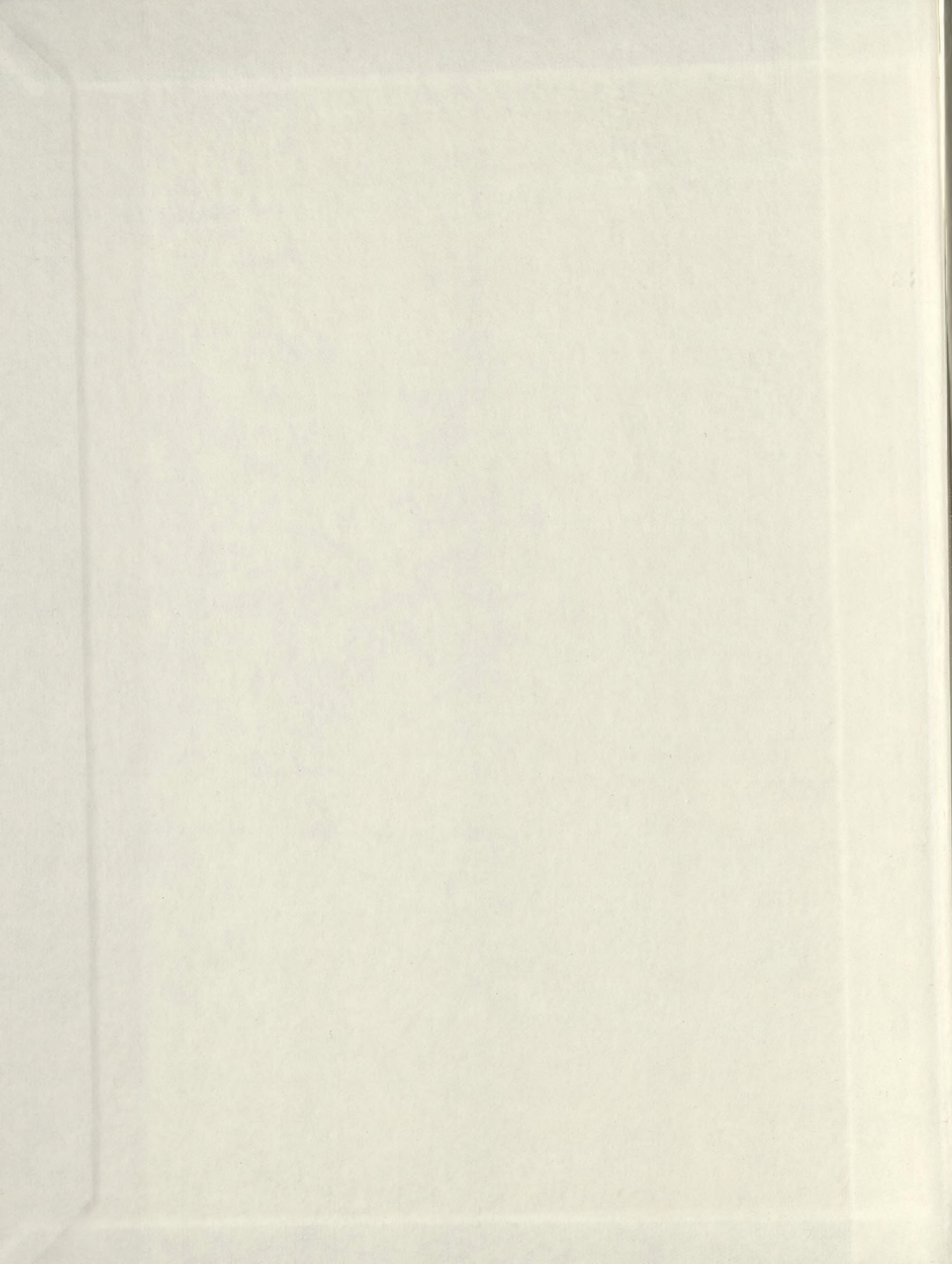


CHURCH AND STATE IN UPPER CANADA:
JOHN STRACHAN'S POLITICAL THEOLOGY
AND PRACTICE

BY

MATTHEW G. ROWLEY,
BTh, MDiv



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Matthew G. Rowley, BTh, MDiv

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Christian Theology)

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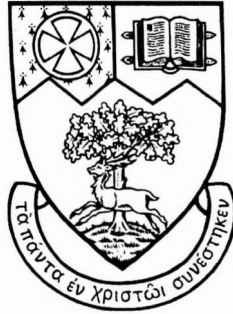
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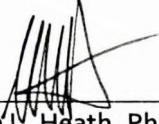
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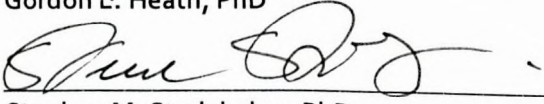
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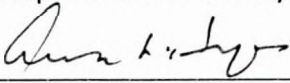
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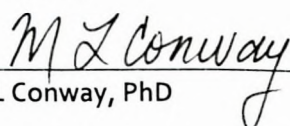
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ABSTRACT

“Church and State in Upper Canada: John Strachan’s Political Theology and Practice”

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Doctor of Philosophy (Theology), 2020

The purpose of the dissertation is to argue that John Strachan’s involvement in politics and education stemmed from his belief that a generally Christian and particularly Anglican Tory British culture would provide the healthiest form of society in Upper Canada. The project provides a counterbalancing view to the common narrative that Strachan was an ambitious and greedy theological turncoat who stifled the political, educational, and religious development of Upper Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century. It argues instead that Strachan was consistent with the thoughts and beliefs of an eighteenth-century Anglican Tory. Chapters 1 to 3 detail the key political and religious events of the eighteenth century in Britain and North America, as well as Strachan’s early life and personal influences. These chapters show that Strachan’s worldview was shaped by the events of the eighteenth century, and that it is difficult to understand his beliefs and actions without recognising the formative power of those occurrences. Chapters 4 to 6 detail Strachan’s theological beliefs in the three central areas of church, education, and politics, emphasising the firm and unchanging nature of these beliefs, and their defining role in his life and actions. Chapters 7 to 9 illustrate how he put those theological beliefs

into practice in the three instances of the Clergy Reserves, King's College, and the battle over Responsible Government. Compromise was unthinkable for Strachan, and caused his defeat in each of the three engagements, a fact that dispels the idea that he was motivated solely or mainly by personal ambition. Instead, Strachan is shown to be an Anglican Tory, theologically motivated and consistent in his support for the established church, Christian university education, and the need to preserve the "Glorious Constitution."

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Completing a project of this magnitude could not have been possible without the loving support and encouragement of many people. To my wife Joanna I owe everything. She has been a tower of strength and encouragement throughout the entire process. I am eternally thankful for all that she has done for me. To my children I owe thanks for their patience and their encouragement as I laboured. Special thanks go to Alicia Hein and Elaine Phillips, tireless readers whose vastly superior knowledge of the intricacies of English ensured that my drafts were well polished. To Dr. Gordon Heath I owe thanks not only for the excellent supervision throughout the dissertation process, but also for his friendship and support through the whole period of my studies. To Dr. Steven Studebaker I owe thanks for his teaching and thought throughout my program. To Dr. Peter Engle I owe a great debt for encouraging me to start out in the path of higher education, as well as for his continued friendship and support through many years. To Pastor Dennis Traverse I owe a great debt for the mentorship that has had such a powerful impact in my life. To Dr. Rob Blackaby I owe my interest in political theology, as well as thanks for his mentorship and friendship. To my father Tim and my mother Karen I owe thanks for their encouragement and support through many years. To Ken Siemens I owe thanks for his encouragement and wise advice on many a day. Finally, to God be the glory and the praise for all that He has done in me and through me. May He be honoured above all and in all things.

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INTRODUCTION

Born in 1778 in Aberdeen, Scotland, and educated at King's College and St Andrews, John Strachan arrived in Upper Canada in 1799 to answer a call for school teachers.¹ Strachan became a schoolmaster in Kingston, where he began to teach the children of the leading citizens of the country.² Ordained an Anglican priest in 1804, Strachan moved first to Cornwall and finally York (Toronto), where he became active in the political life of the country through his association with the key governing figures of Upper Canada (all Anglicans).³ After taking a prominent role in York's government and defence during the war of 1812, Strachan became a member of the Executive Council, the chief governing body of Upper Canada.⁴ Strachan also took a seat in the Legislative Council, the upper house of the Upper Canada legislature, in 1820.⁵

In addition to his political and church work, Strachan continued to develop the Home District Grammar School, from which such eminent men as John Beverly Robinson and John and William Macaulay graduated and took up key roles in provincial politics.⁶ Strachan worked diligently through his political role to carry out his self-appointed mission of growing the rights and influence of the Anglican Church in Upper Canada, but as time went on opposition to his efforts mounted, especially from those who were not members of the Church of England.⁷ Non-Anglicans resented Strachan's heavy-handed manner and his refusal to recognise that Anglicans made up a small percentage of

¹ Craig, "Strachan, John," 1.

² Flint, *Pastor and Politician*, 25.

³ Craig, "Strachan, John," 5.

⁴ Flint, *Pastor and Politician*, 47.

⁵ Craig, "Strachan, John," 6.

⁶ Craig, "Strachan, John," 6.

⁷ Flint, *Pastor and Politician*, 104.

the church population in Upper Canada.⁸ In addition to his forced resignation from the Executive Council of Upper Canada, Strachan's pet project of founding King's College as a particularly Anglican educational institution was blocked by the Lieutenant Governor and a combination of interest groups who did not want to see Anglican establishment become a reality.⁹

In 1827, Strachan was made archdeacon of York, and became bishop of the newly minted Diocese of Toronto in 1839, at the age of sixty-one.¹⁰ Throughout his active political career he also maintained a busy ecclesiastical schedule, first as priest in York, then as archdeacon and bishop. Until 1866, one year before he died, he followed a triennial schedule, which took him to every corner of the diocese (most of what is now the province of Ontario), preaching, confirming, baptising, encouraging, and chastising wherever need arose.¹¹ Strachan's theological beliefs relating to the legitimacy of the Anglican Church caused him to lead in controversy and contentiousness between the Anglican Church and other denominations, especially the Methodists. Strachan was also a key figure in the controversy over Clergy Reserves, the central issue of political battle in Upper Canada for over twenty years, finally ending in Strachan's and the Church of England's defeat as the Clergy Reserves were sold off in 1854.¹² Despite the defeat, Strachan salvaged some support for the Church of England clergy from the ashes, battling tenaciously to preserve what he could for future church ministry.¹³

⁸ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 176.

⁹ Craig, "Strachan, John," 12.

¹⁰ Flint, *Pastor and Politician*, 126.

¹¹ Osmond, "Churchmanship," 53.

¹² Craig, "Strachan, John," 19. The Clergy Reserves had been meant for the support of the Protestant clergy in Upper Canada, but a combination of political and religious enemies of hierarchy and establishment eventually succeeded in selling off these reserves and parceling out the proceeds to various interest groups.

¹³ Flint, *Pastor and Politician*, 146.

Education continued to be a key focus for Strachan throughout his life, and after the failure of the King's College project he worked to develop first the Diocesan Theological Institution to provide training for ordinands, and ultimately Trinity College, which opened in 1852, as the particularly Anglican educational institution he had dreamed of since his arrival in Upper Canada.¹⁴ Additionally, Strachan worked to develop primary education in every corner of the province, as well as championing pastoral education for clergy in the province.¹⁵

Strachan's theological beliefs relating to government also caused him to fight against any introduction of democratic ideology, or "Responsible Government," into Upper Canada, leading to a bitter struggle between him and the radical reformers in the province, most notably William Lyon Mackenzie.¹⁶ This struggle, stretching over more than twenty years, would be the centrepiece of Strachan's political battle to ensure the continued ascendancy of an Anglican Tory worldview in Upper Canada. Strachan's political defeat would also mark the defeat of Anglican Tory power in Canada, and a rapid change in the nature of government and the relationship of the state with the Church.¹⁷

John Strachan was a central character in the church, educational, and political life of Upper Canada (after 1841 Canada) from 1800 until his death on All Saints' Day in 1867. In that time he saw Upper Canada joined first with Lower Canada, and finally with the other British North American colonies to form The Dominion of Canada.¹⁸ The sixty-seven years he spent in the Canadas were foundational to the future of the new Dominion,

¹⁴ Craig, "Strachan, John," 17.

¹⁵ MacRae, "Religious Foundation," 2.

¹⁶ Patterson, "Enduring Canadian Myth," 495.

¹⁷ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 262.

¹⁸ Flint, *Pastor and Politician*, 153.

and the battles in which he was a central actor shaped the direction the new country would follow in politics, education, and religious life. Strachan is remembered as the “arch Tory of his era,” a staunch and unyielding advocate for tradition and establishment in Upper Canada.¹⁹ Strachan was a tenacious defender of the rights of and the need for an established Anglican church as the best theological, political, and educational institution to shape Upper Canada into a properly British, Christian land.²⁰ His advocacy for and advancement of the cause of the Church of England was a driving force throughout his long career in Canada.²¹ Though he lost many battles in his drive to maintain what he perceived to be the central pillar of British life in Upper Canada, and though he was forced to bow to pressure time after time, he never altered his core belief that there should be an established, politically, and educationally active Anglican church in Upper Canada.²² Throughout his life he was praised as a pillar of his community, and also attacked as a corrupt, self-interested charlatan and abuser of his various offices.²³ During his day he encountered the principled opposition of Egerton Ryerson, the Methodist minister and a key figure in early Upper Canada, as well as the less principled castigation of William Lyon Mackenzie, the radical politician and editor of the *Colonial Advocate* newspaper, as well as many others.²⁴ Subsequent generations of scholars and popular historians have mostly vilified him as a dark figure that led the sinister Family Compact and worked to frustrate democracy in Upper Canada.²⁵ It is in light of this damning view

¹⁹ Craig, “Strachan, John,” 20.

²⁰ Craig, “Strachan, John,” 20.

²¹ Osmond, “Churchmanship,” 54.

²² MacRae, “Religious Foundation,” 2.

²³ McDermott, “Theology,” i.

²⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 178.

²⁵ McDermott, “Theology,” i. Though the limited number of biographies written on Strachan are mostly positive, other historical works and biographers of his chief antagonists, both contemporary and

that the present study will evaluate Strachan's theological and political influences, beliefs, and actions to determine the historical facts of his life, and to discern the motivations that led him to the central place he took in Upper Canadian life. By studying the political and religious context of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the project will provide historical data that has been missing from the evaluation of Strachan's life and practices in the realm of political theology. By asking the question "what caused Strachan to develop and maintain his strong beliefs regarding church, state, and education (the three major categories of his political theology) throughout his life?" the project will go beyond evaluating him from an anachronistic standpoint, as in the cases of J. C. Dent and William Kilbourn, to present a historically informed view of the man, with particular focus on his political theology.²⁶

This dissertation argues "John Strachan's involvement in politics and education stemmed from his belief that a generally Christian and particularly Anglican Tory British culture would provide the healthiest form of society in Upper Canada." This thesis will address and counter the common narrative of Strachan as a self-centred, cynical opportunist, an enemy of freedom, or a seeker of wealth; images that still represent the majority view. It will challenge the limited narrative of Strachan's life and political theology by placing him within a historical and cultural framework, showing that Strachan's political theology and actions directly addressed the perceived dangers to the stability of Upper Canada in the early to mid nineteenth century, and that Strachan was part of a larger movement to secure a strong and vitally Anglican, Tory, and British Upper Canada in the face of contrary political and theological forces. At the same time

modern, paint a decidedly negative picture of Strachan. See Dent, *Portrait Gallery*, 94–115 and Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, 7 for two examples of this negative reading.

²⁶ See Dent, *Portrait Gallery*, 94–115 and Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, 7.

the project will evaluate Strachan's weaknesses, theological inconsistencies, and failures to answer the questions of why he was unsuccessful in the various causes he undertook.

Despite the controversial nature of Strachan's life, and despite his importance in the political, religious, and educational spheres of Canada, biographical studies are few, outdated, and academically inadequate. They fall into two groups; the first being books written before or just after Strachan's death; generally from a friendly perspective and often limited scope. The second group was written in the early to mid twentieth century, the latest in 1971, and all from a popular perspective.

In the first group there are four biographical works that provide first-hand knowledge of Strachan's life through the eyes of friends and associates. These are Henry Melville's sketch of Strachan's life within his history of Trinity College, Henry Scadding's brief memoir written immediately after Strachan's death, Fennings Taylor's study of Strachan's life as one of the last three bishops appointed by the Crown, and A. N. Bethune's landmark biography of his predecessor and mentor.²⁷ These works are to varying degrees friendly and even bordering upon hagiographic in nature, but they provide important contemporary information about Strachan, as well as showing the modern reader the way that Strachan's associates viewed him and his work. These early biographies are exceptional in their positive view of Strachan and the emphasis that they place upon Strachan as a churchman who did all in his power for the benefit of the people of Upper Canada as a whole. Bethune's stated intent was to "undertake to perpetuate the name and works of one actively engaged for nearly sixty-five years in the endeavour to

²⁷ Melville, *The Rise and Progress of Trinity College, Toronto: With a Sketch of the Life of the Lord Bishop of Toronto, as Connected with Church Education in Canada* (1852); Scadding, *The First Bishop of Toronto* (1868); Taylor, *The Last Three Bishops, Appointed by the Crown, for the Anglican Church of Canada* (1868); Bethune, *Memoir of the Right Reverend John Strachan, D. D., L. L. D., First Bishop of Toronto* (1870).

promote the welfare of his adopted country, and the spread of God's church."²⁸ This testimony is consistent across all these biographies, despite the willingness of some biographers, even Bethune, to recognise the imperfections of their subject. As conversation partners these biographies are important, because the later histories that take a Whig view of events tend to tell a uniformly negative story, and these early biographies show that the negative opinion of Strachan and his actions and motives was not universal.

The first of the second group of biographies, Thomas B. Robertson's 1928 study of Strachan, strikes a sharply different note than the friendly biographies of former days.²⁹ Robertson's short (66 page) popular treatment of Strachan paints a picture of a shrewd, sharp dealing, and hard man who managed to rise to the top of Upper Canadian society through the means of a questionable conclave of highly placed and privileged friends.³⁰ Though not totally hostile, Robertson presents Strachan as an anachronistic force, attempting to resurrect an idea which "had been buried some two hundred years earlier by Cromwell's Ironsides."³¹ Basing his view of Strachan on the Whig historical approach, he uncritically accepts the views associated with William Lyon Mackenzie and the Durham report. Robertson's view represents the standard interpretation of Strachan that has become common in Canadian historiography, and which the current study will argue needs revising. Sylvia Boorman's 1968 semi-biography is an interesting mix of scholarly research and novelistic popular writing, purposely taking "certain liberties with the facts," and presenting a lively story that is less useful for scholarly work.³² It will be of little use to the study. J. L. H. Henderson, and David Flint's works are the most recent

²⁸ Bethune, *Memoir*, iii.

²⁹ Robertson, *The Fighting Bishop* (1928).

³⁰ Robertson, *Fighting Bishop*, 11–13.

³¹ Robertson, *Fighting Bishop*, 13.

³² Boorman, *John Toronto* (1968), i–ii.

full biographies, both popular in nature but factual and attempting to present a balanced view of Strachan's beliefs and life in brief packages that are accessible to average readers.³³ Though they are good introduction to the man and his times, they lack detail and meaningful scholarly discussion of Strachan's life. In addition, neither of them deals with the broader English or eighteenth century world that formed Strachan, or provides more than a brief historical sketch of his life.

