall be a great religious and spiritual awakening, a great turning to and seeking after God, a fuller recognition of the unity of the race and the brotherhood of man, and an ushering in of the period so long foretold, when the sword shall be beaten into the plowshare, and the spear into the pruning hook, and the nations shall learn war no more, or whether it shall leave the nations worse than when it began, more cruel, more revengeful, more surrendered to the precept that 'might is right,' and that war is the only honourable occupation for humanity.⁴

The strong millennial overtones here are painstakingly obvious. In spite of the war, Baptists were encouraged to keep the interests of the Kingdom of God paramount in their thoughts; in this way the war could serve as a vehicle through which spiritual renewal would be awakened, eventually "ushering in that period so long foretold" – the Millennium, the Kingdom of God on earth.

Furthermore, emphasis was also placed on the need to recognize "the unity of the race" and "the brotherhood of man." Thus, it would appear that there was at least some recognition on the part of Baptists that the war was likely to arouse hostile nativistic sentiments towards some groups of people living in Canada. In this context, Baptists stressed the need to recognize the humanity of their German cousins in spite of the war, and that they too had a place within God's universal kingdom. As F.A. Bloedow remarked in 1914, shortly after the war began and before the body count grew unimaginably high:

We are at war with Germany, but on very cordial relations with German Baptists in Western Canada, who think for themselves, and talk of the war from their point of view just as freely as we would talk with one of our fellow countrymen with whom we differed in politics.

The war will be very trying on them. There is more or less of the disposition, when a force must be curtailed, to let the Germans and Austrians go. This will make it very hard for their churches. Many of them have no sympathy with the German war machine, and those who feel that the Kaiser is fighting a righteous war are good-mannered enough to know that they are in Canada, and that Canada is at war.⁵

In spite of such assurances, as has already been noted, the war unleashed a most pronounced patriotic zeal that precipitated an insistent hostility to “hyphenated Canadians” and demanded their unswerving loyalty to the nation.⁶ Some Baptists, including T.T. Shields, pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, were not so accommodating to their German brethren. Shields saw the advance of Prussianism as a precursor to the spread of modernism, noting that “Prussian militarism is the ripe fruit of the brutal doctrine of the survival of the fittest.” Seen in this context, the war was represented as a struggle between the “brute force” of evolutionary liberalism and the “weaker things” of an “omnipotent God.” Germany, he noted, had shown “us what to expect – Hell with the top taken off!”⁷ For many Canadians, including members of the nation’s churches (Baptists included), these “foreigners” constituted “a real menace to our Canadian civilization.”

The coming of the Great War, therefore, had profound implications not only for immigration, but also for many of the new Canadians scattered throughout the land. The war and the shutdown of passenger shipping from the continent effectively brought an end to the great migratory movement of population from the nations of Europe to the shores of Canada. Those few immigrants who did arrive were almost entirely of English-speaking nationalities. There was even some outflow of Allied nationals from Canada to Europe. Russian, Italian, French and other reservists living in Canada heard the bugle call and returned to their respective countries.

In May 1914, even before hostilities broke out in Europe, Borden’s government passed the British Nationality, Naturalization and Aliens Act, which fundamentally changed Canadian naturalization practice. Prior to the passage of this act, an immigrant merely required a sworn affidavit that testified to three years residence in Canada in order to gain naturalization. With the enactment, immigrants were required to prove both five years residency and an adequate knowledge of either English or French to a superior court judge. Furthermore, the secretary of state was granted absolute discretionary power to deny naturalization to any individual

deemed a threat to the “public good.”⁸ Once Canada found herself at war, the government also saw fit to pass the War Measures Act which gave the executive branch of government almost unlimited powers in the interest of “security, defence, peace, order and welfare of Canada,” including the powers of arrest, detention, exclusion and deportation.⁹ Even before the act became law, the government had already issued an order in council designed to regulate the flow of “enemy aliens” out of the country. While assuring that their property and businesses would remain safe, the government nevertheless demanded they surrender “all firearms and explosives.”¹⁰

In late October the government passed further legislation demanding that all “enemy aliens” were required to register and submit themselves for examination. Special registrars of “enemy aliens” were commissioned in major urban centres, while police authorities were empowered in other jurisdictions. Following registration and examination, “foreign aliens” who were deemed non-threatening were permitted either to leave Canada or remain free provided that they reported monthly to the registrar. Those characterized as “dangerous” were interned along with those who either failed to register or who refused the examination. This “initial wave of enthusiasm” resulted in the internment of some six thousand aliens, many of whom surprisingly were former Galicians (Ukrainians), subjects of the Austro-Hungarian empire, most of whom passionately hated the Austro-Hungarian empire.¹¹ By 1916, most of these internees were released.