In addition to the published biographies of Strachan, there are several notable dissertations and one thesis that provide useful scholarly sources on aspects of the life and work of Strachan. J. L. H. Henderson's 1955 dissertation is an expanded biographical study upon which his later popular book was partially built, and provides a detailed overview of Strachan's work as bishop, giving lots of helpful data and discussion regarding Strachan's values and purposes as a churchman.³⁴ Judson Purdy's study provides valuable data on Strachan's educational endeavours throughout his tenure in Canada, as well as his beliefs in relation to education.³⁵ Norma MacRae's 1978 master's thesis studies Strachan's sermons spanning from 1803 to 1866 to show how Strachan's religious thought formed the foundation of his social and political thought.³⁶ This valuable resource illuminates a key area of Strachan's primary corpus, but is an incomplete picture both due to the scope of the project (his homiletical texts alone), and due to the size of the project (a Masters thesis). The present project will converse with MacRae's work and provide a far more complete view of Strachan's thought, as well as

³³ Henderson, *John Strachan, 1778–1867* (1968); Flint, *John Strachan: Pastor and Politician* (1971).

³⁴ Henderson, "John Strachan as Bishop, 1839–1867."

³⁵ Purdy, "John Strachan and Education in Canada 1800–1851."

³⁶ MacRae, "The Religious Foundation of John Strachan's Social and Political Thought as Contained in His Sermons, 1803 to 1866."

dealing with how that thought was worked out in real life. Finally, Mark Charles McDermott's 1982 dissertation provides an overview of Strachan's theology, presenting valuable data that informs the deeper study of his political theology that this project undertakes.³⁷ These dissertations and the thesis provide the only lengthy scholarly works on Strachan in the last century. Of additional importance is Robert Lochiel Fraser III's dissertation.³⁸ While it is not directly written about Strachan, he is one of the key figures in the study, and Fraser's research provides much useful data on Strachan's role in Church, education, and government in Upper Canada.

Because of the lack of studies that are particularly focused on Strachan, it is necessary as well to look at key works relating to Upper Canada's political, religious, and educational reality. Gerald Craig's landmark history of Upper Canada provides a vital resource for understanding and evaluating Strachan's role in Upper Canada, as well as presenting the most detailed historical study of the period that is available.³⁹ The current project benefits greatly from his work. Alan Hayes' book provides a detailed study of Anglicanism in Canada, with Strachan as one of the key figures who is discussed.⁴⁰ Hayes does lean more toward a Whig point of view, and the present project will challenge some of his conclusions about Strachan's deeds and motivations. Studies by David Mills, Rowan Strong, William Westfall, Carol Wilton, and Alan Wilson all provide valuable data on Upper Canadian issues and the thought and actions of Strachan, making up some of the lack in scholarly biographical materials on Strachan.⁴¹

³⁷ McDermott, "The Theology of Bishop John Strachan: A Study in Anglican Identity."

³⁸ Fraser, "Like Eden in Her Summer Dress: Gentry, Economy, and Society: Upper Canada, 1812–1840."

³⁹ Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784–1841*.

⁴⁰ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada: Controversies and Identity in Historical Perspective*.

⁴¹ Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada*; Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire c.1700–1850*; Westfall, *The Founding Moment: Church, Society, and the Construction of Trinity College*;

Finally, the histories written by John Charles Dent, William Kilbourn, and Lois Darroch Milani provide hostile witnesses and prime examples of the Whig view of Strachan and his life and work in Upper Canada.⁴² These works, and others like them, provide a counterbalance to the hagiographic and sympathetic readings of Strachan's biographers, presenting Strachan as a villain and charlatan who needed to be defeated by the vigorous attacks of people like William Lyon Mackenzie. As examples of the view that is still the most common popular and scholarly stance they also represent the main arguments that the thesis of this project will challenge. While the arguments of scholars like Dent, Kilbourn, and Darroch may seem dated, their hold on the popular view of Canadian history remains firm. Widely read histories, ranging from books like Pierre Berton's *Flames Across the Border* all the way to brief references to Upper Canada and the Family Compact in online encyclopedias continue to perpetuate this view of Strachan.⁴³ Because of this ongoing broad acceptance of the negative view of Strachan there is still need for a fresh review of his beliefs and practices for present-day Canadian history.

Relatively few journal articles relating to Strachan have been published in the last sixty years, though the ones that have been published provide some helpful thought on aspects of Strachan's life and beliefs. Among these, John S. Moir's articles on Strachan's correspondence with John Henry Newman and his relationship with Presbyterianism, William MacVean's article on Strachan's supposed Erastianism, Oliver Osmond's article

Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture in Upper Canada 1800–1850*; Wilson, *The Clergy Reserves of Upper Canada*.

⁴² Dent, *The Story of the Upper Canadian Rebellion; Largely Derived from Original Sources and Documents*; Kilbourn, *The Firebrand: William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion in Upper Canada*; Milani, *Robert Gourlay, Gadfly: The Biography of Robert (Fleming) Gourlay, 1778–1863, Forerunner of the Rebellion in Upper Canada 1837*.

⁴³ See Berton, *Flames Across the Border*, 37–61 for an example of this popular image of Strachan.

on Strachan's churchmanship, and John W. Clark Jr.'s article on Strachan's library are all useful resources. The large gaps in the study of Strachan's life are ample testimony to the continued need for deeper study of his place in Upper Canadian church, education, and government.

The above list of published biographies and other academic work on Strachan illustrates the lack of modern academic study of Strachan's life. The academic treatments listed above do provide some useful springboards upon which the proposed project can be launched, but their focuses leave much room for deeper and more thorough study and development upon this key person and time in Canada's history. This dissertation will partially address the shortfall in academic treatments by engaging in a detailed academic study of Strachan's influences, beliefs, and practices relating to political theology. Additionally, by studying the eighteenth century development of British society and church-state issues in various nations surrounding Upper Canada, the project will place Strachan and Upper Canada within a broader contextual framework, illuminating the relationships between the world of the eighteenth century and its resulting expressions in nineteenth century Canada. It is precisely during the period of Strachan's active life in Canada, from 1800-1867, that some of the key issues of church and state were settled. By focusing on Strachan's influences, beliefs, and actions, the study will shine light upon the way these events, that still influence Canadian church-state relations to the present day, came about. Additionally, by studying Strachan's motivations for engaging in political and educational work, the project will provide a greater understanding of the foundational principles of Canadian church-state dynamics, and may find some lessons that the

present day church can deploy in its engagement with the political and civic life of the nation.

The chief primary sources for the project will be the Strachan Fonds, housed in the Provincial Archives of Ontario. J. L. H. Henderson's *John Strachan: Documents and Opinions*, and John S. Moir's *Church and State in Canada 1627–1867: Basic Documents* also provide important primary data for the study. Additionally the primary sources listed in the bibliography will add depth to the research on Strachan's theology. Because of the scope of the project it will be impossible to add significant research into the various collections of papers from other key individuals of the day, such as Egerton Ryerson or William Lyon Mackenzie. Studying these other materials would require a broader focus than the current project can achieve, but could perhaps provide the author or another researcher with further fields of study at a later date. Additionally, the project does not have the scope to evaluate Strachan's corpus on issues other than political theology.

There will be three sections to the project encompassing three different aims. The methodology for the project will necessarily be a hybrid of two different forms spanning the three sections of the work. The first three chapters will provide a historical and cultural background to Strachan's life and environment. In order to achieve this goal the project will follow the historical method employed by Gerald M. Craig in *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784–1841*.⁴⁴ This work explores primary and secondary sources from a political, civil, social, and religious point of view to build a holistic picture of the world of early nineteenth century Upper Canada. "Craig felt the traditional historian's commitment to the specificity of time and place too keenly not to qualify any overarching framework. He distrusted abstractions; formulas were too fixed, analogies always

⁴⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, iii–xviii.

imperfect.”⁴⁵ Craig’s method does not attempt to unify his whole study around a theoretical approach, but follows a more flexible methodological approach of allowing the complex motivations and allegiances of people to show through and guide the narrative. This methodology has the benefit of providing a wide scope of research, not limiting the historical viewpoint to purely political considerations. Following Craig’s path then, this section will provide “a synoptic history, and a narrative one, tracing the main lines of development . . . not struggling to say something about everything.”⁴⁶ The methodology of the first three chapters of the study will also be furthered by reference to J. C. D. Clark’s *English Society 1688–1832*. Clark’s volume works to “reintegrate religion into an historical vision that has been almost wholly positivist; to discard economic reductionism; to emphasise the importance of politics in social history; and to argue against the familiar picture of eighteenth-century England as the era of bourgeois individualism.”⁴⁷ Clark further seeks to emphasise the importance and inseparability of religion and politics in the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Though Clark’s views of eighteenth century Britain are considered to be irregular by many historians of the period, his arguments are thorough and well supported with data, and the work he has done to return religion to a central position in the study of eighteenth century Britain makes him an invaluable source for the dissertation. Additionally, though he is an outlier in relation to the majority of historians in the field, other eminent historians such as Frank O’Gorman come to similar conclusions regarding elements of religion and the eighteenth century. The first section will follow the example of these approaches to study the historical

⁴⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, ix.

⁴⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, v.

⁴⁷ Clark, *English Society*, ix–x.

⁴⁸ Clark, *English Society*, x.

development of issues of church and state, establishment, and colonial practice from the beginning of the eighteenth century through to Strachan's day. It is important to build a compelling picture of the historical context of Strachan's world in order to understand the global forces that played upon lives and decisions in Upper Canada. This is especially significant when one realises that the leadership of Upper Canada were striving to replicate a particularly British national environment in Upper Canada.⁴⁹ Issues like the Whig-Tory controversy, the battles over Deism, Rationalism, and Free-Thinking, Tractarianism, the American Revolution, and the Methodist movement in Britain and the New World all have significance as the project works toward an understanding of the particular battles of Strachan's life, as well as the overarching concerns of the various factions that struggled to achieve their particular vision for the future of Upper Canada and the rest of the British colonies in the New World. This section will not be an exhaustive study of every conceivable angle, but rather will seek to achieve a basic background view of the world in which Strachan lived in order to focus the main argument of the project. The first section will end with a particular study of Strachan's early life leading up to the time of his entry into Upper Canadian life, thereby providing a historical framework upon which the study can build as it shifts to its second methodology, studying the vast quantities of archival material produced by Strachan to learn his own personal beliefs regarding theology, politics, the role of church and state, education, and other relevant ideas. The study of Strachan's early life will follow Flint's approach (see below).

⁴⁹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, ix.

The second portion of three chapters will mirror Richard Allen's methodology in *The View from Murney Tower*, Allen's biographical study of Salem Bland.⁵⁰ Allen's purpose in writing was to return serious theological study into Canadian historiography, providing deep study of the "social, intellectual, and ethical inputs" that shaped Bland's social focuses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁵¹ Focusing on the intersection of Bland's religious, political, and social thought, Allen's biography provides an excellent template for the present project's mission to place Strachan's political theology in context. Allen's careful use of primary sources, coupled with input from secondary sources to flesh out the details of Bland's thought, will provide the model for the sections' archival research and secondary source integration. The task of this section will be to systematically evaluate Strachan's own words to determine his thoughts and beliefs on the subject of political theology, building a picture of those beliefs through studying his entire archival corpus of autobiography, correspondence, official documents, sermons, and poetry.⁵² In addition to Allen's methodology, Desmond Seward's approach to historical context will be employed, and Strachan's writings will be studied in relation to the historical context presented in section one to attempt to divine the motivating factors that led him to take the stances he did.⁵³ These statements and understandings will then be critically evaluated in light of the historical context in which Strachan dwelt to draw some conclusions as to the motivations, fears, and aspirations that led Strachan to believe the way he did on the various issues evaluated within the section.

⁵⁰ Allen, *Murney Tower*, xxxiv.

⁵¹ Allen, *Murney Tower*, xxxiv.

⁵² The Strachan Collection, housed in the Provincial Archives of Ontario, comprises twenty-one reels of microfilmed documents ranging from minor receipts to an autobiography.

⁵³ Seward, *Jerusalem's Traitor*, 7-9.

The last three chapters of the dissertation will build upon the former sections by presenting a historical study of three key battles in Strachan's church, educational, and political life in Upper Canada, evaluating the ways that Strachan attempted to put his political theology into action, as well as how he was forced to compromise and even surrender on some issues despite his dearly held beliefs and visions for Upper Canada. This section will combine archival research to present his own views of each of these situations, plus integration of secondary sources, both friendly and hostile, to fill in the picture and provide a rounded study of Strachan's role in the foundation of the unique Canadian relationship between church and state. On the friendly side, a close study of A. N. Bethune's biography will provide important background of how Strachan was viewed by his allies in his own day. On the hostile side, studies of William Lyon Mackenzie's and Egerton Ryerson's views on Strachan will provide balance to the work. David Flint employs a similar approach to this in his biography of Strachan, and the author will draw upon his methodology, though providing a more exhaustive study than Flint's popular work was able to achieve.⁵⁴ The present project will incorporate the broader study of Strachan's beliefs and motivations from section two, along with key primary and secondary sources such as Mackenzie and Bethune, to provide a nuanced and balanced view of a person with complex motivations which led Strachan to work so diligently to influence the development of Upper Canada.

Chapter 1 details the development of the Tory political ascendancy in Britain over the eighteenth century, showing the problems and struggles, most notably the Wilkesite controversy, the American Rebellion, and the French Revolution, and the effect that these

⁵⁴ Flint, *Pastor and Politician*, 7-9.

had upon the psyche of the nation.⁵⁵ It then details the religious situation of eighteenth century Britain, showing why the Anglican Church was a key element to Toryism and to the strength of the British constitution, while Dissent partnered with the Whig party to work to weaken the bonds of establishment and even the monarchy. The chapter argues that Strachan and the other Anglican Tories gained their theological and political ideology from eighteenth century Britain, and that Strachan's political theology would have been quite regular for someone of his place and time.

Chapter 2 details the situation of church and state relations in British North America prior to Strachan's arrival. The work of Charles Inglis, Jacob Mountain, and John Graves Simcoe especially is studied to show that the Anglican Tory vision for British North America was a broad idea and official government policy, rather than merely an anachronistic attempt by Strachan to return to the days of the Commonwealth. It shows that Strachan entered a world where the Anglican Tory ascendancy and the radical reforming impulse were already doing battle over the future shape of British North America.

Chapter 3 presents a brief biographical study of Strachan's early life and the formation of his character as he grew up and went to school in Scotland. This chapter emphasises the effect that growing up in the latter years of the eighteenth century had upon Strachan's thought and practice, as well as emphasising the determination to do what he believed to be right no matter what it cost that characterised Strachan's life from

⁵⁵ Several names are used to denote the unrest and subsequent war fought in the Thirteen Colonies from 1775-1783, such as the Revolution, the War of Independence, the Revolutionary War, and the American Rebellion. This study will employ the term American Rebellion, first because it was the term commonly employed in Britain and Upper Canada during the period studied, and would have been the term familiar to John Strachan and his contemporaries, and second in order to differentiate between the American event and the French Revolution.

an early age. It then specifically studies the theological and political influences that shaped his view of the church, education, and politics, and which shaped him into the resolute Anglican Tory who entered public life in Upper Canada.

In chapter 4 the project proceeds to an evaluation of Strachan's theology of the church, first demonstrating Strachan's firm belief in the entire Christian Gospel and the revealed word of God. It further emphasises his total belief in the legitimacy of the Anglican Church as the purest expression of primitive Christian doctrine, with the apostolicity, doctrinal purity, and uniqueness of the Church working together to confirm its unique status as the only possible national established Church. It additionally shows what Strachan understood to be the role and tasks of the Anglican Church, especially showing his belief that the Church had a central role in inculcating civic virtues and building a godly nation.⁵⁶ It also studies his theological views regarding Dissent and the Roman Catholic Church, working to explain his hostility towards these denominations' public roles.

Chapter 5 studies Strachan's theology of education, especially emphasising Strachan's theological belief in the necessity of particularly Christian education. The chapter demonstrates that Strachan believed in education which would produce Christian, practical, and virtuous subjects of the Crown, who would advance the well-being of the whole society. It also shows that it was his theological beliefs that led him to his beliefs regarding the legitimacy, role, and tasks of education, and that his beliefs demanded that education would be shaped in an Anglican Tory mould.

⁵⁶ Though the title "Anglican Church" was not employed until 1955, it will be used interchangeably with other names for the Church of England throughout this project.

Chapter 6 details Strachan's theology of politics, detailing his understanding of the grounds of legitimacy, roles, and tasks of government. The emphasis on government provision for religion is a key idea that the chapter brings forward, as well as Strachan's firm belief in the providential superiority of the "Glorious Constitution" of Britain. A core idea for Strachan was that this constitution was firmly Christian and particularly Anglican in nature, and that the removal of the established Church from its position would destabilise the whole thing. The chapter demonstrates that Strachan's theology was not merely Anglican, but also firmly Tory, determining the direction that he felt bound to follow in political life, and especially providing firm support for his theologically uncompromising stance against any change to the Upper Canadian expression of the British constitution.

Chapter 7 details Strachan's churchmanship through his involvement in the Clergy Reserves controversy. The chapter shows that Strachan was determined to achieve full recognition of the Church of England as the established Church of Upper Canada, and follows his losing battle to maintain the Reserves as the sole property of the Anglican Church. The chapter details Strachan's dogged determination to do what he believed to be right, but also shows his ultimate defeat at the hands of the Reformers and the ideology of separation of church and state. Strachan's Anglican Tory beliefs are shown to have been the prime drivers of his determined protection of the Reserves, rather than the ambition or avarice of which he is sometimes accused.

Chapter 8 details Strachan's dedicated work to found an Anglican university in Canada as a means of placing his theology of education into practice. The chapter demonstrates that Strachan's purpose in founding and fighting for King's College was to

build an Anglican Tory future in Upper Canada. It further shows that Strachan worked diligently to provide a place to train young Canadians in religious and practical knowledge, to create a home-grown clergy, and to form the future generations that would shape the trajectory of Upper Canadian life. It again details the failure of his plan in the face of the Reformers and Dissenters in Upper Canada whose vision regarding the future of Upper Canada was diametrically opposed to Strachan's own.

Finally, chapter 9 details Strachan's protracted campaign against Responsible Government and the abandonment of the traditional British constitutional system in Upper Canada. It shows that Strachan resisted the democratising forces of the Reformers due to his strong theological belief that it would not only be imprudent but sinful to abandon the traditional constitution in favour of the ideas of the Enlightenment and the United States. Once again, the chapter shows Strachan's ultimate defeat, but illustrates his dogged determination to maintain an Anglican Tory foundation for society in Upper Canada.

The study then draws all of the evidence of the nine chapters together into a conclusion that argues the thesis that John Strachan's involvement in politics and education stemmed from his belief that a generally Christian and particularly Anglican Tory British culture would provide the healthiest form of society in Upper Canada.