Nevertheless, while the internment experience outraged Ukrainian Canadians, some Canadian historians have tended to downplay the internment’s horrors, even describing it as “charity to indigent, unemployed foreigners.”¹² Robert C. Brown and Ramsay Cook go so far as to assert that the government’s major concern was beneficence designed “to safeguard the rights of aliens” against nativist hostility. By taking the internees out of harm’s way they conclude “that the government’s actions held in check the unrestrained enthusiasm of native Canadians to persecute their fellow citizens.”¹³ In other words, “these aliens” were interned for their own protection. Ukrainian-Canadian historians have not shared the same enthusiasm for the policies of the Borden government. Mark Minenko notes that the internment of Ukrainian-Canadians “was a grave injustice against a people who had come to contribute to the opening of western Canada . . . the restrictions that were progressively imposed on all Canadians, and specifically upon Ukrainians, went beyond any measures required to ensure law and order in Canada during the First World War.”¹⁴

The Home Mission work of Baptists among the new Canadians was affected by the wave of anti-foreign nativism. An economic recession at the war's outset and the conditions arising out of the war hindered the work in non-English missions. The closing down of large-scale immigration into Canada saw the number of immigration chaplains at Quebec representing the Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists and Baptists reduced from three to one representing all four denominations. That one, incidentally, happened to be Rev. M. Hughes, "our Baptist man in Quebec City."¹⁵ But, more significant, were obvious instances of flagrant discrimination, ridicule and suffering that many pre-war immigrants were forced to endure. And while the denomination tried throughout the war to depict work among the immigrants in the most positive light it could, asserting that "the work among the non-English churches continues . . . with general good harmony [despite] the fact the races represented are opposing each other overseas,"¹⁶ it is clearly evident that serious problems plagued this work. As one commentator remarked concerning Slavic Canadians, the churches have "misunderstood them." While the churches "are on a fair way to appreciat[ing] them for some prejudices are being removed, and it will be in the interest of our mission work and for the good of our country if [sic] we be not too hasty in our judgment of any people coming to us."¹⁷ The effectiveness of church outreach programs, it would appear, was being seriously undermined by the misinformed and erroneous attitudes held by many towards this ethnic community.

In 1916, the Women's Baptist Home Missions Board of Ontario West reported that "this has been a year of common suffering in our German work,"¹⁸ and the Western Missions Board reported that "the war conditions sometimes make the relations between these people and their English brothers a little difficult, but on the whole the work has gone on harmoniously."¹⁹ Johann Fuhr, an immigrant of German origin, recalled that "[i]n World War I, the hatred for Germans was obvious. Before World War I Germans were tops . . . they were workers. During World War I people were talking so much against the Germans that Germans felt downhearted and discouraged at the hatred."²⁰ Commenting on work among the German immigrants, the president of the Convention remarked in 1918 that the war presented one of the most significant reasons for propagating the Gospel amongst the 500,000 Germans living in Canada. This, he asserted, was the only way to prevent "their old ideals" and "philosophy of life" from being set up here in Canada. Propagation of the Gospel was not only the means to spiritual salvation, but political salvation

as well: "If we give them Jesus, we first save them, then we save our country, and who knows? perhaps we may save Germany."²¹

Even Scandinavians, considered by Baptists as "among the most valuable of immigrants" and our "best class of settlers" were also subject to this outpouring of nativistic sentiment. One Swedish Baptist lamented:

Some unscrupulous writer has incorrectly accused the Scandinavians of not being loyal to their new King and country during the present life-and-death struggle in defence of the high cause of freedom, the rights of humanity and lasting peace. A few isolated individuals who are still under the influence of the old country may claim that they are neutral – whatever that may mean – but it is equally true that probably 5,000 or more have enlisted for overseas service. Several have already been reported killed in action. Last year two distinctly Scandinavian battalions were recruited in Winnipeg. We positively refuse to create any sort of "Scandinavianism." Our ambition is – and the word should be taken in its proper sense – our endeavor is to make the youths of the noble blonde race better Christians and better Canadians.²²

The fact that such a letter would be printed in the *Yearbook* is indicative that the editors were concerned that good Baptists would be tarred with a nativist brush. The last few words of the statement, "better Christians and better Canadians," suggest that Baptists maintained their assimilationist zeal throughout the war years and this, as we have already noted, was grounded in nativistic and racial ideology.

Throughout the war years Baptists sought not only to maintain, but actually to intensify their work among the non-English speaking people from Europe as something of vital national interest. As one commentator noted, "No missionary work . . . is more needful, interesting, important and encouraging, than that among the non-English people from Europe."²³ Baptist evangelism, the Western Missions Board asserted, is "a force which makes for the highest ideals and the [surest] counsels in national life."²⁴ The need to Canadianize these people was heightened near the close of the war when rumoured immigrant support for a number of radical organizations served to intensify anti-radical nativist fears of the "menace of the aliens."²⁵ The Russian Revolution, with its public affirmation of atheism, frightened some Canadian religious spokespersons who feared that immigrants from the former Russian empire might be more sympathetic to the revolutionary ideals of the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, the civil war between the Reds and the Whites was regarded by some as the battle

of the godless against the word of Christ.

These fears of a “Red Menace” were further heightened following the events of the Winnipeg General Strike and echoed the America Red Scare of the same period.²⁶ As Dr. F. W. Patterson, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Western Canada, asserted,

This work among the non-English peoples of Western Canada is not only a Christian obligation, but is of especial importance in these days of reconstruction. The ‘Foreigner’ of to-day will be the Canadian of to-morrow. A deliberate and heavily-financed attempt is being made by Bolshevistic leaders to capture the allegiance of the people of non-English origin. Whether the Canada of the future will be a hell of anarchy or whether it shall develop along constitutional lines toward a freer and better citizenship will depend on whether the church of Jesus Christ or the Bolshevik is the winner in this struggle for the allegiance of the new Canadian.²⁷

Patterson concluded his survey by pointing out that the almost ceaseless propaganda campaign aimed by the radical left at the non-English population mandated a “more aggressive and vital evangelistic and educational policy among these peoples than we have yet had.”²⁸ Now, more than ever, the Canadianization of these new immigrants was of vital importance since frightened religious leaders feared that weak-minded former immigrants were susceptible to radical ideas bent not simply on changing Canadian society, but on actually destroying it, transforming it into a godless immoral society. Patterson’s remarks, furthermore, mark a transition in the concept of Canadianization from a “racial” to a “political” phenomenon.

To combat alien political ideas, the Canadian government introduced significant amendments to the Immigration Act that allowed for the immediate deportation of anarchists and any other proponents of armed revolution. Following the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919, the government also amended the Naturalization Act allowing it to revoke the naturalization of any person, even of British heritage, who propagated revolution. The government also changed the Criminal Code allowing it to lay charges against anyone who attempted to promote change outside of the peaceful parliamentary model.²⁹ As Howard Palmer correctly remarked, “[b]y 1919, notions of ethnic, cultural and political acceptability had triumphed over economic considerations in the formation of national immigration policy.”³⁰

The economic recession of the early 1920s once again brought immigration policy to the forefront of public debate in Canada. Hoping to recapture the boom spirit of the pre-war era, leaders of the Liberal Party, the urban press, and the business community all vigorously promoted immigration in the early 1920s. Their ideals were still largely tied to several basic assumptions of the National Policy: farmers were needed to provide traffic and freight for the railroads, to purchase and settle Canadian Pacific Railroad lands, and to provide a domestic market for Canadian-made products. Generally, it was believed that a larger population could provide a stable base for the economic and social development of the country. The need for increased immigration was viewed as “particularly pressing” due to the fact that Canada’s railroads were largely over-extended, national debt had increased substantially during the war, and Canadians were emigrating in increasing numbers to the United States.³¹

While the recession prompted some groups in Canada to call for increased immigration quotas, others, like farmers, labour unions and war veterans, seriously questioned the desirability of further immigration. The opposition of these groups to immigration was almost entirely economic. Farmers and labour organizations questioned “the connection between immigration and economic growth and wondered if immigration would lead to [further] unemployment and a reduced standard of living for Canadian workers or to an overproduction of grain through an increased number of farmers.”³²

During the war Baptists understood that once hostilities ceased, Canada would most likely again become a destination for many European immigrants seeking new homes. As early as 1916, the Home Missions Board warned,

[a]fter the war closes, undoubtedly upon Canada will come a deluge of immigration . . . The history of events following every European war in the last two centuries tells us that emigration is the escape valve from imminent insurrection. As Canada is the only country in the world that offers the new-comers a free home on the land, we can reasonably expect that a large majority of these foreign immigrants will settle in the Dominion. What preparations are we making to meet the incoming tide of immigration?³³

Baptist fears were put to rest when the Canadian government in the early 1920s amended the Immigration Act to further restrict immigration from

south, central and eastern Europe, as well as Asia. These changes virtually excluded all Chinese immigrants from Canada while most central and eastern Europeans were classified as non-preferred or restricted categories of immigration. Southern Europeans and all European Jews were classified as permit class immigrants, making it even harder for them to enter Canada.

The 1922 immigration policy of Prime Minister Mackenzie King's Liberal government sought to uphold the major provisions of the pre-World War I policy. It was selective and made provisions for farm labourers, individuals with "sufficient means" to begin farming, domestics, British subjects and Americans. All other immigrants were virtually excluded. Basically the

policy was an attempt to find a middle ground between business on the one hand, which was demanding that immigration doors be thrown open to allow in larger numbers of immigrants, and organized labour and patriotic groups on the other hand, who wanted the doors kept closed since they feared competition from cheap labour or a new influx of unassimilable and 'inferior' immigrants. The 1922 regulations gave formal expression to the long-standing preference for British immigrants.³⁴

Baptists had, in fact, called for just such a change in immigration policy as early as 1919. Dr. F.W. Patterson, general-secretary of the Baptist Union stated: "If we might be pardoned for venturing into the realm of national politics, it looks as though our Government should immediately discontinue all non-English immigration until we have digested and assimilated the enormous amount we have already taken in."³⁵ As part of its goal of seeing changes implemented with respect to Canada's immigration policy, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec passed the following resolution in 1918:

Resolved, that the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec extend its support to the Department of Immigration and Colonization of the Dominion Government in revising the laws regulating immigration and colonization so as to embrace the following recommendations: First: To discontinue the licensing of [the] [F]emale [L]abour [B]ureau[u] and other agencies whose chief consideration is personal gain. Second: That the Dominion Government and Local Legislatures be requested to use the organized agencies of the overseas religious

bodies, and thus secure from the British Isles only those who are likely to make good away from parental control; and in Canada use the Strangers' Department, or its equivalent, now found in operation in all well-organized Protestant denominations, in both city and country, for the purpose of determining positions suitable to the industrial capacity of the employee, and at the same time for exercising moral oversight. Third: That the Department of Immigration and Colonization be urged to substitute for the profiteering agencies, interdenominational directorates in all large cities, similar to that which is now in successful operation in Montreal, under the designation of the Protestant Directorate of Female Immigration.³⁶

The following year, the Convention was proud to acknowledge its heartfelt appreciation to the Department of Immigration and Colonization of the Dominion Government for its work in reversing the laws relating to immigration with respect to the Female Labour Bureau and the perceived control profiteering agencies appeared to have over this organization. The Convention "heartily commend the action of the said department in establishing well-kept and well-inspected hostels in the chief centres from coast to coast to assist female immigrants to get established in suitable situations under proper safeguards."³⁷

Baptists also expressed strong disapproval of their government with respect to its policies regarding the immigration of Mormons to Canada. Once again, Baptists were targeting a specific immigrant community because of its religious beliefs and practices:

Instead of nipping this evil in the bud, the Government has allowed these people to come in greater numbers every year, until now Mormonism has grown to be a more serious menace than any of us quite realized . . . Like the Roman Catholic menace, Mormonism not only provides a field for missionary work, but is itself an aggressive enemy of Christianity . . . [Furthermore], Mormonism is the deadly foe of womanhood and the home. Let us [therefore] awake from our indifference to this great menace . . .³⁸

Mormons have had a long history of oppression and persecution as a result of their religious convictions, something Baptists as dissenters should have easily related to. It was, after all, this religious suffering and persecution that gave rise to two principal Baptist distinctives: religious liberty and separation of church and state. However, as Baptists found themselves

increasingly a part of mainstream Protestantism and culture in Canada, they appeared less inclined to extend such privileges to groups whose ideologies challenged or threatened their own perceptions of what Canada should be. From the Baptist perspective the best thing the Government could have done was to “nip this evil in the bud” and prevent the Mormon “menace” from ever setting foot on Canadian soil.

Reservations were also expressed about the danger of having masses of non-English speaking peoples settled together in one locale, since it was assumed this would perpetuate the customs and traditions of the homeland. While recognizing that this was difficult to control in cities,

... protest should be made against the Government’s granting to non-English speaking peoples, tracks of land for community settlements. [Furthermore], [t]here should be no diminishing of the required standards for full citizenship along lines of education and other qualifications. Responsibility along these lines rest primarily with the Government, and we should expect thorough enforcement of our Canadian laws.³⁹

Foreign blocks were thus to be discouraged because they would lead to the “balkanization of Canada” and hence prevent assimilation.

In addressing this conflict between community and ethnic solidarity, sociologist C.A. Dawson remarked:

It was expected that these separatist communities [Mormons, Doukhobors, Mennonites, among others] would arouse the antagonism of those settlers who belonged to neighbouring communities in which a more secular pattern of life prevailed. Many of the social and economic movements which had received the ready support of other settlers were met with stout opposition in these colonies. The politics of the latter were uncertain; they seemed to be opposed, in some instances to public schools, to avoid the official language of the region, and, in certain groups, to be antagonistic to the nationalistic sentiments of the linguistic majority. In other instances, while the members of a colony spoke the official language, they adhere to religious tenets which seem strangely alien. In such a situation the members of outside communities felt uncomfortable and insecure. Naturally they brought pressure to bear on governmental representatives to bring these blocs under school, homestead, and all other regulations without delay or compromise. In many instances these

ethnic minorities were made extremely self-conscious and resentful by the antagonistic attitudes of their neighbours.⁴⁰

Fears were also raised concerning “the fact that a large proportion of these peoples are opposed to prohibition and presumably to other legislation of a moral nature.” Consequently, it was necessary for Baptist churches to become more aggressive in reaching out “the helping and guiding hand to these, ‘Strangers within Our Gates.’” It was believed that the churches should open classes to teach the English language and present Canadian ideals of life and citizenship to as many men, women, and children as possible within these communities. Only by implanting Christian ideals was it possible to remedy “the evils of which we complain.”⁴¹ Clearly, as Baptists prepared to deal with the expected onslaught of immigrants that was soon to arrive sometime in the 1920s, they were armed and waiting with their program of Canadianization.