CHAPTER 1
ENGLISH SOCIETY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Introduction

The political and religious settlement of England in the eighteenth century formed the ideological and constitutional foundation of Upper Canadian society in the early nineteenth. In order to properly evaluate Strachan's beliefs and practices regarding church and government it is necessary to study the political and religious events of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (especially the upheavals of the Wilkes controversy, the American Rebellion, the French Revolution, and the Reform Bill of 1832) in order to understand the world in which Strachan was raised and that shaped his political and religious thought. Without fully appreciating the deep effects that these events had upon people of all levels of society, it is impossible to fully appreciate Strachan's firm Anglican Toryism and unbending attitude in each of the three areas of Church, education, and politics that will be studied in later chapters. Additionally, without understanding the religious nature of political events in England, especially the role of Dissenting and heterodox groups in the Whig and radical political movements, it is difficult to develop a well rounded view of Strachan's purposes behind opposing Dissenting denominations and their political activities in Upper Canada. This chapter first provides an overview of the key political events of the eighteenth century, then presents the complex religious situation in Britain, arguing that these events provided not only the context in which Strachan was formed ideologically, religiously, and socially, but also

that his battles in Upper Canada were the continuation of the same struggles that had been going on in Britain for over a century.

English Politics in the Eighteenth Century

The Glorious Revolution of 1689 created a new political establishment in England—one that emphasised the role and power of the Parliament, but also created a dichotomy between the royal prerogative and parliamentary power.¹ It “raised fundamental issues about the nature of kingship, and introduced new and jarring concepts into politics and religion.”² One of the results of the revolution, the Act of Toleration of 1689, altered the balance of political life by providing official status to Protestant Dissenters within the English state.³ In opposition to this and other changes, the Tory party received the strong support of the High Church Anglicans, while Dissenters voted strongly in favour of the Whigs, who rewarded their support by easing the strictures of established church authority.⁴ This change allowed greater participation by Dissenters in public life. Occasional conformity, whereby a Dissenter would carry out only the minimum requirements of the religious test law to hold public office, further increased their public participation.⁵ The defence of the established Church of England and the Protestant succession became key Tory party concerns, in contrast to the Whigs who proved to be far more open to the liberalisation of religious life in the country.⁶ Party politics was

¹ Krieger, *Kings and Philosophers*, 98.

² Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 9.

³ Marcham, *History of England*, 495.

⁴ Hill, “Parliament, Parties, and Elections,” 59.

⁵ Marcham, *History of England*, 496.

⁶ Hill, “Parliament, Parties, and Elections,” 60. Hill points out that the Whigs had radically changed their party emphases from their previous strong support for republicanism and radicalism to a more moderate view as they gained and held power, first under William and then under the Hanoverians. As the century progressed, however, these leanings would reassert themselves in support for America and France.

structured around gaining power, and religion, especially the Church of England establishment and offices, became one of the key tools used by parties to gain advantage.⁷ The use of religious authority as a means to gain power, or conversely the limitation of established Church power to weaken Tory power, was replicated in the New World colonies throughout the next century and a half.⁸ Whig ministries worked to break down the establishment and to free Dissenters for greater political action, and Tory ministries reinforced the establishment as a bulwark against Roman Catholicism and Dissent in the nation. An important tool of this reinforcement was the limitation of Dissenting educational institutions.⁹ The Tories became the party of the Church, the landed interests, and of traditional theories of monarchy, while the Whigs became not only the party of Dissenters, but also the mercantile and city interests, espousing Enlightenment ideas regarding contract theory and natural rights.¹⁰ Whigs also became the party of Erastianism, viewing the Church of England as a mere organ of the government purposed with maintaining order rather than a spiritual body tasked with caring for the souls of the nation.¹¹

The first great political struggle of the eighteenth century was the Jacobite movement, attempting from 1715 to 1745 to restore King James and his successors to the

⁷ Marcham, *History of England*, 515.

⁸ Marcham, *History of England*, 515.

⁹ Hill, "Parliament, Parties, and Elections," 62. The attempt by the Tories to strangle non-Anglican education is an important precedent as the study evaluates Strachan's purposes regarding education in Upper Canada.

¹⁰ Steele, "Governance of the British Empire," 106.

¹¹ Kilcrease, *Church Crisis*, 71. The membership of the House of Commons was far from common in the modern sense of the idea. Most members were either gentry, merchants, or in many cases, the younger sons of nobility or elder sons waiting to take their places in the Lords. Many Commons seats were controlled by patrons in the aristocracy, and many other seats were influenced by nobles who cast guaranteed weight behind their chosen candidates. Additionally, the standard for membership of the electorate was the 40-shilling freehold, ensuring that only those of some means could vote. All these measures meant that the Commons was still the bailiwick of the middle and upper classes of society. See Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 206–7; 246–7 for further discussion of the electorate.

throne.¹² It was not a unified movement, but a loose grouping of different people such as the Scots, some Tories, Roman Catholics, and Non-Jurors (those Anglican clergy who could not pledge allegiance to the new king and queen and therefore lost their posts).¹³ Because of their diverse motivations and diverse desired outcomes, they were never able to develop the cohesion necessary to pose a true threat to the 1689 settlement, but nonetheless posed a real threat in the minds of the British civil population and government, raising spectres of the Wars of the Roses and the Civil War.¹⁴ Until the movement collapsed in 1746, the threat remained that any weakening of the government or the strength of the monarchy could lead the Catholic Stuarts back to the throne, a danger that galvanised the otherwise anti-prerogative Whigs to support the Glorious Revolution and the Hanoverian monarchs.¹⁵ This threat ensured that all sides supported political stability, in the same way that the hostile presence of the French in Canada ensured that the American colonists maintained a strong connection with Britain. For people like Strachan the lesson from the Jacobite movement was clear: support of the royal prerogative and the existing constitution meant unity and security within and security without.

Because of the number of Tories who supported the Jacobite movement, they had to work hard to return to political favour and prove their loyalty.¹⁶ The Whigs took the opportunity to root out their Tory enemies from positions of authority in government, the

¹² Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 229.

¹³ Szechi, "The Jacobite Movement," 84.

¹⁴ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 229. It should be kept in mind that the monarchy had only been restored in 1660 after an upheaval that had seen the king beheaded and the constitution of England overthrown by the Cromwellian Republic.

¹⁵ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 236.

¹⁶ Szechi, "The Jacobite Movement," 85.

armed forces, the judiciary, and the Church.¹⁷ As the High Church Tories were replaced by Low Church Whigs in the important bishoprics, the doctrine and strength of the established church was deliberately weakened as the minority Whig bishops introduced Erastian Whig ideals. The Dissenting political movement also worked to undermine Church establishment (see below), in turn contributing greatly to the Whig political ascendancy from 1714–1760.¹⁸ Such moves caused Anglican Tories like Strachan to deeply distrust the motivations of any Whig or radical political agenda, and caused them to resist Whig involvement in government at any level.¹⁹

Roman Catholics were also seriously tainted by their loyalty to the Jacobite cause, and were highly distrusted in society, removing any hope of Catholic emancipation or participation in public life.²⁰ Distrust of Roman Catholics continued, creating serious unrest in Britain and the Colonies as a result of the Quebec Act of 1774 as Protestant British citizens were placed under Roman Catholic civil authority.²¹ This unrest burst into violence with the Gordon Riots of 1780.²² Strachan exhibited the same distrust of Roman Catholic motivations throughout his life, opposing their involvement in any level of government.

Recent work on the eighteenth century shows that the Jacobite movement was seen as a real existential threat to the stability, monarchy, government, and church of the

¹⁷ Responsibility for appointments in the Church hierarchy rested with the Crown, and due to the post-revolution political settlement this meant the government of the day had de facto authority over Church appointments. For the present study it is important to recognize the role that the government in power had as the controller of these appointments.

¹⁸ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 237.

¹⁹ The term radical was used in the day for a unique political group, both by the group themselves and by their opponents. Subsequent histories maintain this title to describe this group.

²⁰ Szechi, "The Jacobite Movement," 84.

²¹ Clark, *English Society*, 215.

²² Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 118–19. The Gordon Riots resulted from popular agitation to repeal the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 that got out of control. Lord George Gordon, a fierce anti-Catholic, led a march on London that resulted in the looting and burning of Catholic businesses and the deaths of hundreds before the army was able to gain control of the capital.

nation.²³ Szechi goes so far as to argue that “no other European *ancien regime* power, except perhaps Poland, faced anything like such a persistent, dynastic/ideological challenge from dissident elements in its own population.”²⁴ The idea of a subversive Roman Catholic presence waiting to destroy church and state carried on in the popular imagination into the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic, especially with Strachan’s generation who grew up in a world still haunted by the memories of these events. This same fear echoed in the mistrust of the political motivations of the Methodists and other American-based denominations in Upper Canada during and after the War of 1812.

George III’s accession caused the political system to shift away from Whig ideology toward Tory traditionalism. George III worked to restore the authority and extent of the royal prerogative that had been whittled away under the Whigs before 1760.²⁵ Political instability resulted as successive ministries worked to gain the confidence of the king and the Commons at the same time.²⁶ Another factor was the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), which caused the Whig government to run aground in the face of a new king who was ready for peace and tired of faction, and a nation that agreed.²⁷ Though the war had been successful, including the capture of the Canadas after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, the financial and physical costs weighed upon the government. The prime minister brokered a peace that, though it made the annexation of the Canadas permanent, returned many other wartime territorial gains, and led to further political

²³ Szechi, “Jacobite Movement,” 82.

²⁴ Szechi, “Jacobite Movement,”

²⁵ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 201.

²⁶ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 203.

²⁷ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 90.

acrimony.²⁸ The Whigs claimed that George III was creating a political despotism, and throughout the next several decades a cry of “secret influence” became a common refrain, as Whigs accused various persons of working to control the king for their own private aims.²⁹ These same accusations continued to be a powerful tool of Whig and radical opposition to the governing classes during Strachan’s career in Upper Canada. William Lyon Mackenzie and others made the same charges against the Family Compact and the Crown. Whig party ideology coalesced around attempts to force “secret influences” into constitutional accountability, to oppose the king’s ministries, and to work for Whig party government as the only protection against despotism.³⁰ Included in their political agenda was the weakening and hopeful destruction of establishment in the Church of England, a key support of the royal prerogative in the face of Whig ideas of natural law.³¹ The Whig party became the party of radicalism and Enlightenment constitutional ideals. By contrast, the Tory party of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century became the party of conservatism and the maintenance of the status quo, despite maintaining a large following in the bourgeoisie and working classes of the urban constituencies.³² Even as the theories of order based on the absolute sovereignty and prerogative of the king began to pass away, the concept of the naturalness and superiority of the monarchy as a necessary institution underpinned by an established Church remained, with the Tory party

²⁸ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 91. An additional consequence that the government did not consider was the defensive safety it provided to the Thirteen Colonies, encouraging those who were dissatisfied with British rule to contemplate separation from the mother country, free of the fear of French invasion if they did so. See Craig, *Upper Canada*, 2 for a discussion of the strategic concerns involved in the American Rebellion.

²⁹ Lee, “Parliament, Parties, and Elections,” 75.

³⁰ Lee, “Parliament, Parties, and Elections,” 74.

³¹ Dickinson, “British Constitution,” 16.

³² Clark, *English Society*, 79.

as the political custodian of this worldview.³³ The idea of the “body politic” as an anthropomorphic analogy to the human body and the human family became a central ideal of conservative political thought and formed a key foundation for the modern philosophy of conservatism.³⁴ As part of a non-juring Scottish Episcopalian family, Strachan was raised with these concepts from his earliest years, and his political life in Upper Canada reflected this ingrained conservatism.

Wilkes and Liberty

The story of John Wilkes illustrates the profound uncertainty and political upheaval that was possible when a forceful person captivated the mob and turned it to his own ends. Wilkes was born into a Dissenting family and educated at Dissenting academies; he was not only a political radical, but a religious radical as well, embracing Deism and Free Thinking.³⁵ First elected in 1757, Wilkes rose to prominence after founding the *North Briton* newspaper, through which he worked to undermine the reputation and authority of the prime minister and the king through publishing false slander about the prime minister’s public and private life, especially regarding his sexual life.³⁶ Capitalising on old Jacobite and Commonwealth tropes, on 23 April 1763 Wilkes went even further and published issue 45 of the *North Briton*, which directly accused the king of either being a liar or the dupe of lying ministers over the acceptance of the Treaty of Paris, which

³³ Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism, and Politics*, 263.

³⁴ Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism, and Politics*, 263.

³⁵ Rude, *Wilkes and Liberty*, 18. For the present study the portrait of a popular elected newspaperman who was not given to scrupulous honesty or fair play, who worked to tear down the established system of patronage and government authority with the backing of a popular movement is particularly important, as it closely foreshadows the battles between John Strachan and the Family Compact on one side and Robert Gourlay and William Lyon Mackenzie on the other.

³⁶ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 223. These same tactics would be employed by Gourlay and Mackenzie against Strachan and other members of the Family Compact.

Wilkes found to be unacceptable.³⁷ Lord Grenville, the prime minister, issued a general warrant for the arrest of those responsible for the seditious libel of Number 45, and as the publisher Wilkes was arrested.³⁸ Crowds gathered in support of Wilkes, and the slogan “Wilkes and Liberty” became a rallying cry for the discontented elements of London and the rest of England.³⁹ Wilkes claimed to stand for the “liberties not only of gentlemen, but also of the middling and inferior sort of people who stand in need of protection.”⁴⁰ Though Wilkes was freed from prison because of his parliamentary privilege, the actions of the government in issuing a general warrant caused deep unrest due to its perceived authoritarian nature.⁴¹ The government lost credibility through these challenges, and Wilkes became a hero to reformers.⁴² His depiction of the government as a tyrannical force seeking to destroy the common liberties of Englishmen led to his idolisation by the London mobs.⁴³ George and the government would not allow Wilkes the victory, and when a blasphemous poem *An Essay on Woman*, a semi-pornographic parody of Pope’s *Essay on Man* written by Wilkes was published, both houses of Parliament condemned him for seditious and blasphemous libel.⁴⁴ Wilkes was revealed to be a rake and profligate rather than an altruistic champion of freedom and good government, and he

³⁷ Marcham, *History of England*, 573. The number 45 was a deliberate reference to the Jacobite rising of 1745, evoking images of attempted overthrow of the Crown and government.

³⁸ Rude, *Wilkes and Liberty*, 35.

³⁹ Duffy, “Contested Empires,” 224. These cries echoed the calls that were beginning to sound across the Atlantic Ocean as the colonists of the Americas began to defy the authority of the Crown over their society.

⁴⁰ Jarrett, *Britain*, 283.

⁴¹ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 96. Similar tactics would be used by the Family Compact to silence Robert Gourlay and to attempt to silence Mackenzie, though they failed in the second case.

⁴² Rude, *Wilkes and Liberty*, 35.

⁴³ Plumb, *Eighteenth Century*, 121. Mackenzie deployed these same tactics against Strachan and the Compact throughout his long and acrimonious publishing career, up to and including his revolutionary declaration.

⁴⁴ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 222.

lost most of his support.⁴⁵ Wilkes was expelled from the House of Commons and forced to flee to France, maintaining only his popularity among the radical elements of the London streets, but losing his broader credibility.⁴⁶

Wilkes' use of obscenity and blasphemy as a political weapon against the political establishment was a continuation of the radical theological agenda of the Deists, Arians, Socinians, and others of heterodox theological persons who gained influence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Richard Baron, one of Wilkes' influences, deployed the anticlerical and anti-church writings of the Socinians to assert that

scarcely one point of faith, as professed and taught in any national church, is to be found in the scriptures, but everything is distorted and misrepresented: to say nothing of the hierarchy, prelacy, and church power, with their appurtenances and tackle, all of them as contrary to Christianity, as sodomy is to nature. Therefore, I say, let the hierarchy be demolished, and the Trinity be kicked out of doors.⁴⁷

Wilkesites even created a parody Liturgy that was widely reprinted in the American Colonies:

I believe in Wilkes, the firm patriot, maker of number 45. Who was born for our good. Suffered under arbitrary power. Was banished and imprisoned. He descended into purgatory, and returned some time after. He ascended here with honour and sitteth amidst the great assembly of the people, where he shall judge both the favourite and his creatures. I believe in the spirit of his abilities, that they will prove to the good of our country. In the resurrection of liberty, and the life of universal freedom forever. Amen.⁴⁸

The Wilkesite movement had a religious, as well as a political agenda. It was this kind of anti-Christian rhetoric that would sour the terminology of "liberty" for Anglican Tories like Strachan.

⁴⁵ Rude, *Wilkes and Liberty*, 35–6.

⁴⁶ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 96. The same methods would be used to repeatedly expel Mackenzie from the Upper Canada Assembly. Ultimately Mackenzie would also be forced into exile once his true colours were revealed after the abortive Upper Canada Rebellion.

⁴⁷ Baron, quoted in Clark, *English Society*, 310.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Clark, *English Society*, 311.

The Wilkes controversy created a rift in the Whig party, with Old Whigs standing against the libellous and seditious activities of Wilkes, while the New, younger Whigs saw an opportunity to turn the nation to their own ends.⁴⁹ They especially attacked the system of patronage and government control that had led to the expulsion of Wilkes from the parliament in the face of his popularity amongst the people.⁵⁰

Wilkes continued to be a problem, returning from France for another parliamentary election, being arrested, elected, kicked out of parliament, the centre of popular riots, and attacking the government every step of the way.⁵¹ Wilkes was adopted by the London crowds as the “symbol of irreverent defiance of authority around which a parliamentary reform movement was developed independent of the oligarchic parliamentary elite.”⁵² The government’s heavy-handedness and repression of demonstrations, which led to bloodshed, further unsettled the country.⁵³ The appointment of an alternate member to take Wilkes’ seat in Parliament was a deeply unpopular decision in the country and provided ammunition to radicals in the American colonies who were fomenting rebellion in the New World.⁵⁴ These methods would be used by Mackenzie and others as comparisons for the actions of the Family Compact in their suppression of dissent, and the cry of “Wilkes and Liberty” resurfaced for decades after.

O’Gorman recognises Wilkes as the first “popular” politician, able to create a distinctive political movement due to mass crowd power and popular support. His popular appeals bypassed the normal channels of political authority, and showed the way

⁴⁹ Jarrett, *Britain*, 285.

⁵⁰ Jarrett, *Britain*, 285. These same kinds of attacks would be used against the Tories in Upper Canada.

⁵¹ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 223.

⁵² Duffy, “Contested Empires,” 224. Again this parallels the story of Mackenzie, who became the rallying point for opposition to Strachan and the Family Compact.

⁵³ Rude, *Wilkes and Liberty*, 37.

⁵⁴ Marcham, *History of England*, 574.

for future radicals to maintain their influence in the face of the political establishment.⁵⁵ By using popular culture, and by emphasising self-expression, the rights of Englishmen, and traditional liberty he was able to co-opt popular dissatisfaction for personal gain and identify his own personal cause with the cause of English liberty in general.⁵⁶ As R. B. Mowat states, “with all the forces of government and privilege against him, he had triumphed simply by reason of his popular appeal.”⁵⁷ The precedent had been established for popular agitators to use the press and the power of the masses to overwhelm government and to set the political narrative. Robert Gourlay and especially William Lyon Mackenzie employed the tactics pioneered by Wilkes to stage their assaults upon the Anglican Tory ascendancy in Upper Canada, and Strachan and the Compact, recognising the damage such tactics had done in previous generations, responded with firm refusal to bend to their attacks and demands, leading to the crisis of the Upper Canada Rebellion.

The Rise of Radicalism, the American Rebellion, and the French Revolution

The Wilkes affair illustrates the growth of political radicalism, a movement that was to reshape British politics as much by its foreign iterations as by its domestic influence. Political radicalism in England began with the publishing of John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), wherein he argued that the divine right of the king to rule was actually a slavish doctrine, inconsistent with natural law.⁵⁸ Locke argued that the only legitimate form of government was “one established by consent and framed in order to

⁵⁵ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 224.

⁵⁶ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 224.

⁵⁷ Mowat, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, 33.

⁵⁸ Dickinson, “The British Constitution,” 4.

secure for all men their natural rights to life, liberty, and property.”⁵⁹ These ideas were the political results of Enlightenment theories of natural law and the theological heterodoxy of Deists, Socinians, Arians, and other heterodox Dissenters and Free Thinkers of the age.⁶⁰ While Locke’s views were on the fringe of debate and only accepted by a few radical Whigs in his day, by the late eighteenth century they had become the building blocks of radical challenges to the political order.⁶¹ Locke’s thought, transmitted through the ideologies of the American Rebellion and French Revolution, became a powerful ideological force in the battles over church and government in Upper Canada.

Despite the attempts of a small minority of radical Whigs to justify the Glorious Revolution on the grounds of contract theory, their arguments fell flat in the face of a majority of Whigs and Tories who preferred to look to the ancient rights of the Englishman and preserve royal prerogative even as they practically deposed their king.⁶² Once the danger of Jacobite revolt receded, however, Whigs felt freer to reflect upon the foundations of political authority and consider alternative theories of society that limited the prerogatives of the Crown.⁶³ The royal prerogative was the issue that the radicals would attempt to use to shift the established political settlement.⁶⁴ The new ground of the 1760s political settlement saw moderate Whigs and Tories affirming together that the power and prerogative of the Crown was a key pillar of the constitution, impossible to

⁵⁹ Dickinson, “British Constitution,” 4.

⁶⁰ Trenchard, *A Short History*, quoted in Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 19.

⁶¹ Dickinson, “British Constitution,” 4.

⁶² Dickinson, “British Constitution,” 5.

⁶³ Robbins, *Commonwealthman*, 117, 228.

⁶⁴ Clark, *English Society*, 203.

alter without damage to the whole of the English constitution.⁶⁵ This position reinforced the role of the two houses of Parliament not as partners with the Crown but rather subordinate petitioners dependent upon Royal favour, a stance roundly decried by the radicals.⁶⁶ The combined Tories and conservative Whigs further fused the old doctrines of hereditary right and passive obedience with the idea of the liberties of Englishmen and the free constitution upheld by the Crown and the Royal prerogative.⁶⁷

As the traditional system entrenched under the Tories, growing groups within the Whig party of the 1770s and after were seized with radical ideas and advocated for great political reforms. In the 1770s they agitated for shorter parliaments and seat redistribution. In the 1780s they worked for a larger program of increased suffrage, annual elections, the secret ballot, and equalised constituencies.⁶⁸ These radical voices were also sympathetic to those in the American Colonies who felt misused by the government, and they also supported the revolution in France.⁶⁹ Indeed, there was a concerted effort by the radical groups on both sides of the Atlantic to work together in a common cause, with the American issue providing the British radicals a chance to regularly attack government policy.⁷⁰ Radical calls for a reformed parliamentary franchise and constitutional reform were the grounds of opposition to government policy, nicely dovetailed with the American arguments regarding representation and colonial government.⁷¹ The radicals claimed that the lack of true representative democracy in the

⁶⁵ See Brecknock, *Droit Le Roy*, 31–36 for this amalgamated Tory and conservative Whig position.

⁶⁶ Brecknock, *Droit Le Roy*, 32.

⁶⁷ Blackstone, *Commentaries Vol. 1*, 184–211.

⁶⁸ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 223. The same calls for “responsible government” of various kinds would be used in the battles between the Family Compact and their opponents in Upper Canada.

⁶⁹ Robbins, *Commonwealthman*, 320.

⁷⁰ Langford, “Old Whig, Old Tory,” 118.

⁷¹ Langford, “Old Whig, Old Tory,” 118.

British Parliament and government meant that it could not provide a true expression of the will of the people, validating the arguments of the American radicals.⁷² These same arguments were employed against Strachan and the Family Compact in Upper Canada until the defeat of the Tory ascendancy following the union of the Canadas in 1841.

The American Rebellion

The American colonies by the middle of the eighteenth century were becoming powerhouses of agricultural, mercantile, and industrial achievement, with standards of living, birth rates, and growth by immigration that vastly outstripped European norms.⁷³ Their population grew from 223,000 in 1700 to 2,000,000 by 1776, with corresponding rises in living standards, creating a vast colonial middle class.⁷⁴ The rapid increase of printing presses, newspapers, and libraries, in addition to an educated populace, created a class of wealthy and well-read people who were open to new ideas. The arguments of radicals, the religiously heterodox, and Enlightenment thinkers regarding political representation, and Locke's ideas of natural law and the social contract gained broad influence among colonial intellectuals in the 1760s.⁷⁵ The political awareness of the population was also heightened by the larger percentage who were qualified to vote for local provincial assemblies (somewhere between 50 and 80 percent of the adult male population were enfranchised, at least twice as many as in the home country).⁷⁶ This

⁷² Langford, "Old Whig, Old Tory," 118.

⁷³ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 99.

⁷⁴ Speck, "Britain and the Atlantic World," 453.

⁷⁵ Clark, *English Society*, 49. It should be noted that the supposed prominence of Enlightenment ideas in the first half of the eighteenth century in the Americas, and the supposed proto-democratic and egalitarian societies that some claim they fashioned have been effectively questioned by Clark, who differentiates between the relatively small number of influential men involved in the "Patriot" movement and the broader populace who were indifferent or even opposed to radical political theory. See Clark, *English Society*, 48–9.

⁷⁶ Speck, "Britain and the Atlantic World," 453.

wider franchise and sense of political entitlement led the provincial assemblies to dramatically reduce the power of the executive within the colonies, leading the governor of South Carolina to complain in 1748 that the political balance of the British Constitution had been overthrown in the New World.⁷⁷ By midcentury the government in London was already finding this independent streak to be concerning. There was a marked movement toward separation from the mother country, as seen by Charles Wesley when he stopped in Boston in 1737 and heard locals speaking openly of the need to “shake off the English yoke.”⁷⁸ Party distinctions also shifted from the complex identities of Britain to a simple distinction of Whigs as anti-government (meaning Parliament and home country government) and Tories as pro-government.⁷⁹ A contemporary newspaper writer said that the only place where party distinctions were clear anymore was in the New World, while at home the parties were built around personality and consistent only in their desire for power.⁸⁰

As O’Gorman shows, the American colonies were far from united in their natures prior to the American rebellion.⁸¹ Especially significant for the present study were the large Dissenting populations of the New World. Four colonies (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island) in New England were Puritan and either Congregational or Presbyterian in nature, one was founded with the particular idea of religious freedom and non-establishment (Pennsylvania), and one had even been founded with a strong Roman Catholic population (Maryland).⁸² Religious dissent from

⁷⁷ Speck, “Britain and the Atlantic World,” 454.

⁷⁸ Wesley, *Calm Address to England*, 6.

⁷⁹ Langford, “Old Whigs, Old Tories,” 107.

⁸⁰ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 221.

⁸¹ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 187.

⁸² O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 187.

Anglicanism was common, and Dissenting congregations fought the appointment of Anglican bishops in the New World.⁸³ Indeed, the rumour of an Anglican “plot” to appoint bishops against the will of the colonial majority may have helped to precipitate the rebellion.⁸⁴ Though Anglican numbers were small, the Church was still considered to be the primary loyalist force in the colonies, and when the rebellion did break out many Anglican clergy and parishioners experienced persecution, loss of property, and even loss of life.⁸⁵ As will be seen below, heterodox Christian doctrines often drove anti-church and anti-clergy attacks, and the American intellectual elites broadly accepted these core doctrines, leading to vehement, violent reaction to any attempts to establish Anglicanism in the New World.⁸⁶

The turmoil in the home country profoundly effected the life of the colonies, leading to government policies inconsiderate of the wellbeing and sentiments of the American colonists.⁸⁷ The Seven Years’ War caused a divergence of attitudes and views between the colonists and the home country, as the colonists refused to take responsibility for their own defence, continued to trade with the enemy throughout the conflict, and vilified Parliament as it attempted to impose its will upon the colonies in aid of the war effort.⁸⁸ Prior to the fall of Canada in 1760, and the confirmation of the annexation of French territories in the New World of 1763, the Crown and British government played a vital role in the protection of the American Colonies from conquest or subjection by the French.⁸⁹ With the removal of the threat from the French and their indigenous allies, the

⁸³ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 57.

⁸⁴ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 57.

⁸⁵ Sweet, “Anglicans in the Revolution,” 52.

⁸⁶ Walters, *Rational Infidels*, 8.

⁸⁷ Mowat, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, 210.

⁸⁸ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 188.

⁸⁹ Marshall, *Eighteenth Century*, 291.

colonies felt secure and began to chafe at the imposition of the will of the British Parliament, especially regarding taxation.⁹⁰ The end of the Seven Years' War seemed to be the right time for Parliament to begin integrating the colonies into the economic and political responsibilities of empire, so the government quartered an army in the New World and emplaced taxes to pay for it, as well as to contribute toward the debts incurred in conquering New France.⁹¹ Additionally, as the regular army was forced to defend the colonies against the Pontiac uprising of 1763–1764, the government proclaimed strict controls over settlement beyond the Allegheny Mountains to assuage indigenous concerns regarding European settlement.⁹² The colonists felt that their natural rights to expand were being curtailed, and they began to resent a government that seemed to be making policy without actual knowledge of the local situation. Complaints against an unresponsive and ignorant home government making policy for the colonies became central to the growing problems in the relationship between Britain and the colonists.⁹³ The Quebec Bill of 1774 caused further discontent within the American Colonies, as it seemed to the colonists to violate the rights of Englishmen by placing subjects of the Crown under Roman Catholic authority, an act that Horace Walpole equated to the abuses of James II.⁹⁴ The Bill became another avenue for the colonists to attack the government, becoming an excuse to rebel, even though they encouraged those same French Canadians to join their rebellion.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Mowat, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, 210.

⁹¹ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 189.

⁹² Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 101.

⁹³ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 101. This problem would find echoes in the nineteenth century as British North Americans dealt with the Colonial Office.

⁹⁴ Walpole, *Last Journals, Vol. 1*, 357.

⁹⁵ Johnson, *Taxation No Tyranny*, 57–8.

In response to discontented communiques from the New World colonists, successive British governments ignored and denigrated their concerns, with Lord Grenville remarking that “no one likes to be taxed.”⁹⁶ The imposition of the Stamp Act, which had been in place in England since 1694, angered the colonists enough to precipitate a “Stamp Act Congress” and the passage of a motion against the British government’s imposition of taxes. This congress was accompanied by popular riots in the major cities.⁹⁷ Parliamentary authority began to break down in the New World, with customs men and stamp distributors fleeing for their lives as the “Sons of Liberty” worked to weaken parliamentary authority and agitate for independence.⁹⁸ The Whigs tended to support the colonists, and Edmund Burke wrote and argued in parliament on their behalf, encouraged the government to make peace and listen to the colonists’ demands for reform.⁹⁹ With the meeting of the first Continental Congress in 1774 and the passing of the Declaration of Rights that demanded that the British government bow to colonial wishes, the die was cast for rebellion. The ensuing upheaval and war provided an opportunity for radical politicians to fly their political banners and agitate for radical change, and in the case of the colonies, complete independence and a new experiment in radical government.¹⁰⁰

Clark argues that the main issues of the American crisis were not taxation, representation, or reform, but rather the core issues of allegiance and sovereignty.¹⁰¹ This was seen first of all in attacks upon the authority and autonomy of royal governors, as

⁹⁶ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 102.

⁹⁷ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 103.

⁹⁸ Marshall, *Eighteenth Century*, 391.

⁹⁹ Burke, *Speech on American Taxation*, 254.

¹⁰⁰ Marcham, *History of England*, 572. For further information on the timeline of the American Rebellion see Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 92–128.

¹⁰¹ Clark, *English Society*, 199.

throughout the eighteenth century a steady campaign to erode the prerogative powers of the king's deputies in America in favour of the colonial assemblies had been undertaken.¹⁰² In the 1730s both the Massachusetts and Rhode Island colonial assemblies were penalised for their opposition to the British government.¹⁰³ By the 1750s, colonial officials were warning the government of growing insubordination by colonial institutions and leaders toward the government in Britain, especially the Parliament.¹⁰⁴ These same tactics would be employed in Upper Canada, and wariness of the power of elected legislatures would entrench Strachan and others in their fight against Responsible Government.

Many of the key players in the drive for independence were deeply influenced by the combination of Deistic and Arian/Socinian/Unitarian theology with radical political ideologies.¹⁰⁵ Under the impetus of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776), the American colonists declared their unwillingness to submit to the hereditary monarchy of England, which Paine declared to be nothing more than "Popery of government."¹⁰⁶ Paine's arguments regarding monarchy revolved around theological themes, rather than purely political, because it was Anglican political theology that underpinned the British constitution.¹⁰⁷ Paine called for the government to "protect all conscientious professors (of religion)," and for diversity of religious opinions to be encouraged through non-establishment.¹⁰⁸ Paine's suggestions regarding separation of religion from the state were taken up in the famed "Establishment Clause" of the American Constitution, which

¹⁰² Langford, "Old Whigs, Old Tories," 117. The same tactics would be employed by the reformers in Upper Canada.

¹⁰³ Langford, "Old Whigs, Old Tories," 118.

¹⁰⁴ Langford, "Old Whigs, Old Tories," 117.

¹⁰⁵ Walters, *Rational Infidels*, xiii.

¹⁰⁶ Paine, *Common Sense*, 15.

¹⁰⁷ Clark, *English Society*, 326.

¹⁰⁸ Paine, *Common Sense*, 43.

declared that “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”¹⁰⁹ This new polity was celebrated in England by the Deist Richard Price, who hailed the new nation as a “rising empire, extended over an immense continent without BISHOPS,—without NOBLES,—and without KINGS!”¹¹⁰

Clark demonstrates that the charges of tyranny levelled against George III by the political radicals of the colonies, led by Paine, were built upon the same charges of conspiracy against liberty that were laid by Wilkes and other political radicals.¹¹¹ These claims find no more truth regarding George’s treatment of the colonies than they do in relation to the supposed conspiracy against the rights of Englishmen upon which Wilkes built his career.¹¹² This is especially shown by the fact that the majority of the public chose to side with the Crown rather than the supposed champions of liberty in the forms of American rebels (and later on the French revolutionaries).¹¹³ Krieger likewise confirms that George III was not nearly as authoritarian as the rhetoric of the Whig opposition would lead one to believe. He was the first Hanoverian born in England, and the first to be entirely tutored in the English constitution and the revolutionary settlement. Indeed, “George III’s policies and problems alike stemmed from the very literalness with which he took his rights within the constitution.”¹¹⁴ Contrary to radical accusations, William Blackstone, the great eighteenth century English expositor of the law, found George III to be a sovereign who,

¹⁰⁹ “The Constitution,” *State Papers*, 17. In the Constitution proper and in the brief preamble there is no mention of God at all, apart from the date (in the year of our Lord), a drastic departure from the close acknowledgement of God in English political life. The establishment clause is actually contained in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Clark, *English Society*, 331.

¹¹¹ Clark, *English Society*, 194.

¹¹² Clark, *English Society*, 194.

¹¹³ Duffy, “Contested Empires,” 224.

¹¹⁴ Krieger, *Kings and Philosophers*, 334.

in all those public acts that have personally proceeded from himself, hath manifested the highest veneration for the free constitution of Britain; hath already in more than one instance remarkable strengthened its outworks; and will therefore never harbour a thought, or adopt a persuasion, in any the remotest degree detrimental to public liberty.¹¹⁵

Wilkes had already shown, however, that it was not necessary for agitators to have valid grievances, especially when they had the power of the press on their side to spread their message. Radicals in Upper Canada would continue to use the inflated accusations of supposed tyranny pioneered during this period as a means of attacking the governing classes in the nineteenth century. Strachan himself would write a lengthy pamphlet to defend George III in the face of continued attacks in the early nineteenth century.¹¹⁶

Radicals in Britain made the American Rebellion into one of their great causes as the ongoing war led to economic issues, unemployment, low wages, and high prices.¹¹⁷ As the war went against Britain, charges of incompetence and secret cabals were laid against the Crown and aristocracy, and cries for parliamentary reform were raised by the Wilkesite and radical parliamentary groups.¹¹⁸ Once again calls for liberty were raised, but this time the mood of the nation was against those who attacked the Crown.¹¹⁹ The Tories were universally and uncompromisingly hostile to the position of the American colonists, due to the core Tory principles of the divine right of the properly constituted authority and the principle of non-resistance to that authority.¹²⁰

The cataclysm that saw the colonies become independent cannot be, according to O’Gorman, recognised as anything but a crucial turning point in English and world

¹¹⁵ Blackstone, *Commentaries Vol. 1*, 326. Though Blackstone was a Tory, his views were broadly respected and he was not seen as a person who put party above sound evaluation.

¹¹⁶ See Strachan, *Discourse*.

¹¹⁷ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 227.

¹¹⁸ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 226.

¹¹⁹ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 227.

¹²⁰ Langford, “Old Whigs, Old Tories,” 124.

history. By establishing the independence of a nation state with huge potential wealth and political power; by serving as a symbolic example of national independence and political and economic freedom based on Enlightenment principles; by exhausting and diverting French strength and energies that would lead to the collapse of its government and further revolution; and finally by creating immense political and economic problems in Britain that could not be easily resolved and that would dominate the following decades, the Rebellion reshaped the world.¹²¹ Langford confirms that the American conflict dominated the best part of two decades in British political life, almost to the exclusion of any other issue, engendering constitutional and practical problems, as well as leading to a clash of religious and political ideologies that shook British constitutional institutions. It was at its greatest extent the first bout in a battle between two diametrically opposed philosophies that would struggle for the hearts, souls, and governments of nations across the world.¹²² Included in the list of those nations would be Anglican Tory Upper Canada under John Strachan and the Family Compact.

In addition to the grand political and constitutional problems posed by the rebellion, it was also the cause of the first real settlement in what would become Upper Canada, as Loyalist refugees left the colonies to start new lives in British North America. The difficulties of governing colonies from thousands of miles away, and the consequent problems arising from lack of understanding of the local situation, would continue to be a problem for the colonial administration of the nineteenth century. These problems would have grave impact upon the political and religious world of Upper Canada as British governments wrestled with the needs of Loyalists and other colonists in British North

¹²¹ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 187.

¹²² Langford, “Old Whigs, Old Tories,” 108.

America.¹²³ The same themes of liberty, equality, and the rights of self-government would become divisive issues for John Strachan and his contemporaries as they strove to recreate the Glorious Constitution in Upper Canada, and the same voices of opposition that had caused the rebellion in the United States would attack them throughout the early nineteenth century.

The French Revolution and the Reform Movement

The French Revolution of 1789 rocked Europe to its foundations, both through the unprecedented and shocking ideas and actions of the National Assembly in Paris, and through the wars and resulting cataclysms that swept the Continent.¹²⁴ The final result of the revolution would not be seen until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The Revolution was viewed in Britain as “the master theme of the epoch in which we live.”¹²⁵ In Britain it would provoke a constitutional, political, social, religious, and strategic crisis and threaten to tear apart the British polity.¹²⁶ Enlightenment principles had been broadly propagated on both sides of the Channel, and under the influence of John Locke and Voltaire the ideas of personal reason versus revelation, authority, and tradition had continued to drive the growth of a radical movement in Britain that was ripe to espouse the principles of the Revolution.¹²⁷

In 1789, the French nation was in chaos as its already overstretched finances were further taxed by the one billion livre French support of the American Rebellion.¹²⁸ As the

¹²³ Moir, *British Era*, 87.