When the Baptist Home Mission Society (and the Women’s Home Mission Society) began their work among post-World War I immigrants to Canada, they spoke for Baptist churches affirming what they saw as their divine mission to “evangelize,” “Christianize,” and “Canadianize” these folk. As the *Canadian Baptist* asserted in 1922:

The subject of immigration is in the limelight. The number landing and the character of the men and women who are to people our vast Dominion is of vital interest both to church and State. Socially, politically, and religiously, immigration is an issue of prime importance . . . It is difficult to say what the future will be, but the expectation is that [sic] the number entering our country will increase. It will be pleasing if the future immigrants are still more largely of British origin or from those countries of the continent whose political, social and religious ideals are akin to our own.⁴²

The *Canadian Baptist* continued, that “[f]rom the stand point of national life the work of Home Missions must continue to hold a place of paramount importance.” Not only was it “vital to our future,” but the “foreign element” was “impinge[ing] on Our national life.” Furthermore, the cities were gathering places for the growth and spread of all manner of “isms” – religious, social and political.⁴³ Quite simply, the influx of foreign speaking peoples was seen as one of the most serious issues facing the nation. Baptists supported the efforts of the Canadian government to Canadianize these “strangers within our gates,” but asserted that this goal

could only be accomplished if the immigrants were also Christianized. As the *Canadian Baptist* asserted, "If this work is pressed there is yet a chance to assimilate the foreign elements. Slavic, Italian, Polish, Scandinavian and other peoples are crowding in. They cannot be ignored. But long and patient work must be done among them with the Gospel of Christ, if, as Christian citizens, they are to be built into the structure of the body politic."⁴⁴ With the prospect of increased immigration on the horizon, Baptists were clearly concerned about the social, political and religious consequences that would result. This was true not only for Western Canada, but for the larger urban centres of the nation where increasing numbers of these immigrants settled. C.J. Cameron commented,

[t]he chief problem of the city is the problem of the immigrant. The incoming tide that has flooded the central region of the city is largely foreign. New Canadians is the term used to describe this great host of strangers that have come within our gate. How to assimilate this heterogeneous mass of people composed of a hundred nationalities, making them virtuous living and liberty – loving citizens [sic], loyal to our free institutions and capable of self-government is the greatest problem Canada has to face. The World War revealed how many citizens in Canada were in it, but not of it.

There are many agencies that are of valuable help in solving the foreign problem, such as the Public Schools, the press, our political institutions, etc. But serviceable as these may be for certain ends, they fail to develop the noblest character.

The chief contribution toward the solution of this vexed problem is made by the Christian church. Its great task in our land is to teach these new Canadians the spirit of Christian brotherhood by seeking to bring them into a spiritual relationship with God.⁴⁵

Cameron remained as convinced after the war as he had been before that the only institution capable of realistically dealing with the immigrant question was the church. While the schools, press and political institutions could meet "certain ends," their effectiveness in addressing the issues surrounding immigration was at best limited. Since the root of all social ills Cameron believed was spiritual, what was required was a spiritual solution that only the churches could offer.

Canadian Baptists, as such, believed that immigrants and immigration lay at the heart of many of the nation's social problems, and that urban centres were their breeding grounds.⁴⁶ Likewise, they held that nothing

short of the Gospel of Jesus Christ could rectify the situation. Many were convinced that nothing short of religion could conserve the “true value and promote the highest interest of society.” Religion was in their judgment “an indispensable factor” not only in the reconstruction of the world following the devastation of the World War I, but also in the “restoration of social harmony”:

All races and classes of men cannot succeed . . . without the motives and experience of religion . . . The need and the opportunity of the present hour conspire to make it especially propitious for the promulgation of the religious views and practices which Baptists hold and have consistently exemplified through a long history . . . We have all races and classes represented here and the only power sufficient to fuse these people and make them a common people, lovers of God and followers of Jesus Christ, is the power of the Gospel . . . it is either Jesus Christ or chaos. The Baptists of Canada must see that it is Jesus Christ and not chaos.⁴⁷

Clearly for these Baptists the only way Canadians could truly be a “common people” was to be “lovers of God” and “followers of Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, it was only through the Christianization of Canadian society that social chaos could be avoided. This dictated not only the regeneration of the individual, but of society as well. The millennial overtones in all of this are quite obvious, and it is clear that the war had not dampened Baptists’ desires to turn Canada into “His Dominion” from sea to sea. As one Baptist commentator remarked, “. . . the Christian church must . . . not shirk the social obligations of her mission . . . [the] hope in time, by the grace of God [is] to create a healthy Christian atmosphere, that in due season conditions of human life and human government will be permeated with the Spirit of Christ, and conditions of life in all its varied spheres, will be favourable to the realization of the Kingdom of God.”⁴⁸