¹²⁴ Schama, *Citizens*, xiv. For a detailed study of the history of the French Revolution see Schama, *Citizens*.

¹²⁵ Shelley, quoted in Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 328.

¹²⁶ Macleod, “French Revolution,” 112.

¹²⁷ Macleod, “French Revolution,” 112.

¹²⁸ Winks and Kaiser, *Europe*, 140.

burden of taxes to pay this debt increased, in 1787 the French Estates (the equivalent of the Parliament) were called to consider the problem of the finances and other core issues. Talk moved fatefully from tax policy to parliamentary reform, and the result of these reforms was that the commons took over the assembly and declared itself the National Assembly, which did not meet at the behest of the king and could not be dissolved.¹²⁹ After popular uprisings in Paris led to the destruction of the Bastille prison, aristocrats were attacked by armed mobs, which lynched and burnt their way through the countryside. Newspapers came into circulation, printing dramatic tales that fuelled the mob fury of Paris and encouraged dramatic acts of vengeance. The Assembly voted to abolish the aristocracy and to do away with traditional church tithes, and in August 1789 approved the Declaration of the Rights of Man, a new constitution for the new nation. Church property was confiscated in November 1789, and the Church was reformed as an Erastian tool of the state that expected all clergy to swear to uphold the new constitution.¹³⁰ The Revolutionary *philosophes* of the new regime began to reshape France root and branch, creating a ten-day week and fashioning a new calendar, and even creating the new “Cult of Reason” that was to replace Christianity as an appropriate revolutionary faith.¹³¹ By 1793, the Revolution had decided to do away with the king altogether, and Louis XVI was beheaded.¹³² The Terror that followed would claim the lives of thousands of French men, women, and children.¹³³ By the ultimate end of the revolutionary government with the destruction of Napoleon at Waterloo, hundreds of

¹²⁹ Breunig, *Age of Revolution*, 7.

¹³⁰ Winks and Kaiser, *Europe*, 154.

¹³¹ Schama, *Citizens*, 778.

¹³² Winks and Kaiser, *Europe*, 159.

¹³³ Breunig, *Age of Revolution*, 19.

thousands of Frenchmen and millions of other Europeans lost their lives on the battlefields of Europe, and the fabric of the continent was irrevocably altered.¹³⁴

The initial British reaction to the fall of the Bastille, the abolition of feudalism, and the establishment of constitutional government in France was mostly positive, with the belief that the French nation was finally joining the path that Britain had been on since the Glorious Revolution.¹³⁵ Many in government saw only just desserts for the country that had aided the American Colonies in their rebellion against the mother country, and looked forward to the opportunity to gain status as France lost.¹³⁶ The sweeping French declarations of principled reconstruction and radical new experiments in government caused special excitement to many would-be reformers in England as they saw a model that they could follow in their own battle for reform of the English constitution.¹³⁷ The attacks upon monarchy, priesthood, and aristocracy seemed to provide the template and the impetus to continue pushing for reforms, most obviously seen in the several attempts made in the 1780s and 90s to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts.¹³⁸ Poets and intellectuals like William Wordsworth wrote odes to the Revolution, believing that human nature was being born anew and that the human race was going to ascend to the next stage in its development and refinement.¹³⁹

In November 1789, Richard Price, a Dissenting minister and political agitator, preached a secular sermon to the members of the Revolution Society, a reform group that advocated popular representation of the same variety that was being instituted in France.

¹³⁴ Breunig, *Age of Revolution*, xi.

¹³⁵ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 233.

¹³⁶ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 141.

¹³⁷ Webb, *Modern England*, 129.

¹³⁸ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 141.

¹³⁹ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 234.

He lauded the revolution in France as a worthy successor to and continuer of the work that had been done in the American Rebellion, and concluded that the French had “underlined the lesson of 1689—that the people, as the true source of power, reserved the right to choose their governors, or to cashier them for misconduct and institute new forms of government.”¹⁴⁰ Price further contended that the ardour for liberty would catch and spread, leading to greater religious and political equality in Britain.¹⁴¹ Price’s society agreed to send a congratulatory address to the French National Assembly, expressing the desire to see their successes replicated in Britain.¹⁴²

On the other side of the issue, Edmund Burke penned one of the best known political works of all time, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), as he responded to and refuted the assaults upon the British constitution, and exposed the flaws of the new French experiment.¹⁴³ Rejecting Price and others’ simplistic contractarian view of the world, Burke defended the existing political/theological order by attacking the Revolution as a subversive and extensive overturning of the political and social structures that the Glorious Revolution had instituted in Britain.¹⁴⁴ Chief among these things was the trinitarian balance of the monarch, aristocracy, and commons in government, with the Church underpinning all and upholding law, order, property, religion, and morality—it was an evil revolt against the foundations of European civilisation as a whole to desire to overturn these things.¹⁴⁵ In contrast to these destructive forces, Burke argued that the English nation was resolved to “keep an established church,

¹⁴⁰ Webb, *Modern England*, 129.

¹⁴¹ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 142.

¹⁴² Macleod, “French Revolution,” 115.

¹⁴³ Burke, *Reflections*, 32.

¹⁴⁴ Macleod, “French Revolution,” 114.

¹⁴⁵ Macleod, “French Revolution,”

an established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree it exists, and in no greater.”¹⁴⁶ Burke especially defended the established Church of England as the first ground for his confidence in the English system:

First I beg leave to speak of our church establishment, which is the first of our prejudices, not a prejudice destitute of reason, but involving in it profound and extensive wisdom. I speak of it first. It is first, and last, and midst in our minds. For, taking ground on that religious system, of which we are now in possession, we continue to act on the early received and uniformly continued sense of mankind. That sense not only, like a wise architect, hath built up the august fabric of states, but, like a provident proprietor, to preserve the structure from profanation and ruin, as a sacred temple, purged from all the impurities of fraud, and violence, and injustice, and tyranny, hath solemnly and forever consecrated the commonwealth, and all that officiate in it.¹⁴⁷

Burke argued that the French Revolution must be condemned for destroying the very foundations of the national glory in the name of the “Rights of Man.”¹⁴⁸ Burke’s thought on government and the Church formed the core foundation of the Anglican Tory ideology that Strachan and others defended throughout the early nineteenth century in Upper Canada.

In addition to many laudatory responses, Burke’s challenge of the French Revolution attracted many attacks, chiefly from Thomas Paine, who had already written to defend the American Rebellion. In his *Rights of Man* (1791–1792), Paine castigated the British government, attacked the church and the aristocracy, and called for a constitutional convention in Britain to match those that had made such dramatic changes in America and France.¹⁴⁹ Paine challenged not only the establishment that Burke was supporting, but even the idea of toleration as practised in England:

¹⁴⁶ Burke, *Reflections*, 91.

¹⁴⁷ Burke, *Reflections*, 91.

¹⁴⁸ Burke, *Reflections*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Duffy, “Contested Empires,” 229.

Toleration may be viewed in a much stronger light. Man worships not himself, but his Maker; and the liberty of conscience which he claims is not for the service of himself, but of his God. In this case therefore, we must necessarily have the associated idea of two things: the mortal who renders the worship, and the Immortal Being who is worshipped. Toleration, therefore, places itself, not between man and man, nor between church and church, nor between one denomination of religion and another, but between God and man; between the being who worships, and the Being who is worshipped; and by the same act of assumed authority which it tolerates man to pay his worship, it presumptuously and blasphemously sets itself up to tolerate the Almighty to receive it.¹⁵⁰

Paine found in the French disestablishment of the Church an opportunity for true liberty, and called for the same freedom in Britain, removing the confessional underpinnings of the state in favour of the liberties that he saw being granted to all Frenchmen.¹⁵¹ Paine's dramatic arguments would be taken up by Upper Canadian radicals as they argued against the Clergy Reserves and Anglican control of the university system.

Because of the liberalism of the government, the influence of Enlightenment ideas, the strength of the radical movement, the expansion and radicalism of the Wilkesite press, and the fallout from the national disaster of the American Rebellion, English society was vulnerable to dramatic upheaval and the same kind of root and branch change that was happening in France.¹⁵² Reforming enthusiasm spread through Britain in the wake of the Revolution and subsequent laudatory works of Paine and others, and the government began to worry that the reforming fervour would lead to a similar movement in the British Isles.¹⁵³ As time went on, however, Paine was in his turn challenged, and as the Revolution became increasingly violent and destructive, the initial euphoria of the British majority turned to horror and alarm.¹⁵⁴ The French Revolution, the

¹⁵⁰ Paine, *Rights of Man*, 137.

¹⁵¹ Paine, *Rights of Man*, 162.

¹⁵² Macleod, "French Revolution," 113.

¹⁵³ Webb, *Modern England*, 130.

¹⁵⁴ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 234.

subsequent war, and the political upheaval brought on by both were burned into the consciousness of the people of Britain. Lord Cockburn, a Scottish peer, remembered the time as a boy:

I heard a great deal that I did not comprehend; but, even when not fully comprehending, boys are good listeners, and excellent rememberers, and retain through life impressions that were only deepened by their vagueness, and by their not flowing into common occupations. If the ladies and gentlemen, who formed the society of my father's house, believed all they said about the horrors of French bloodshed, and of the anxiety of people here to imitate them, they must have been wretched indeed. Their talk sent me to bed shuddering.¹⁵⁵

By January 1793, the French had abolished their monarchy, unleashed the Terror, and executed King Louis XVI on the guillotine.¹⁵⁶ Under the impetus of the radical anticlerical ideology of Voltaire and Rousseau the French had undertaken a policy of "dechristianisation," the destruction of all formal religion and its replacement with the "Cult of Reason."¹⁵⁷ Finally, Britain was thrown into war with France as the Revolutionary government decided to export their ideals to the rest of Europe.¹⁵⁸ The government responded with a repressive policy against reformists that met with broad support and loyalty from the country.¹⁵⁹ Angry mobs in Birmingham attacked the house and laboratory of Joseph Priestly, burning them to the ground.¹⁶⁰ Priestly, Paine, and others chose to exile themselves in America or France, and their published attacks upon the British Church, government, and society became ever more extreme.¹⁶¹ The leaders of the upper and middle classes who had been in favour of reform now disassociated

¹⁵⁵ Cockburn, *Memorials*, 50. Cockburn's experience would have matched Strachan's, as he was in grammar school, college, and tutoring the children of the wealthy through this period of upheaval. He was fifteen years old when King Louis XVI was executed.

¹⁵⁶ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 234.

¹⁵⁷ Schama, *Citizens*, 776. A statue of the "Goddess Reason" was raised on the altar at Notre Dame in Paris.

¹⁵⁸ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 234.

¹⁵⁹ Webb, *Modern England*, 131.

¹⁶⁰ Webb, *Modern England*, 131.

¹⁶¹ Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 147.

themselves from the radical movement as it continued to reflect the ideas and language that had led to such excesses in the French nation.¹⁶² Charles James Fox and a few other radicals still occasionally stirred on the benches of Parliament, but the Anglican Tory ascendancy was firmly in control, and had broad public support to use the tools of power to suppress reforming and republican urges within the nation. Maintenance of the existing order continued to be a prime purpose as the government faced off against an enemy threatening invasion and destruction of the British nation.¹⁶³ The same approach to the perceived threat of radical ideology animated Strachan and the rest of the Anglican Tory elite to defend the traditional British order in Canada.

H. T. Dickinson describes the unwritten constitution upon which the government of Britain rested at the close of the eighteenth century as unique in the world, balancing three pure elements of government into three essential aspects of English government: the Crown, the Lords, and the Commons.¹⁶⁴ Monarchy alone protected the country from disputes over legitimate right to exercise authority, as well as providing a single leader who could act decisively during crisis, but had the shortcoming of placing the life, liberty, and property of the subjects at the mercy of a single ruler with the potential of being a tyrant. Aristocracy provided an able elite that could lead and offer an inspiring example, but they were prone to degenerating into a narrow, self interested oligarchy. Democracy provided the greatest liberty to the ordinary subject, but it was too slow to act and inherently unstable and prone to collapse into anarchy and mob rule. If, however, the three elements were mixed together in one government, the strengths of each would

¹⁶² Williams and Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, 147.

¹⁶³ Webb, *Modern England*, 135.

¹⁶⁴ Dickinson, "British Constitution," 7.

preserve against the weaknesses of the others.¹⁶⁵ It was upon this foundation that the British government at the end of the eighteenth century operated. The roles of King, Lords, and Commons had been stabilised under Anglican Tory hegemony and provided the colonies with an example of the balance to be struck between prerogative, privilege, and the people. But radicals and reformers continually sought to undermine the balance of power between the three aspects of government, and as the nineteenth century unfolded the sharp changes to the constitutional balance of powers effected Britain and the colonies as well.

Britain avoided a comparable revolution to France and internal rebellions like those of the American colonies through conservative maintenance of the existing political and religious order. O’Gorman argues that Britain emerged in 1820 stronger than it had been in 1789, enduring the ordeals of the struggle against revolutionary France without endorsing any reforming ideologies, without parliamentary reform, and without Catholic emancipation in Ireland. The only change to the structure of the state had been the Act of Union with Ireland in 1800. Indeed, O’Gorman argues that Britain weathered the crisis *because* no great structural changes were made and because it had preserved its existing social and political systems, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the status quo in the face of revolution.¹⁶⁶

The maintenance of British societal structure, including the established church and the balance between the Royal prerogative, the Lords, and the House of Commons was the preservative against the chaos and cataclysm of the Rebellion and Revolution. “The symbolic provision of permanence was a prime function of the royal family in the secular

¹⁶⁵ Dickinson, “British Constitution,” 7.

¹⁶⁶ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 273.

sense, as it was of the Church in the spiritual.”¹⁶⁷ This determined preservation of the status quo was not merely a reality in Britain, but was also evident in British North America, most particularly in Upper Canada.

Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the fundamental ideological divide in British politics was the scope of the royal prerogative.¹⁶⁸ The Whigs and Tories jockeyed over this central matter, and all the political battles of the day must be viewed through the prism of the issue.¹⁶⁹ The Whig party believed it was their duty to resist the tyranny of a king who wished to raise himself up as a despot, and the Tories believed it was their duty to preserve the Crown from the depredations of party politicians who were intent on violating the constitution and limiting the power and authority of the king for their own factional interests.¹⁷⁰ Lee argues that Toryism therefore became an amalgam of attitudes centred on the preservation of the established aristocratic, landed, Anglican order against both internal opponents like political radicals, Catholics, and Dissenter, and external enemies, above all the French. The royal prerogative formed the main line of this defence, dividing the Tories as defenders from the Whig critics of the “secret influence” of the Crown.¹⁷¹ The defence of this prerogative was a key reason for Strachan and other Anglican Tory’s fight against Responsible Government.

In contrast to the Tories, by the time they returned to power in 1828 the Whigs had gained a reputation among those who valued Anglican Christianity and church establishment as being irreligious, favourable to the destruction of establishment and to

¹⁶⁷ Clark, *English Society*, 83.

¹⁶⁸ Lee, “Parliament, Parties, and Elections,” 73.

¹⁶⁹ Lee, “Parliament, Parties, and Elections,” 73.

¹⁷⁰ Lee, “Parliament, Parties, and Elections,” 73.

¹⁷¹ Lee, “Parliament, Parties, and Elections,” 77.

infidelity in all its forms.¹⁷² The Whig theory of church establishment, if there had to be one, was built upon the Erastian concept of majority rule, and they found no problem with an established Presbyterian Scottish Church, or even the creation of an established Roman Catholic Church for Ireland.¹⁷³ Any religion was welcome so long as it followed the basic law of charity and tolerance, which was the core of Whig Christianity.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, in 1790 Charles James Fox even conceded during the attempt to repeal the Test and Corporations Act that toleration should be extended to “Jews, Mahometans, Brahmins, Confucians, and all sorts of sectaries.”¹⁷⁵ The Whig ideal was that no one should be penalised by the state or limited from holding any office of state based upon their religious belief, a view that ran exactly contrary to the establishment doctrine of the Church of England.¹⁷⁶ By 1832 religious liberty had become a watchword and a program for the Whigs.¹⁷⁷ Whig doctrine saw no natural sacredness to monarchy, and they saw no duty for the civil magistrate to preserve the purity and doctrinal order of Christianity. The larger the tent, the better it was for their purposes.¹⁷⁸ These ideas were anathema to Strachan and his view of the legitimacy and role of the established Church of England. Religion was a key battleground throughout the eighteenth century, and it is to the religious situation in Britain that this study now turns.

¹⁷² Best, “Whigs and the Church,” 103.

¹⁷³ Best, “Whigs and the Church,” 105.

¹⁷⁴ Best, “Whigs and the Church,” 106.

¹⁷⁵ Cobbett, *Parliamentary History XXVIII*, 430.

¹⁷⁶ Best, “Whigs and the Church,” 107.

¹⁷⁷ Best, “Whigs and the Church,” 109.

¹⁷⁸ Best, “Whigs, and the Church,” 113.

Religion in Eighteenth-Century Britain

Anglicanism in the Eighteenth Century

According to Clark, the role of the established Anglican Church as one of the key forces responsible for maintaining the traditional establishment of English society is often overlooked by historians.¹⁷⁹ Without understanding the role of the Church it is impossible to make sense of the defeat of radical ideology in the late eighteenth century, as there was no strong secular challenge mounted against the Enlightenment and radicalism.¹⁸⁰ “By disregarding the Church, by ignoring its political theology, many writers have given us no basis for understanding the position of strength which the Anglican-aristocratic regime occupied until 1828–1832.”¹⁸¹ However, this political significance is offset by the problems associated with establishment, which resonated on both sides of the Atlantic as the nineteenth century dawned.¹⁸²

The Glorious Revolution had a profound effect upon the Church of England, as the Toleration Act of 1689 made dissent from the established religious order legal for orthodox Protestant Dissenting denominations.¹⁸³ As the Whig party gained the levers of State after the Hanoverian succession, more of the special privileges enjoyed by the Church of England were removed as the Test Act was weakened and the meetings of Convocation were ended.¹⁸⁴ As seen above, the result of the Whig’s long hold over government was that the episcopacy had been largely taken over by the few Whig churchmen available, placing them at odds with their clergy and congregations, and

¹⁷⁹ Clark, *English Society*, 200.

¹⁸⁰ Clark, *English Society*, 200.

¹⁸¹ Clark, *English Society*, 200.

¹⁸² O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 295.

¹⁸³ Dickinson, “British Constitution,” 16.

¹⁸⁴ Dickinson, “British Constitution,” 16.

heightening a sense of division and indolence within the Church.¹⁸⁵ The Erastian view of the established church as a subordinate arm of the government whose purpose was simply to support the ministry and maintain order became the standard Whig interpretation of Crown authority over the Anglican Church.¹⁸⁶ The status of the Anglican establishment was further weakened throughout the eighteenth century as the government sought to stabilise the diverse interests of the Empire. In 1707, The Act of Union officially joined England and Scotland into one nation.¹⁸⁷ The established Anglican Church in England was faced with an established Presbyterian Church in Scotland, which seemed to strengthen the case for Dissenters who disliked the privileged status of the Anglican Church, and weakened the High Church defence of their status as the only true Christian church in England.¹⁸⁸ The Quebec Act of 1774 was also extremely controversial in Britain, as it allowed for the first time within the Protestant world of the British Empire for the return of Roman Catholics to a role of authority, permitting Catholics to be admitted to the Crown-appointed legislative council of Lower Canada and Roman Catholic clergy to continue collecting tithes.¹⁸⁹ The Catholic relief acts in 1778 and 1791 led to unrest and rioting.¹⁹⁰ These recognitions of non-Anglican churches in positions of authority, establishment, or quasi-establishment stripped away the arguments for the uniqueness of the Anglican Communion as the true religious heart of the British Empire.

As the century wore on, the Church of England experienced internal divisions as the Methodists grew in influence and finally seceded from the Church, and as the

¹⁸⁵ Green, *English Peoples*, 693.

¹⁸⁶ Dickinson, "British Constitution," 16.

¹⁸⁷ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 230.

¹⁸⁸ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 230.

¹⁸⁹ Duffy, "Contested Empires," 225.

¹⁹⁰ Duffy, "Contested Empires," 225.

Evangelical revival led to a struggle between the latitudinarians and the Evangelicals.¹⁹¹ Due both to the Whig ascendancy in Parliament and subsequent appointment of Whig bishops and leaders, as well as to the results of the departure of the non-jurors in the seventeenth century, latitudinarianism represented the theological perspective of many influential churchmen in the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁹² Practically, because of its non-doctrinaire stance, latitudinarianism led to Erastianism in the Anglican establishment during the Whig ascendancy in the midcentury, and a weakening of the fundamental focus on the good of the Church when that good differed from the government's plans.¹⁹³ Latitudinarians tended to be associated with liberal theology, and in several cases were also suspected of heterodoxy, especially of Arianism and Socinianism.¹⁹⁴ Deism was also a pervasive influence among Anglican bishops of the mid to late eighteenth century, leading to the expansionary and missional impetus of the earlier centuries being sapped away.¹⁹⁵ Strachan had to contend with this reduced missionary drive as he strove to develop the Church in Upper Canada, fighting for strong clergymen willing to spread the Gospel.

In contrast to latitudinarianism, Evangelicalism favoured doctrinal orthodoxy and personal piety, and encouraged churchmen to act out their faith through positive public actions.¹⁹⁶ Though their numbers were small, there were several influential people such as William Wilberforce and Hannah More who profoundly influenced British society through advocacy and campaigns on public morality issues such as repeal of slavery, care

¹⁹¹ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 294.

¹⁹² Sykes, *Church and State*, 260.

¹⁹³ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 295.

¹⁹⁴ Gregory, "Church of England," 233.

¹⁹⁵ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 169.

¹⁹⁶ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 298.

for the poor, limitation of popular entertainments like the theatre, and restoring stricter observance of the Sabbath.¹⁹⁷ Evangelicalism also tended, despite its seeming Tory ideology, to be a threat to the Church establishment after the 1790s, as their desire for effectiveness caused them to criticise the lifestyles of the political elite, the comfortable status of the Church of England, and the performance of Church duties in the face of political influence and interference.¹⁹⁸ The Low Church group, which many Evangelicals adhered to, were also against overly elaborate or “Anglo-Catholic” varieties of worship.¹⁹⁹ Additionally, Evangelicals provided much of the impetus for the development of the Anglican Church Missionary Society and the spread of Gospel work in the empire, often in the face of the Erastian and High Church parties within the Church of England.²⁰⁰ As the nineteenth century dawned Evangelicalism would continue to bear a countervailing balance to latitudinarian and other forces, and could count among its adherents the future prime minister, W. E. Gladstone.²⁰¹

Despite the significance of latitudinarian theology, Jeremy Gregory demonstrates that the majority of Anglican clergymen were theologically orthodox, and points out that those who were most strongly latitudinarian were forced to abandon the Church by the end of the century, as Evangelicalism and renewed High Churchmanship limited their chances of advancement and made their positions untenable.²⁰² By the end of the century Evangelicals had encouraged a return to the “religion of the heart” and challenged the latitudinarian emphasis on reason over experience, rebalancing the theology of a large

¹⁹⁷ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 299.

¹⁹⁸ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 301.

¹⁹⁹ Hempton, “Enlightenment and Faith,” 85.

²⁰⁰ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 301.

²⁰¹ Ditchfield, “Methodism,” 258.

²⁰² Gregory, “Church of England,” 233.

portion of the church, but also lending to disunity as different theological camps began to form within the Anglican Church.²⁰³

On a practical level establishment proved to be a problem for the Church of England throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The administrative structure of the Church had hardly altered since the Middle Ages, and the geographical distribution of the 11,000 parishes in England and Wales had not changed since the fifteenth century, meaning that the Church was not able to deal with the rapid population growth in the major towns of England.²⁰⁴ Creating a new parish, amending parochial boundaries, and building new parish churches all required parliamentary legislation, in contrast to Dissenting chapels that merely required a place to meet and a magistrate's licence.²⁰⁵ Additionally, political interference in appointment to ecclesiastical offices limited the ability of the church to choose those who could best further the Gospel rather than the work of the government.²⁰⁶ While the system was sufficient for the maintenance of public order, the advancement of the Church lagged behind, and the ability to respond to the changing needs of the population were deeply hampered.²⁰⁷ An obvious example of this problem was the inability of the Church to appoint a bishop in the American Colonies due to the political considerations of the Whig government. Clerical pluralism also ensured that there were many parishes that did not have an actual minister in residence.²⁰⁸ This same rigidity was a severe limitation to the Anglican Church in Canada as Strachan

²⁰³ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 131.

²⁰⁴ Gregory, "Church of England," 235.

²⁰⁵ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 295.

²⁰⁶ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 295.

²⁰⁷ Gregory, "Church of England," 235.

²⁰⁸ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 296.

and others worked to expand the Church in newly settled areas while competing with more flexible denominations like the Methodists and Baptists.

Public school and university education was firmly the preserve of the Church of England, with the Test Act requiring professors and students to affirm the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, thereby assuring Church influence in the upper echelons of society.²⁰⁹ In the middle of the century the universities gained a reputation for loose morality and poor education, leading to a temporary loss of influence, but by the end of the century a full 60 percent of all peers had either attended Oxford or Cambridge, and had been properly inculcated with conservative Tory Anglican values.²¹⁰ The weight placed upon grammar schools and universities as a means of inculcating Tory Anglican beliefs and values would continue to impact the Church of England at home and in the colonies. Strachan was a firm proponent of this role for the educational institutions in Upper Canada, seeking to model colonial education after the home country system.

Though the Whig interpretation of the eighteenth century encourages the belief that the Church of England had little to do with an enlightened and irreligious age, “The Church of England was the guardian of faith, morals, and social order, and its position an expression of them; or so it was represented.”²¹¹ Though it was not adjusting to the changing social situation of the nation, Anglicanism was still a key aspect of the old society of England. Until the end of the eighteenth century it was necessary for a gentleman who intended a public career to be at least nominally Anglican.²¹² Additionally, the churches were key patrons of the arts and culture, and set the standard

²⁰⁹ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 132.

²¹⁰ Henry, “Elite Culture,” 318.

²¹¹ Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 84.

²¹² Clark, *English Society*, 90.

for what was to be considered obscene or immoral.²¹³ It was Anglican political theology that formed the single largest defence of the established order in the late eighteenth century, providing the power to overcome Whig ideology that had become intellectually bankrupt as it took on radical political ideas in exchange for the more conservative Whig traditions of the past.²¹⁴ The orthodox Anglican answer to contract theories and natural right was to maintain the traditional religious, Christian view centred on Pauline, Trinitarian theology, showing that the ideas of the Enlightenment, Deism, and other theories revolved around a heterodox understanding of theology.²¹⁵ Law and order required the successful defence of the established constitution of Church and State for Anglicans.²¹⁶ Strachan was a firm proponent of this Anglican theology. This was not about power or authority for the Church, but rather a necessary component for the healthy function of every aspect of society, and for the good of the people within that society.²¹⁷ As discussed, the paternalistic and hierarchical understanding of society that provided the prevailing narrative for the majority of British subjects required a “great chain of being” as seen in Pope’s *Essay on Man*: “So from the first eternal order ran, and creature link’d to creature, man to man.”²¹⁸ The orderly hierarchical standard of public life, which, according to the standard Church of England theology of the day, was inseparable from the Christian view of the world, was evident in 1820 when a clergyman stated that

The particular excellence of that admirable structure of society established in this country consists not, as we all know, in equality of rights and privileges; which, under the free and varied exertions of the human powers would be neither practicable nor desirable; but in that singular coherence and adaptation of its

²¹³ Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 84.

²¹⁴ Clark, *English Society*, 199.

²¹⁵ Clark, *English Society*, 58.

²¹⁶ Clark, *English Society*, 80.

²¹⁷ Clark, *English Society*, 81.

²¹⁸ Pope, *Essay on Man*, 51.

several parts, by which many classes and ranks of men, rising in orderly gradation, and melting as it were into each other, through the lightest shades of difference—united by a common interest, and cemented by Christian charity,—compose together one solid, well compacted, and harmonious whole—presenting a scheme as beautiful in theory, as it is valuable in practice, and productive of a far greater sum of utility and happiness, than is attainable under any other form.²¹⁹

The purpose of the Anglican ascendancy was viewed primarily by the Anglican clergy through this lens of order, common interest, and the facilitation of the best society

possible by the proper function of humans within the hierarchy of law and order.

Christian faith and moral code was the common possession of everyone in the society,

regardless of rank, and the Church was the keeper of the “public good” that flowed from

this faith and morality.²²⁰ The political world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

century was driven by an Anglican political theology that continued to provide the

generally received body of political theory for the nation, built around a non-secular

worldview and understanding of political power.²²¹ Despite this apparent strength, the

internal issues in the church, rising influence of Methodism and Roman Catholicism, and

the establishmentarian focus of the Church itself led to a far more impressive theoretical

church-state connection than the actual reality warranted. By 1828, the confessional state

that had existed in England for generations had begun to erode under the combined

influences of Dissent, Heterodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and religious apathy.²²² Clark

argues that this undermined position did not stem from an intellectual abandonment of

the validity of establishment, but rather the erosion of the numerical strength of the

Church of England.²²³ By 1828 half of the churchgoing population in England did not

²¹⁹ Otter, *Reasons for Continuing*, 8–9.

²²⁰ Clark, *English Society*, 87.

²²¹ Clark, *English Society*, 212.

²²² Clark, *English Society*, 89.

²²³ Clark, *English Society*, 89. The same reality was even more starkly revealed in Upper Canadian church membership.

attend the Anglican Church, and over half the population never attended church at all. It was this reduction in numerical power that led to the destruction of the Church of England as the key keeper of the “public good” and morality in Victorian England.²²⁴ As population loss combined with loosening of the legal restrictions upon Protestant Dissent and Roman Catholicism, the established Church was placed on the defensive. O’Gorman argues that it was the internal enemies (Deism, lay control, complacency, as well as Methodism and Evangelicalism), rather than the external enemies (secularism, science, urbanisation, and radical reform) that formed the real opposition to the confessional state. These were the things that occupied the attention of the church, weakened missionary endeavour, and stripped away its will to undertake structural reform of practices and institutions.²²⁵ The new face of the English constitution was no longer confessionally Anglican, as the “British state had relinquished its substantive connection with the Church of England in favour of denominational pluralism for all forms of Trinitarian Christianity.”²²⁶ The English religious environment, as in many other areas of life, provided the lead to the colonial outposts of empire, and shifts in the home country affected the ultimate status of the Church of England worldwide.

Protestant Dissent, the Enlightenment, and Heterodoxy

In addition to Anglicanism, orthodox Protestant Dissenting groups, the Enlightenment, and various forms of heterodoxy helped to shape the political world of eighteenth-century

²²⁴ Clark, *English Society*, 88. This argument regarding the relative numerical power of the church carries deep significance for the battle that Strachan would wage to ensure an established church in Upper Canada.

²²⁵ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 170.

²²⁶ Strong, *Anglicanism*, 220.

Britain, and also impacted the Anglican Church's actions and worldview.²²⁷ Dissenters in England were considered to be those who were Protestant but not Anglican, and still maintained belief in the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, which had been abandoned by the Unitarians, Socinians, Deists, and Arians who formed the heterodox religious groups of eighteenth-century England.²²⁸ These Dissenting groups gained some legal protection under the 1689 Act of Toleration, but were still limited in their ability to directly participate in political life.²²⁹ By contrast, heterodox groups were officially unrecognised, discouraged, and could be prosecuted, and atheism was directly prosecuted under the Blasphemy Act of 1698.²³⁰

Unlike the New World, where Protestant Dissenters formed a considerable majority of the population in the Thirteen Colonies and British North American (excluding Lower Canada, where Roman Catholics were a considerable majority), in England the population of Dissenters was small, though as the preferred religious expression of many middle class townsmen it was a vocal and politically active group.²³¹ Presbyterians were the largest Dissenting group, with 179,350 members in England, followed by the Independents with 59,940 adherents, Particular Baptists with 40,520, Quakers with 39,510, and General Baptists a mere 18,800.²³² Because of their Protestant orthodoxy they were seen to be less of a threat to the established order than Roman

²²⁷ Roman Catholicism also played a role in political life, but it was largely limited to support for Jacobitism in the first half of the eighteenth century, with strict legal prohibitions meaning that Roman Catholics were unable to publicly participate in political or civil life until after Catholic emancipation in 1829. Additionally, all the gains in toleration made during the eighteenth century came as a result of Roman Catholic loyalty to the Crown when tested. See Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 241–51 for further discussion.

²²⁸ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 131.

²²⁹ Gregory and Stevenson, *Eighteenth Century*, 247.

²³⁰ Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 243.

²³¹ Watts, *The Dissenters*, 270.

²³² Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 242.

Catholics or heterodox groups.²³³ To people like Strachan who had grown up in Britain, Dissenters were numerically insignificant in comparison with the strength of the Church of England. The Act of Toleration permitted clergy from these groups (excluding the Quakers who would not take oaths) to take the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, to affirm their acceptance of thirty-six of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Anglican Faith, and to make a declaration against Transubstantiation in order to obtain licences as ministers and schoolmasters.²³⁴ Additionally, Dissenting places of worship could be built and publicly maintained after the Toleration Act, allowing greater public freedom for Dissenting worship.²³⁵

Dissenters also built their own places of education, known as academies, because Oxford and Cambridge and other official universities were subject to the Test Act, requiring students and professors to subscribe to the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of Anglicanism.²³⁶ Dissenting academies gained a reputation for broad and effective teaching, as well as free enquiry. The first had a positive effect upon the schools, with even some Anglican parents sending their children to the academies for the high class training they would get in comparison to the universities.²³⁷ The reputation for free enquiry with its accompanying questioning of received Christian theology and ideas led to a backlash against these schools and attempts to limit or even close them.²³⁸

As the eighteenth century wore on Protestant Dissent lost much of its force, as its membership bled off in two ways. A large portion of the doctrinally orthodox rejoined

²³³ Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 131.

²³⁴ Watts, *The Dissenters*, 259–60.

²³⁵ Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 247.

²³⁶ Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 244.

²³⁷ Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 244.

²³⁸ Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 244.

the established Church or joined the Methodist movement, and a different part found that the combination of free enquiry and Enlightenment thought led them to Arianism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism.²³⁹ Dissent as a religious force was far more powerful politically in its alliance with heterodox groups in support of the Whigs than it was popularly and socially with the people of Britain.²⁴⁰ Indeed, of the Dissenting groups only the Baptists were able to claim any sort of lower class appeal.²⁴¹ In the nineteenth century, as the various political reforms and advance of Victorian ideas came into effect, demographics drastically changed, and Dissenters and Roman Catholics made up fully half of the church-going population.²⁴² British North America led Britain in this denominational dynamic, as Dissenting groups were always stronger than the established Church.

The Methodist movement, founded in the 1730s by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, all Anglican clergymen, had a vital effect upon the religious landscape of eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain.²⁴³ These men and their followers practised a strict, methodical form of Christianity that emphasised personal holiness and the need for prayer and biblical study.²⁴⁴ The main tenets of Methodist/Evangelical teaching were: Biblicism, Crucicentrism, Conversionism, and Activism.²⁴⁵ The movement adhered to the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Anglican Church during the lifetimes of the two Wesleys and Whitefield, and while they lived they refused to

²³⁹ Clark, *English Society*, 315.

²⁴⁰ Lincoln, *Ideas of English Dissent*, 1.

²⁴¹ Underwood, *English Baptists*, 118.

²⁴² Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 251.

²⁴³ Heitzenrater, *People Called Methodists*, 42. Heitzenrater provides an excellent general history of the Methodist movement.

²⁴⁴ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 303.

²⁴⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 2-3.

separate from the Church of England, maintaining that they were loyal and consistent members of that communion.²⁴⁶

George Whitefield pioneered outdoor preaching as a means of reaching working-class people, speaking with a powerful and theatrical style that moved people emotionally and caused the Anglicans to label him and the other Methodists as “enthusiasts.”²⁴⁷ John Wesley soon took up outdoor preaching as well, and the Methodist movement rapidly swept England, Scotland, and Wales, spreading to the American colonies as Whitefield made thirteen journeys across the Atlantic during his life.²⁴⁸ The two great preachers, in addition to the many circuit preachers recruited by the movement, were preaching to crowds numbering in the tens of thousands, and the resulting adherents were organised into societies, regional circuits, and districts.²⁴⁹ It was the organisational efficiency of the movement that really built its staying power, with new “bands” or “classes” being added whenever a few members of the group could be gathered together, and these in turn being joined to larger bodies that ultimately led to the annual conference of the organisation.²⁵⁰ Additionally, the commissioning of preachers was much more streamlined than the difficult process required to ordain a new clergyman in the Anglican Church, which meant the movement could continually gain fresh ministers as new circuits began.²⁵¹ This was especially important in the colonies, where flexibility and responsive organisation was necessary to meet the needs of expanding frontier settlements, and where populations

²⁴⁶ Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, 48–9.

²⁴⁷ Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 43. See Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, for a fuller account of Whitefield’s life.

²⁴⁸ Ditchfield, “Methodism,” 257.

²⁴⁹ Ditchfield, “Methodism,” 256.

²⁵⁰ O’Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 303.

²⁵¹ Hempton, *Methodism* 18.

were far apart and untouched by formal church organisation.²⁵² The growth of the Methodist church in the frontier communities of Upper Canada was a result of this denominational flexibility.

The intent of the English movement under Whitefield and the Wesleys was not to compete with the Church of England, but to focus their efforts where the Industrial Revolution had outrun the ordinary parish organisation of the Church of England and left a gap in church ministry.²⁵³ A firm Tory, Wesley remained loyal to the Crown, and wrote and spoke against John Wilkes, the Wilkesite agitators, and the American Rebellion, encouraging all Methodists to stay loyal and dutiful to the government.²⁵⁴ Wesley saw the Methodist movement as a means of strengthening the Church of England and supporting the established political order.²⁵⁵ Despite this fact, after the American Rebellion the American Methodist Connection formed their own denomination. Following the death of Wesley in 1791 the English Methodists also formally split from the Church of England.²⁵⁶ American Methodism began to identify with republican ideology and the new outlook of the United States of America, and under the leadership of Francis Asbury the Methodist Episcopal Church became a pillar of the new American world.²⁵⁷ John Strachan was deeply antipathetic towards the American Methodist movement because of their emphases, but was much more favourable toward the Wesleyan Methodists who came from Britain directly, without perceived republican sympathies.