In the confusion of the post-war era, with its seeming drift to secular and material values, there was an “urgent call” from the Baptist Young Peoples Association for a textbook that could be used at mission circles or band meetings, and that presented a renewed perspective on missions from a Baptist point of view. The Home Mission Board issued *The Call of Our Own Land*. It was essentially a reprinting of an earlier work by C.J. Cameron.⁴⁹ The “Preface to the Text” stated that, “it is extremely important for our young people to become intimately acquainted with our

history, sufferings and distinctive principles.”⁵⁰ Unfortunately, *The Call of Our Own Land* pointed a finger at immigrants as a source of moral and social decay, especially in the chapter entitled “The Task of the City,” where immigrants were held principally responsible for the ills of urban life.⁵¹ Likewise, the subsequent chapter “New Canadians” condemned not only immigrants but also viciously attacked Mormons and Roman Catholics. By contrast Baptists were described as defenders of liberty and freedom. In a section entitled “The Peril of Our Immigration,” the text states,

If a sliver of wood be accidentally driven into the hand one of three results must take place. The foreign substance may be assimilated into the blood. If this process be impossible the flesh will fester around the intruder and try to cast it out. If it fails in this act there follows mortification to the hand. The same order of action prevails in solving the immigration problem. We must endeavour to assimilate the foreigner. If the mixing process fails we must strictly prohibit from entering our country all elements that are non-assimilable. It is contrary to the Creator’s law for white, black or yellow races to mix together. Black and yellow races cannot be assimilated by the white, and therefore, should be excluded from Canada. May our country be delivered from a yellow peril on the Pacific Coast similar to that which the United States suffers in its black problem of the South.⁵²

The text goes on to assert that “many evils” in the land, everything including disease, drunkenness, illiteracy, low standards of living, and crime, exist because of the “great mass of unassimilated foreign population.” The solution to the problem, apart from excluding those deemed most undesirable, was to turn them into Christian Canadians: “[I]f we have a spark of patriotism, a love for this land of every land the best [solution]. . . [is to] Canadianize the foreigner by Christianizing him.”⁵³

Despite criticism from farmer and labour organizations and Protestant church leadership, enthusiasm for immigration “as an economic panacea continued unabated throughout the mid-twenties” among the business community. In 1924 and 1925 several powerful sectors of Canadian society, which included transportation companies, boards of trade, newspapers and politicians of various political parties pressed the Liberal government of Mackenzie King to open the doors to immigration. These groups were convinced that only a limited number of immigrants could be expected from the “preferred” countries of northern Europe and

Britain and “that probably only central and eastern Europeans would do the rugged work of clearing unsettled farm land.” With the economy in a state of growth by the mid-twenties, the federal government yielded to this pressure and changed its immigration policy with respect to immigrants from central and eastern Europe. In September 1925, the King government entered into the “Railways Agreement” with the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways. This agreement opened the doors to more central and eastern Europeans, but it also fuelled the sentiments of nativism with ever increasing passion.⁵⁴ Historian Howard Palmer notes that

[f]rom 1926 to 1930, the predominant nativist cry was that non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants would subvert Anglo-Saxon institutions and racial purity. This Canadian version of Anglo-Saxon nativism was slightly different from its American counterpart. Whereas Anglo-Saxon nativism in the United States had been concerned primarily about a “racial” threat to the purity of the Anglo-Saxon “race,” Anglo-Saxon nativism in Canada was given added impetus by the desire of some traditionalists to preserve Canada as “British.” Americans and Canadians could share Anglo-Saxonism as a racial concept, but “Britishness,” though closely related, was a nationalist sentiment peculiar to Canada. The intensity of late twenties nativist reaction stemmed in part from an overall concern about the decline of things “British” in Canada.⁵⁵

As post-war immigrants once again began arriving on the shores of Canada, Baptists were told to be “armed and ready” with their program of Canadianization and Christianization. In fact, the two had essentially become synonymous. M.L. Orchard, in his treatise *The Time for the Sickle*, asserted: “[t]o be truly Canadian must include being truly Christian. If we would Canadianize these people we must surely Christianize them. The New Birth is a prime essential to the New Canadian.”⁵⁶ Baptist churches, Orchard believed, “just because they claim to be New Testament churches and because they emphasize a spiritual religion” were under “a peculiar obligation” to dispense this message of the “New Birth to every New Canadian.”⁵⁷ In doing this Baptists could ensure that they were preparing not only the individual, but also the social order “for the coming of new world and the making of Our Dominion His Dominion . . .”⁵⁸

For most Baptists of the 1920s, the most vexing problem associated with immigration was still the Roman Catholic question. As C.H. Schutt

of the Baptist Home Mission Board charged:

The most important problem – in my opinion, is the evangelization of the Roman Catholics of our land, who number at the present time nearly 39 % of Canada’s population, and comprise a large proportion of every Province of the Dominion, and are rapidly growing in proportion and influence in many communities which were formerly Protestant.⁵⁹

Baptists feared that a continued influx of Roman Catholic immigrants would result in a *coup de grace* for freedom and liberty. W. T. Graham noted that “The Roman Catholic church is doing all it can to capture Canada for the Pope. I do not blame them for it, but I do know it will be a dark day for this Dominion if the teaching of the Catholic church becomes dominant here.”⁶⁰ Baptists were still convinced that the aim of Roman Catholicism was to “capture Canada for the man at the Vatican . . . by her Catholic immigration . . . In 50 or 100 years from now, if the world continues, what religious force will dominate Canada? Will it be Catholic or Christian?”⁶¹