²⁵² See Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion*, 1–8 for a discussion of Methodist structure and missions in the New World.

²⁵³ Mowat, *Eighteenth Century*, 48.

²⁵⁴ See Wesley, *Free Thoughts*; Wesley, *Calm Address*; Wesley, *Inhabitants of England*.

²⁵⁵ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 305.

²⁵⁶ Hempton, *Methodism*, 93–4.

²⁵⁷ Heitzenrater, *People Called Methodists*, 325.

Despite the American experience and the later split from the Church of England, the Methodist movement contributed significantly to the Evangelical revival in the Anglican Church, and also provided a strong conservative influence upon the working classes in the new industrial towns throughout England.²⁵⁸ The positive political influence of Methodism has been broadly invoked as a key factor that enabled Britain to avoid revolution.²⁵⁹ This conservatism, however, gave way to a more traditional dissenting political stance once the Methodists broke with the Church of England after Wesley's death.²⁶⁰ By Strachan's time, Methodists in England were again distrusted by the Anglicans as divisive anti-establishment figures.²⁶¹

Heterodox teachings, especially those of Deism, did not form a particular unity, but rather sprang from the newly fashionable ideas of the Enlightenment that had been making progress throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.²⁶² Based upon the idea that reason was the measure of all things, Deism, Unitarianism, Arianism, and Socinianism all took positions that required religious truths to be subordinated to natural reason. Matthew Tindal, widely considered to be the classic exponent of deistic teaching, rejected all special revelation through Scripture and claimed that true Christianity could be discovered solely through the contemplation of natural religion through human reason:

Can we lay too great a stress on reason, when we consider, 'tis only by virtue of it God can hold communication with Man? Nor can otherwise, if I may so speak, witness for himself, or assert the wisdom and goodness of his conduct; than by submitting his ways to men's cool deliberation, and strict examination? Since 'tis from the marks we discern in the laws of the universe, and its government, that

²⁵⁸ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 307.

²⁵⁹ Hempton, "Enlightenment and Faith," 97.

²⁶⁰ Ditchfield, "Methodism," 258.

²⁶¹ Hempton, "Enlightenment and Faith," 96.

²⁶² Lee, "The Taming of God," 641.

we can demonstrate it to be govern'd by a God of infinite wisdom and goodness: He whose reason does not enable him to do this, can neither discern the wisdom, goodness, or even the being of a God.²⁶³

The basic tenets of Deism followed from this view of natural religion, denying the role of God in everyday life and raising virtue and goodness to be the only requirements for salvation and public good.²⁶⁴ God was not an active force in the world, and humanity should not consider what He would think to be right and wrong based on revelation, but rather should do whatever was pleasing to reason, the tool that God had given man to rule the world effectively.²⁶⁵ Anything beyond these basic truths was the fabrication of priests whose mission was to enslave people for personal gain.²⁶⁶ In the eyes of Deists and other heterodox teachers, priests deserved not only derision, but also to have their authority and influence in society curtailed.²⁶⁷ Priestly shepherding and championing of orthodox doctrine destroyed the possibility that people could come to a simple, clear understanding of God, and instead perpetuated the wickedness and misery of a world wracked by intolerance.²⁶⁸ By the time of Voltaire, the clergy were seen as the source of every kind of evil and wickedness through their orthodox Christian teachings, an attitude that would have violent results for the clergy of France in the French Revolution.²⁶⁹ This unbelieving stance was the height of dangerous teaching for orthodox Anglicans like Strachan, as seen by his cautions to his students.²⁷⁰

Arianism, Socinianism, and Unitarianism were all linked together, and often Dissenters went through a process beginning with Arianism and ending with

²⁶³ Tindal, "Christianity as Old as Creation," 121.

²⁶⁴ Cherbury, "De Veritate," 39.

²⁶⁵ Byrne, *Natural Religion*, 58.

²⁶⁶ Toland, "Christianity Not Mysterious," 53–77.

²⁶⁷ Smyth, *The Making of the United Kingdom*, 175.

²⁶⁸ Toland, "Christianity Not Mysterious," 57–8.

²⁶⁹ Voltaire, "Sermon of the Fifty," 157.

²⁷⁰ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 49.

Unitarianism.²⁷¹ Arians rejected the full divinity of Christ, believing that he was a lesser, created being.²⁷² Key for their political theory, they did not believe in the doctrine of original sin, and believed all restraints on conscience were violations of free will, including church establishment and any laws compelling religious tests for public office.²⁷³ The independence of all individuals based upon their free will meant the equality of all individuals, which meant Crown and aristocracy were false idols that impinged upon the ability of people to live freely. Destruction of the old constitution and representative democracy were the natural conclusions to Arian and Socinian arguments, necessitating a dramatic revolution.²⁷⁴ Socinianism carried on these lines of thinking, while also rejecting Jesus' divinity completely, and Unitarianism became the final refuge for most of these Dissenters, as the ultimate rejection of Christ's divinity and the home of a "reasoned" faith.²⁷⁵ Clark presents Richard Price and Joseph Priestley as the examples of this movement and the political causes that their beliefs led them to espouse.²⁷⁶ Republican ideology therefore also evoked suspicion of religious heterodoxy among Anglican Tories like Strachan.

Dissenters in the first half of the eighteenth century concentrated their political efforts on the cause of political toleration, particularly the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act that had limited their involvement in the political realm.²⁷⁷ They also argued for the disestablishment of the Church of England, claiming that establishment

²⁷¹ Clark, *English Society*, 330.

²⁷² Cross and Livingstone, "Arianism," 99.

²⁷³ Wigelsworth, *Deism in England*, 4.

²⁷⁴ Clark, *English Society*, 331.

²⁷⁵ Haydon, "Religious Minorities," 247.

²⁷⁶ Clark, *English Society*, 330.

²⁷⁷ Clark, *English Society*, 316.

was inconsistent with human freedom and voluntarism.²⁷⁸ On the basis of natural religion John Toland argued, "'Tis a notion therefore as false in itself, as common among shallow politicians, that *'tis necessary for a government to have but one religion*. . . they who would confine all civil employments to one sect, must be of opinion (if they have any real opinion in the matter beyond a selfish fetch) that *Dominion is founded in Grace*."²⁷⁹

Thomas Chubb likewise attacked the notion of religious limitation and tests: "Positive religious institutions cannot possibly lay men under any reasonable restraint, which Natural Religion does not lay them under, so that civil governors have no authority in matters of religion."²⁸⁰ On this basis then, the establishment, and through this the privilege, of the Anglican Church was a detriment and had nothing to do with reason.²⁸¹

Joseph Priestley argued that not only was establishment unnecessary, but even more that disestablishment would lead to greater strength for Christianity:

I have even no doubt, but that, as Christianity was promulgated, and prevailed in the world, without any aid from civil power, it will, when it shall have recovered its pristine purity, and its pristine vigour, entirely disengage itself from such an unnatural alliance as it is at present fettered with, and that our posterity will even look back with astonishment at the infatuation of their ancestors, in imagining that things so wholly different from each other as Christianity and civil power, had any natural connection.²⁸²

Under the guise of sincere desire for the good of the world in general, and the Christian Church in particular, Priestley and others worked diligently for the destruction of establishment and the reduction of any public role for Christianity. Decades of these kinds of attacks caused Anglican Tories to be sensitive to arguments for disestablishment

²⁷⁸ Wigelsworth, *Deism in England*, 126.

²⁷⁹ Toland, *State-Anatomy*, 29. It should be noted that Toland's sentiments would not seem out of place in many standard Free Church theologies of the present day. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 892–3 for a present-day doctrine of separation between the church and the state.

²⁸⁰ Chubb, *Short Reflections*, 8, 24.

²⁸¹ Chubb, *Short Reflections*, 8.

²⁸² Priestley, *Letter to Pitt*, 16–17. It should be noted that his idea of returning to pristine Christianity envisioned a Unitarian theology, free from Trinitarian baggage.

as preliminary to anti-Christian teaching, especially after the French Revolution showed where these ideas could end up.

The Deists, allied with the Whigs in the Parliament, championed the 1718 repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts and unsuccessful attempts to repeal the Test Acts.²⁸³ Through the successful repeal of the Occasional Conformity Act they were able to get around the Test Act, allowing opposition to establishment to be mounted from within the Parliament and other civic venues.²⁸⁴ Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century there was a concerted parliamentary effort in the name of toleration to break the doctrinal power and authority of the Church.²⁸⁵ This in turn caused an Anglican reaction against any further toleration that might lead to the weakening of establishment as a political bulwark and defence against heresy.

Heterodoxy in the late eighteenth century worked to subvert the existing political order of the British nation. Richard Price and Joseph Priestly both viewed the government as in no way directly ordained of God, and found monarchy and church establishment to be merely human institutions that could be removed with little practical and no theological harm to the nation.²⁸⁶ They advocated a utilitarian approach that, while still expecting citizens to be good and honest, emphasised that government was a necessary evil that should be restricted as much as possible for the good of the nation.²⁸⁷ The radicals of the eighteenth century had a definite political mission, but to achieve it they had several preliminary steps to make. If there was to be any shift in the traditional role of Church, King, and Parliament, the first step had to be the removal of the theological

²⁸³ Wigelsworth, *Deism in England*, 135.

²⁸⁴ Clark, *English Society*, 305.

²⁸⁵ Wigelsworth, *Deism in England*, 194.

²⁸⁶ Hole, *Pulpits and Politics*, 29.

²⁸⁷ Hole, *Pulpits and Politics*, 30.

basis upon which these three pillars of society were built.²⁸⁸ “Because the public arena in which the learned assessment of natural philosophy took place was also composed of political and theological assumptions, a contribution to any area would have some bearing on the other two.”²⁸⁹ Trinitarian orthodoxy provided the core theological underpinning to this Christian-monarchical system, so before the system could be changed, it was necessary to form an “intellectual strategy which would permit escape from a political theology whose theoretical power and widespread reception walled in the dissident.”²⁹⁰ For this reason heterodox Dissenters made up the largest portion of the radical intelligentsia and the strongest body of supporters of radical political action.²⁹¹ “So closely is religion and government linked together, that the one supports the other and corruption in a Christian government cannot come in, but by the corruption of religion, and overthrowing those principles which it teaches.”²⁹² The Anglican Church, “by law established,” provided the major support and ideological underpinning of the English monarchy, standing directly against the democratising and levelling compulsions of the radicals.²⁹³ Whereas parliament was still a small body of gentry and lower nobility, the ten thousand parishes of the Church of England were the frontline apparatus that enforced conformity within the nation.²⁹⁴ It was this powerful conservative political and religious force that Strachan and others sought to emulate in British North America.

Because of this close relationship, and because the Church was the linchpin which held together the existing social order in Britain, deistic theology took on special

²⁸⁸ Clark, *English Society*, 277.

²⁸⁹ Wigelsworth, *Deism in England*, 5.

²⁹⁰ Clark, *English Society*, 277.

²⁹¹ Clark, *English Society*, 282.

²⁹² Leslie, *The Rehearsal*, 12 October 1706. Cited in Clark, *English Society*, 298.

²⁹³ Smyth, *Making of the United Kingdom*, xiii.

²⁹⁴ Clark, *English Society*, 277.

significance in the political fight to bring down the power of the Church. The doctrines of natural religion and the natural law were used to undercut Special Revelation, weakening the foundation of the Church's teaching regarding government, especially in the areas of non-resistance and passive obedience to the government.²⁹⁵

Wherefore. . . lawgivers, considering the proneness of men to evil, and themselves aiming at the public good, established the immortality of the soul, perhaps at first not so much out of a regard to truth as to honesty, hoping thereby to induce men to virtue. Nor are politicians to be so much blamed herein more than physicians, who many times, for the benefit of the patients, are compelled to feign and pretend diverse things, since, in like manner, politicians devise fables only to regulate the people. . . . And therefore, my Lord, besides the authority of the Holy Scriptures, as also the innumerable other arguments which may be deduced as well from philosophy as reason to prove the immortality of the soul, together with its rewards and punishments. . . , there is no argument of greater weight with me than the absolute necessity and convenience that it should be so.²⁹⁶

If the doctrines derived from Special Revelation were not true, for instance the immortality of the soul, and if God was not actively involved in the world, for instance through the Incarnation, then the institution of the priesthood as the shepherd of revelation and minister of God's continuing work on earth was invalid. If this was true then the Church could not claim divine institution. And if the Church could not claim divine institution, how much more did the State become obviously secular.²⁹⁷

In a word, it has been the pride, ambition, and covetousness of the priests, and the force and violence which by their means and instigation the persecuting magistrates have used on the people to make 'em pay a blind submission to the decrees of the clergy, which has been the cause, not only of all the mischiefs [sic] and miserys [sic] which have happened in Christendom on account of religion, but of the great corruption of religion; which being a thing so plain and easy in itself, and suited to the capacity of the people, would never have been so much and so universally depraved, had there been an entire liberty of conscience.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ Bradley, *Religion, Revolution*, 24.

²⁹⁶ Blount, *Letter*, cited in Ellenzweig, *Fringes*, 49.

²⁹⁷ Clark, *English Society*, 281.

²⁹⁸ Tindal, *Four Discourses*, 130–1.

Tindal claimed that the Church had no authority other than what was given it by the State, and that the State received its authority from the people.²⁹⁹ John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon attacked all High Church clergy as “Popish” priests who had politicised the faith, encouraging the government to act on religious motives, as opposed to the “independent Whig,” who “scorns all implicit faith in the State, as well as the Church.”³⁰⁰ Charles Leslie, an enemy of deistic thought, saw this attack upon the legitimacy of the Church as theologically motivated:

. . . the cry of these men against the Church, is carried on by Deists, Socinians, and all our libertines who make use of their artillery; and wage war with the Church and all instituted religion upon their very principles, of not being tied to any church or communion, but to change at mere will and pleasure: that there is nothing essential in church government, or any authority of divine appointment in her governors that she is no otherwise a society, than as the people please to make her: But only a sect of such and such opinions, which are free without hazard, for every man to take up, or lay down as he pleases. . . And from hence they argue no necessity of any conformity or communion at all, further than to keep ourselves safe from the hands of the law.³⁰¹

Several figures saw in the works of the Deists a clear attempt to undermine the faith of the nation for political purposes. Once the Bible, the clergy, and the authority of the Church were stripped away, the main props of the political system would have been knocked down, and utilitarian rule by the people could replace divine law and monarchical government.³⁰² When the same arguments were used by people like Mackenzie, they evoked not only political ideas but also carried the implicit threat of heresy for Strachan and other Anglican Tories.

The attack on the clergy had significant political implications, not just because of the denial of clergy authority to declare revelation, but also by the propagation of the

²⁹⁹ Tindal, *The Rights of the Christian Church*, lx.

³⁰⁰ Gordon, *Independent Whig*, 3.

³⁰¹ Leslie, *The Wolf Stript*, 26.

³⁰² Clark, *English Society*, 299.

need for public consent in ecclesial matters. Dissidents and Dissenters of every stripe, but especially Deists, who largely remained within the established Church, were anxious to ensure that the people of the Church themselves could choose the priests and other leaders who would preside over them.³⁰³ This was a first step for the removal of all priestly authority as unnecessary baggage in people's personal religion.³⁰⁴ The cry "No bishop, no king" was a real challenge once natural religion, human reason, conscience, and utility became the judges and measures of Church and political institutions.³⁰⁵ Anticlericalism was the first step in supporting the goal of heterodox political theology: contractarian republicanism.³⁰⁶ It was, after all, the clergy who were the keepers and propagators of divine right doctrines, which were the chief enemies of the deistic theological goal of government by natural law alone.³⁰⁷

Once natural religion had been championed as a key theological doctrine, and once the priesthood and established Church had been denied, the next step in the program was the denial of the divinely ordained nature of monarchy as a whole. If the doctrines of natural religion and natural law were true, then "A government is a mere piece of clockwork, and having such springs and wheels must act after such a manner; therefore the art is to constitute it so that it must move to the public advantage."³⁰⁸ The rejection of revelation asserted the authority of human reason, which meant that humanity was self-sufficient in attainment of religious truth (thereby doing away with the need for clergy or the Church). If humanity was self-sufficient in the preeminent sphere of religion, then

³⁰³ Bradley, *Religion, Revolution*, 139.

³⁰⁴ Woolston, "Defence," 132.

³⁰⁵ Stewart, "Clarke, Newtonianism," 63.

³⁰⁶ Robbins, *Two English Republican Tracts*, 17.

³⁰⁷ Robbins, *Two English Republican Tracts*, 30–1.

³⁰⁸ Trenchard, *A Short History*, quoted in Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 19.

how much more was it so in the sphere of politics? “The sanction of tradition, and, more important, divine sanction via revelation for any particular regime were all called into doubt.”³⁰⁹ After all, it was through religion that the ruler was able to assert their authority:

The will of an arbitrary monarch is not to be disputed. He has religion prepared to justify, and force to maintain him in whatsoever he does, all his subjects entirely depending on his pleasure, in their wealth and the endowments of their mind, as well as in the use and drudgery of their bodies.³¹⁰

This language, when it reappeared in the newspapers of political radicals in Upper Canada, therefore carried not only a threat to government, but to the faith.

Whigs imbibed a strong strain of anticlericalism from their connection with radical politics and theology, and slowly over time they whittled away not only at the establishment of the Church of England, but also the ability of the Church to maintain orthodoxy and support for the crown.³¹¹ High Church Anglicanism demanded a strict submission to this rule of obedience on the part of its ministers, and indeed ministers were required to swear an oath to the monarch, promising not to “countenance any effort to depose or harm the English sovereign.”³¹² This firm resistance to the republican and radical forces in the nation ensured that the clergy would become a target of attack. Especially after the Hanoverian succession, the Church came under consistent and ruthless attack from heterodox radicals of all stripes.³¹³ Whigs recognised the powerful combination of High Church Toryism, preaching passive obedience and non-resistance to the Crown, and saw that their electoral chances lay in the acceptance of the Dissenter

³⁰⁹ Clark, *English Society*, 281.

³¹⁰ Toland, *Anglia Libera*, 9.

³¹¹ Clark, *English Society*, 303.

³¹² Noll, *Christians*, 111.

³¹³ Clark, *English Society*, 300.

voluntary principle, and even rights to irreligion, as a means of conquering the unassailable fortress of late eighteenth-century Tory ascendancy in Britain.³¹⁴ The ultimate fruition of this alliance would come about in the Reform Act of 1832, which removed the last barriers to Dissenting political involvement and completely changed the foundation on which the British constitution was founded.³¹⁵ The resulting societal change had profound political and religious effects in British North America as well, and, as will be seen in later chapters, spelled the ultimate defeat of Strachan's political ideal for Upper Canada.

Conclusion

The eighteenth century in Britain was an age of political and religious ferment. The Glorious Revolution unchangeably altered the fabric of the British Constitution, and showed that further alteration was possible for those with the right will. The upheavals of the Jacobite movement, the Wilkesite controversy, and the American Rebellion shook the political classes and unsettled the establishment, leading to repression and backlash when the French Revolution showed the possible ends of radical theory. The Tory party became the champions of the established Church, the royal prerogative, and the landed country gentry. The Whigs in their turn championed religious Dissenters, radical political ideology based on Enlightenment thought, Erastianism, and the newly forming mercantile and city elites. Political advantage drove religious engagement, and the desires of the established Church and Dissenting groups became tools for people seeking power.

³¹⁴ O'Gorman, *Long Eighteenth Century*, 170.