The city problem, which was an immigrant problem, was also a Roman Catholic problem. Baptists held that they (and other Protestant churches) were being driven from the inner cities because of “a steady stream of Catholic citizens from Italy, Russia, Poland and other parts of the world.”⁶² Immigration was, therefore, feeding Catholic growth in metropolitan areas. Furthermore, since the recent “stream of immigrants had been from the south” of Europe, “a people alien” to Canadian “customs, ideals and religion,”⁶³ many of the social and moral problems of the nation were also directly attributable to these Catholic immigrants. Consequently, it is not surprising to find once again Baptists calling for the “strictest care” in the selection of immigrants and the maintenance of immigration from the British Isles “in a ratio far in excess of that from all non-English speaking countries.”⁶⁴ In advocating a narrow selectivity Baptists hoped to keep Catholics out (or at the very least reduce their numbers substantially), while ensuring that Canada remained British and Protestant. Baptists, therefore, ended the decade as they had begun it, demanding rather severe restrictions be placed on Canada’s immigration policy.⁶⁵

As the 1920s drew to a close, there were, however, inklings within the Baptist ranks that the nativism so much a part of the Baptist Home Mission outreach might be counterproductive to the church’s efforts. In an

article on “racialism” in the *Canadian Baptist* in 1928, Dr. Frederick C. Spurr, in outlining several solutions to the immigrant problem, remarked that Baptists needed to have “courage” and abandon “our contempt for tanned skins; our sneers at Eastern culture; [and] the belief in the moral and intellectual inferiority of Eastern peoples.”⁶⁶ There was, however, still a sense of moral superiority and intolerance in Spurr’s comments when he concluded by stating “[i]t involves the acceptance, in the name Christ, of responsibility for all peoples who are less enlightened and less advanced than ourselves.”⁶⁷ Likewise, in addressing the issue of “Evangelism and Home Missions,” Rev. M. Simmonds noted:

We are being confronted with a larger problem than we appreciate, and one that involves very delicate questions, which will have to be answered in accordance with Christian principle. We are being told that the Canadianization of these newcomers is an imperative need from the nationalistic standpoint. Personally, I am not quite sure that we are truly Christian when we speak thus.⁶⁸

While acknowledging the un-Christian nature of this Canadianization program, Simmonds, like the majority of his Baptist brethren, was not quite ready to give it up. In the very next sentence he concedes that “. . . there is no better means of Canadianizing than evangelizing. But evangelizing is not to be degraded to a means, it is a most worthy end in itself . . . immigrants stand as a potential danger to themselves and to us, growing up in the confused juxtaposition of variant cultures, traditions and sanctions . . . they must be evangelized . . .”⁶⁹ While Simmonds would call for a greater “sympathetic appreciation on their traditions,” evangelism had and would continue to remain “a means”—a means whereby Baptists had sought to assimilate the immigrant through a program of “Canadianization,” and “Christianization.”⁷⁰ While Baptists were not quite ready to abandon this Canadianization scheme, some voices were beginning to question its value, effectiveness, credibility and reflection of Christian charity.

Endnotes

1. Cited in N. Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd., 1994), 52.
2. As cited in Hillmer and Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire*, 53.

3. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1914, 28, Canadian Baptist Archives, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON (hereafter CBA).
4. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1914, 62, CBA.
5. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1914, 226, CBA.
6. Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982), 47-50.
7. T.T. Shields, "'Culture' and Evolution," *Revelations of the War* (Toronto: Standard Pub. Co., ca. 1915), 26-28.
8. G.S. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914-20: The Impact of the First World War," in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s*, ed. Franca Iacovetta with Paula Draper and Robert Ventresca (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 386.
9. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour," 387.
10. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour," 387.
11. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour," 387-88.
12. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour," 388.
13. R.C. Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), 226; cited in Kealey, "State Repression of Labour," 388.
14. Mark Minenko, "'Without Just Cause': Canada's First National Internment Operation," in *Canada's Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity*, ed. L. Luciuk and S. Hryniuk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 302-3.
15. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1915, 74, CBA.
16. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1917, 260-61; also see *Baptist Yearbook*, 1915, 234, 237; and *Baptist Yearbook*, 1916, 271, 274, CBA.
17. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1915, 262, CBA.
18. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1916, 250, CBA.
19. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1916, 271, CBA.
20. Johann Fuhr, 20 June 1972, Phonotape 73.295, Provincial Archives of Alberta; cited in Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 48.
21. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1918, 230, CBA.

22. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1917, 262, CBA.
23. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1916, 271, CBA.
24. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1918, 278, CBA.
25. For discussion of how government legislation (PC 2381 and 2384) moved to censure all “publications” in “an enemy language,” see Kealey, “State Repression of Labour,” 392-403.
26. See David Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: the Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978); David Bercuson and Kenneth McNaughton, *The Winnipeg General Strike, 1919* (Don Mills, ON: Longmans, 1974); Donald Avery, “Dangerous Foreigners”: *European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979); and Donald Avery, “The Radical Alien and the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919,” *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton*, ed. Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1976), 207-31.
27. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1919, 273, CBA.
28. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1919, 283, CBA.
29. Kealey, “State Suppression of Labour,” 402; and Avery, “The Radical Alien and the Winnipeg General Strike,” 222-24.
30. Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 56.
31. Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 64.
32. Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 70.
33. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1916, 68, CBA.
34. Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 65.
35. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1919, 274, CBA.
36. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1918, 35-36, CBA.
37. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1919, 34, CBA. Part of the impetus for Baptists here was clearly moral reform to ensure that these women were established in “suitable situations,” and hence not in prostitution.
38. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1918, 239-40, CBA. Baptists had expressed concern about Mormonism in the past (see C.J. Cameron, *Foreigners or Canadians?* [Toronto: Baptist Home Mission Branch of Ontario and Quebec, 1913]).

39. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1919, 222, CBA.
40. C.A. Dawson, *Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1936), 379.
41. *Baptist Yearbook*, 1919, 222, CBA.
42. "Man at the Gate," *Canadian Baptist*, 2 February 1922, 4.
43. "Home Missions and the Nation," *Canadian Baptist*, 18 May 1922, 8.
44. "Home Mission and the Nation," *Canadian Baptist*, 18 May 1922, 8.
45. "The Task of the Churches in the City," *Canadian Baptist*, 6 January 1921, 13.
46. As one Baptist commentator put it, the "foreign population is large and a source of danger" (see "Heart Cry of the Canadian West," *Canadian Baptist*, 1 March 1923, 1).
47. "Open Doors in Saskatchewan," *Canadian Baptist*, 23 February 1922, 3.
48. "Social and National Well Being," *Canadian Baptist*, 12 May 1921, 2.
49. "Text Book on Home Missions is Coming," *Canadian Baptist*, 26 April 1923, 3; The earlier work on which much of this text is based is C.J. Cameron's *Foreigners or Canadians?*; "I heartily commend it", was the endorsement of the editor of the *Canadian Baptist*, "to our people generally, and especially to the Baptist Young People's Unions, and the study groups in our colleges" (see "The Call of Our Own Land," *Canadian Baptist*, 31 May 1923, 3).
50. C.H. Schutt and C.J. Cameron, *The Call of Our Own Land* (Toronto: American Baptist Publishing Society for the Home Mission Board of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1923), Preface.
51. Schutt and Cameron, *The Call of Our Own Land*, 96-110.
52. Schutt and Cameron, *The Call of Our Own Land*, 143.
53. Schutt and Cameron, *The Call of Our Own Land*, 144, 146.
54. Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 93-94. The agreement originally covered a period of two years. It was renewed in October 1927, for another three years. For a discussion of the rise of nativist sentiments during the years from 1925-30, and the debates with immigration "boosters" (see Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 96-122).
55. Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 98.

56. M.L Orchard, *The Time for the Sickle* (Winnipeg: Baptist Union of Western Canada, 1925), 53.
57. Orchard, *The Time for the Sickle*, 53.
58. "The Social Need of the World," *Canadian Baptist*, 9 June 1932, 7; and "Evangelizing Canadian Life," *Canadian Baptist*, 9 June 1932, 14.
59. "Opening for Bi-Lingual Work," *Canadian Baptist*, 29 March 1928, 2; and "Home Mission Board Report," *Baptist Yearbook*, 1928, 110-11, where similar rhetoric is used.
60. W.T. Graham, "The Baptist in History," *Canadian Baptist*, 13 October 1927, 11.
61. Schutt and Cameron, *The Call of Our Own Land*, 177-78.
62. "Immigration – Not Strategy," *Canadian Baptist*, 11 December 1930, 3.
63. "Making a Great People," *Canadian Baptist*, 2 June 1927, 14.
64. "Home Mission Board Report," *Baptist Yearbook*, 1927, 114-15, 219, CBA.
65. It also seems that Baptists saw the "melting pot" concept that began to emerge in the 1920s as a failure as well. "Will this melting pot result in Canada remaining British in her ideals, her motivating principles of truth and justice and righteousness or will she be subjected to creeds, dogmas, superstitions and slavery as [prevail] in continental Europe. It has only taken these years of depression to prove to us the strength of these New Canadians. Their influence now is not beneficial"(M.A. White, "The Task at Home," *Canadian Baptist*, 2 August 1934, 7).
66. "Racialism," *Canadian Baptist*, 6 September 1928, 7.
67. "Racialism," *The Canadian Baptist*, 6 September 1928, 7.
68. "Evangelism and Home Missions," *Canadian Baptist*, 10 July 1930, 7; also see M.A. White, "Joy in Service," *Canadian Baptist*, 3 November 1932, 14.
69. "Evangelism and Home Missions," *Canadian Baptist*, 10 July 1930, 7.
70. See "Eleven Nations in this School," *Canadian Baptist*, 9 August 1928, 6.