³¹⁵ Clark, *English Society*, 347.

The Church of England struggled with latitudinarianism, Erastianism, and plain indolence as the comfort of its situation and the authority it exercised in the political community did not translate into effective church ministry. The challenges provided by Dissenters were only one half of the internal/external war that was being waged for the soul and mission of the Anglican Church. As the Evangelical movement gained steam, and as Methodism sapped some of the motive force from the church, Anglicanism was left looking strong but also experiencing significant internal erosion. The ultimate result was the falling away of many English people from the established Church during the nineteenth century, and the continued decline of its moral authority as voluntarism replaced establishmentarian ideology.

Despite the decline of church numbers, church influence in government, in communities, and in education continued to be significant, and those who were not closely watching the political realm could be excused for believing that the Church had never been stronger or healthier. Most of the peers and members of Parliament were Anglican, the king was a fierce defender of the Church, and the parish church was still the centre of community life. The university system continued to support and inculcate Tory Anglican values into new generations, and the Test Acts continued to ensure that positions of power required Anglican allegiance. The Anglican ascendancy made order, the common interest, and the facilitation of the best society possible by the proper functions of humans within the hierarchy of law and order. All fit together, and all worked together. The public good of the society was secured through the work of the Anglican Church.

Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke provide perfect representatives of the two opposing sides of eighteenth-century political theology. Burke represents the traditional forces of the Anglican Tory establishment that was ascendant at the end of the eighteenth century, while Paine represents the radical heterodox reforming impulse that was driving radicalism internally and the American and French polities externally. While the establishment represented by Burke stood victorious at the point when Strachan entered into the political and religious scene of Upper Canada, the radical elements represented by Paine were continuing to work for the ultimate victory of their ideology. As in England, those diametrically opposed forces would meet and do battle on the field in Upper Canada and the forces of Burke and Paine would be augmented by those of Strachan and Mackenzie. The dichotomies of Tory versus Whig, Anglicanism versus Dissent, passive obedience and non-resistance versus active demonstration and rebellion, establishment versus toleration, monarchy versus republicanism, executive compulsion versus popular impulsion, High Church versus Low Church, would all find a place in the battle for the political theology of the newly forming colonial society. It is to the emerging relationship between the Church and the government in British North America that this study now turns.

CHAPTER 2

CANADA BEFORE STRACHAN

Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter, British political and religious issues were complex and interlocking, with many different motivating factors coming together to create a larger whole. The British battles over politics and religion were key forces that shaped the political and religious situation in the New World also. As was the case in Britain, the relationship between the church and the government in the British North American (hereafter BNA) colonies was always a complex and contentious issue. Charles Inglis, Jacob Mountain, John Graves Simcoe, and others had the vision of creating an ideal Anglican Tory world in the BNA colonies, and they were already battling the earliest stirrings of the radical political and religious ideologies that Strachan would spend so much of his life fighting. The following studies of relations between the church and state in British North America will show that Strachan was not attempting to create a new constitutional settlement or fresh ideology regarding church and government, but rather that he was being consistent with the Tory Anglican worldview he came from and the Tory Anglican governmental environment he encountered when he arrived in British North America.

British North America

Prior to the American Rebellion the majority of colonists were French Roman Catholics who had been inherited by the Crown with the conquest of French Canada.¹

¹ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 162.

Accommodating these colonists while still building a British colonial structure became a unique problem for the colonial government. As hostilities between the newly independent American Colonies and the Crown concluded, growing loyalty and preserving unity within the remaining colonies became a prime concern for the colonial administrations and the government in Great Britain.² In Britain, this led the colonial office, especially William Knox, Undersecretary for the Colonies from 1770 to 1782, to actively develop a general plan for the establishment of the Church of England in BNA.³ It was Knox who most actively proposed establishment as a means of combating unrest and republicanism, as well as proposing the establishment of Anglican colleges and the setting aside of Crown land for the building and funding of Anglican churches and schools in BNA.⁴ These and other recommendations encouraged the imperial government to look favourably upon proposals to establish the Anglican Church in Canada.⁵ Coupled with this positive impetus from the Crown, the work of the Anglican Church on the ground in BNA created a powerful drive towards establishment and the effective organisation of the Anglican Church in Canada.⁶ The English model of Church establishment provided the guiding policy and strategy for Canadian Anglican leaders in the two generations beginning in the 1780s.⁷

Prior to confederation the BNA colonies were divided into three main geographical areas: The Atlantic Provinces, Lower Canada, and Upper Canada.⁸ Though

² Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 56.

³ Fahey, *In His Name*, 5.

⁴ Fahey, *In His Name*, 5.

⁵ Fahey, *In His Name*, 5.

⁶ Unlike Dissenters like Priestly, the Anglican Church did not dissemble regarding their motivations, and they viewed themselves as carrying out their constitutional duty in working to confirm the establishment in BNA. Their actions had a political element, but not purely politically motivated.

⁷ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 55.

⁸ Lower and Upper Canada made up the single province of Quebec prior to 1791.

the political divisions of these regions changed both prior to Strachan's arrival in BNA and after, each region had a different political and religious environment. In order to place Strachan's own work in church and state within the greater context of the Canadian colonies as whole, a brief separate study of each colony will be undertaken to illuminate the personalities involved in church and state issues, as well as the constitutional and practical settlements that had been reached in regard to the issue by the time of Strachan's arrival in Upper Canada.⁹

The Atlantic Provinces

Nova Scotia had been conquered by the British in 1710, and the Roman Catholic Acadian population had been expelled from the colony after 1755, following war with France and concerns regarding their loyalty to Britain.¹⁰ In the first meeting of the new provincial legislative assembly the decision was made to declare the Church of England to be the state religion of the colony.¹¹ The legislation further provided that Dissenters of any denomination had "Liberty of Conscience, and may erect and build Meeting Houses for Public Worship" as well as rights to govern themselves and to be excused from all rates and taxes levied to support the established church.¹² In the same legislation all Roman Catholic priests were banned from the province, and penalties of imprisonment were prescribed for any priests found ministering within the borders of the province.¹³ Additionally, all "Papists" were stripped of property rights and other civic benefits and

⁹ For a thorough study of Canadian Church history in this time period see Walsh, *French Era*, and Moir, *British Era*.

¹⁰ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 163.

¹¹ *An Act for the Establishment*, in Moir, *Church and State*, 33.

¹² *An Act for the Establishment*, in Moir, *Church and State*, 33.

¹³ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 163.

relegated to the status of second-class citizens.¹⁴ With the 1784 creation of the province of New Brunswick the first legislative assembly created an act of establishment that mirrored the Nova Scotia legislation, ensuring toleration for Protestant Dissenters and outlawing Roman Catholicism. Prince Edward Island followed suit in 1803, formally establishing what had already been a long-standing de facto Anglican hegemony.¹⁵ In all these cases the laws of the colonies mirrored the constitutional arrangement of the mother country, tolerating though not condoning Dissenters while outlawing any Roman Catholic practices.¹⁶ Discrimination against Roman Catholics did not really end until the passing of Catholic emancipation legislation by the Parliament of Great Britain in 1829 and the subsequent harmonisation of colonial laws with the mother country.¹⁷

Unlike Upper Canada, the establishment of the Anglican Church in Atlantic Canada did not meet with serious controversy, but all congregations seemed to be willing to go along with the plan for the wider good of the Protestant religion. John S. Moir attributes this general state of agreement to the moderation of the Church of England and the provincial assembly, which included Dissenters in its ranks from the beginning, and which put no particular restraints upon the abilities of Dissenters to take part in the civic life of the nation.¹⁸ Even after the appointment of an Anglican bishop for Nova Scotia the government was careful not to favour the established church unduly over the other Protestant denominations, and even provided financial aid and property for church construction to some Dissenting denominations.¹⁹

¹⁴ Moir, *Church and State*, 35.

¹⁵ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 51.

¹⁶ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 163.

¹⁷ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 164.

¹⁸ Moir, *Church and State*, 35.

¹⁹ Moir, *Church and State*, 35.

The influx of American Loyalists that resulted from the rebellion of the American colonies drastically changed the representation of populations within the Atlantic Provinces, and led to the division of Nova Scotia into two provinces in 1784, with New Brunswick representing a new and far more homogenous population that was even more determined to maintain a British model of government, complete with established church and strict controls over Dissenting populations.²⁰ Governor Guy Carleton and Undersecretary of State for the Colonies William Knox produced a High Church Tory constitution for the new colony based upon their firm belief that the American Colonies had rebelled in part because of the lack of a fully established Anglican church that could have trained the people of the colonies in the proper virtues of loyalty and obedience to the Crown.²¹ The government of Britain had finally come to the conclusion after the events of the American Rebellion that the refusal to appoint bishops in the New World had been a grave mistake, weakening the Church and the British Constitution, and they purposed to rectify their mistake in the Atlantic colonies.²² They were helped to this conclusion by a letter sent to Governor Carleton from Charles Inglis, Samuel Seabury, and sixteen other Loyalist clergymen who wrote with three simple reasons why a colonial bishop was vital:

1. Unless the episcopate is granted, the Church of England will be in a more disadvantageous situation than any other denomination of Christians . . . 2. The proposed episcopate will supply the province of Nova Scotia with a sufficient number of clergymen . . . 3. The fixing of a bishop in Nova Scotia and the consequent supply of clergymen, will strengthen the attachment and confirm the loyalty of the inhabitants, and promote the settlement of the province.²³

²⁰ Moir, *British Era*, 22.

²¹ Moir, *British Era*, 23.

²² Strong, *Anglicans and Empire*, 118.

²³ Inglis et al., "Loyalists' Letter of 1783," in Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 231–3.

The hope was that by providing social and constitutional institutions similar to those found in the mother country, British authority over the remainder of the North American empire could be maintained and strengthened in the face of the new “democratising” influences to the south, and that more settlers from the home country could be enticed to take the step of settling in the harsh environment of Canada.²⁴ It was with these considerations in mind that the momentous step of appointing the first colonial bishop in the British Empire was taken.

Charles Inglis, a Loyalist clergyman from New York who had signed the letter sent to Carleton, was appointed Bishop of Nova Scotia in 1787.²⁵ Inglis had experienced the upheaval of the American Rebellion in all its force, having his church burned by the rebels in 1777 as a response to pamphlets he published in defence of the British government.²⁶ As a Loyalist who had experienced the worst of republican excess in the American Colonies, Inglis believed firmly that “Government and Religion are therefore the pillars . . . on which society rests, and by which it is upheld; remove these, and the fabric sinks into ruin . . . Whoever is sincerely religious towards God will also be loyal to his earthly Sovereign, obedient to the laws, and faithful to the government which God hath placed over him.”²⁷ Inglis disliked religious dissent, believing that it reinforced republican principles and encouraged the breakdown of an orderly civil society.²⁸ However, he was wise enough to realise that he must be sensitive to Dissenter

²⁴ Marshall, “Britain without America,” 588–9

²⁵ Murphy, “English-Speaking Colonies,” 119. See Harris, *Inglis*, for a detailed biographical study of the life of Bishop Inglis.

²⁶ Harris, *Inglis*, 74.

²⁷ Inglis, quoted in Moir, *British Era*, 23.

²⁸ Christie, “Democratic Rage and Delusion,” 11.

sensibilities and avoid unnecessary conflict with the other religious groups in the diocese.²⁹

When he first began his work as bishop, Inglis was responsible for the entirety of British North America, a practical fact that made it difficult for him to effectively govern his vast, “primitive Bishoprick.”³⁰ Despite these difficulties, he made strides in building churches with government financial support, instituting triennial visitations amongst all his clergy, and founded King’s College, an Anglican institution that was intended to provide for the broader higher education needs of Anglicans and Dissenters alike.³¹ With the separation of the Diocese of Quebec in 1793 Inglis’ task was made easier, though the still massive size of the diocese and limited number of clergy meant that the task of providing Anglican religious services to the population remained an extreme difficulty.³²

In addition to the efforts of the Anglicans in the Atlantic Provinces other denominations were growing, gaining influence, and challenging the claims of the Anglicans as the official church of the Provinces. Presbyterianism, Methodism, Congregationalism, and New Light Protestantism all gained large followings, with Nancy Christie showing that of the roughly 100,000 persons residing in the Atlantic Provinces, half were Protestant, and the majority were non-Anglican.³³ While the Scottish Presbyterians were an established church at home in Britain, the other denominations were all considered Dissenters, and even the Presbyterians were viewed with suspicion

²⁹ Moir, *British Era*, 23.

³⁰ Moir, *British Era*, 24.

³¹ Harris, *Inglis*, 141.

³² By 1790 there were only six SPCK missionaries and one Dissenting clergyman in New Brunswick, as well as thirteen Anglican and six Presbyterian clergymen in Nova Scotia, though there were many “Methodists and sectaries.” See Moir, *British Era*, 25.

³³ Christie, “Democratic Rage and Delusion,” 10.

thanks to a perception of sympathy with the American rebels.³⁴ Bishop Inglis and his successors viewed the various Dissenting denominations with strong suspicion and prejudice, believing that the Methodists and New Lights were “almost to a man, violent Republicans and Democrats.”³⁵ This antipathy was especially felt in the restrictions levied upon Dissenting denominations in the areas of land endowments and marriage laws, with the Established Church being the only body that could legally receive glebe lands and school reservations, and whose clergymen were permitted to officiate marriages.³⁶

Lower Canada

With the completion of the Seven Years' War in 1763, Britain gained control over a large, sparsely populated (in comparison to the American colonies to the south) Roman Catholic, French-speaking, and French-cultured country.³⁷ The majority Roman Catholic population posed a new problem for the English government, whose laws particularly proscribed Roman Catholics from taking any part in governance or civil life, and severely limited even the existence of Roman Catholic hierarchies.³⁸ Because of these civil restrictions, developing a governance framework for Canada was a difficult problem for the Colonial Office. In their turn, the Canadiens were worried that there would be a repetition of the mass deportations experienced by the Acadians, who had been uprooted from their homes in the Atlantic Provinces over concerns about their loyalty to the

³⁴ Moir, *British Era*, 25.

³⁵ Moir, *British Era*, 25.

³⁶ Moir, *British Era*, 25.

³⁷ Chausse, “French Canada,” 57.

³⁸ Fay, *Canadian Catholics*, 29.

Crown.³⁹ Their fears proved to be groundless, as the 1763 Treaty of Paris provided for “Liberty of the Catholic religion to the inhabitants of Canada: he will, in consequence, give the most precise and most effectual orders, that his new Roman Catholic subjects may profess the worship of their religion according to the rites of the Romish church, as far as the laws of Great Britain permit.”⁴⁰ They were pleasantly surprised to find a benevolent, considerate government that in fact gave them more administrative freedom than their own previous French masters had been willing to concede.⁴¹

Despite this benevolence, it was still the intention of the government to do all it could to establish and promote the Church of England among the people of Quebec, and in order to achieve this end the governors of Quebec were issued with private instructions to ensure that the Church of England was put on an effective footing within the province:

And to the end that the Church of England may be established both in principles and practice, and that the said inhabitants may by degrees be induced to embrace Protestant religion, and their children be brought up on the principles of it; we do hereby declare it to be our intention, when the said province shall have been accurately surveyed, and divided into townships, districts, precincts, or parishes . . . all possible encouragement shall be given to the erecting of Protestant schools in the said districts, townships, and precincts, by settling, appointing, and allotting proper quantities of land for that purpose, ad also for a glebe and maintenance of a Protestant minister and Protestant schoolmasters; and you are to consider and report to us . . . by what other means the Protestant religion may be promoted, established, and encouraged in our province under your government.⁴²

Despite these instructions, little was done by the governors of Quebec to institute Anglican establishment owing to the difficulties of maintaining authority and civic goodwill in the province, and it would not be until after the American Rebellion that any

³⁹ Fay, *Canadian Catholics*, 29. See Arsenault, *The Acadians*, for a detailed history of the Acadians.

⁴⁰ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 147.

⁴¹ Chausse, “French Canada,” 57.

⁴² Instructions to Governor Murray quoted in Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 148.

serious attempts would be made to make establishment of the Anglican Church in Quebec a reality.⁴³

The Quebec Act of 1774 restored French civil law, redrew the borders of Quebec, exempted Canadiens from the Test Act oaths, and recognised the Roman Catholic religion within Quebec by allowing it to collect tithes from Roman Catholics.⁴⁴ In exchange for the traditional Oath of Renunciation, the Canadiens were given an Oath of Loyalty to King George, and expected to acknowledge the rights of the Protestant bishop of Quebec (at the time still the bishop of London).⁴⁵ Property and civil rights were confirmed for all Canadiens, though British criminal law was instituted.⁴⁶ At the same time, the government began to give Protestantism a place in Quebec, with churches and ministers following the British troops and government and beginning the first Anglican ministry in the province.⁴⁷ The first discussions regarding official Anglican establishment were begun, but again the lack of representation among the population proved a difficult hurdle.⁴⁸

As seen above, the Quebec Act was not well received by the American colonists, who were incensed that Roman Catholicism was being given such leeway, and it became another excuse for the colonists to rebel.⁴⁹ They found the French Canadians unresponsive to their attempts to encourage them into rebellion, and when the Americans invaded during the Rebellion they were met with hostility from the Catholic hierarchy

⁴³ Moir, *British Era*, 60.

⁴⁴ Chausse, "French Canada," 71.

⁴⁵ Fay, *Catholics in Canada*, 35.

⁴⁶ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 155.

⁴⁷ Moir, *British Era*, 45.

⁴⁸ Moir, *British Era*, 45.

⁴⁹ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 157.

and at best indifference from the Canadien population.⁵⁰ The loyalty of the Canadiens during those times earned them great credit with the British government, and further buttressed their status as subjects of the king, thereby ensuring that there would be no repetition of the Acadian catastrophe. The Catholic Bishop of Quebec Briand was largely responsible for this wise policy on the part of the Catholic hierarchy, and ensured the status of Catholicism in Quebec through his actions.⁵¹

The end of the war drastically changed the status quo of Quebec, with predominantly Protestant Loyalists joining the 7,000 souls who had already fled the American Colonies to the shores of Lakes Ontario and Erie.⁵² These Loyalists, who had chosen to leave all they had in order to remain under the British Crown and British laws, were dismayed to learn that they were subject to French civil law and were a minority in a French-speaking, Roman Catholic system.⁵³ The absence of British property laws, as well as the lack of a representative democratic assembly led to petitions by the Loyalist settlers in the Western part of the province for separate British government and institutions.⁵⁴ Along with the desire for British institutions came the desire to remove the civil influence of Roman Catholicism upon the western part of the province. Charles Inglis also toured Quebec in 1789 and found that the Church of England and Protestantism in general was in a "deplorable state."⁵⁵ Though the Church of England had been the state religion of the colony for thirty years, there were only three parishes and three missions in the whole colony, and the Protestant majority in the western part of the

⁵⁰ Chausse, "French Canada," 73.

⁵¹ Chausse, "French Canada," 73.

⁵² Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 165.

⁵³ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 164.

⁵⁴ Moir, *British Era*, 60.

⁵⁵ Moir, *British Era*, 59.

province had only three missionaries and the eastern settlements had only three priests for the sparse population of Anglicans.⁵⁶ In light of these petitions and sentiments the British government acted by creating the Constitutional Act of 1791, formally separating the province of Quebec into the separate provinces of Lower Canada (present day Quebec) and Upper Canada (present day Ontario).⁵⁷

The Constitutional Act did not formally establish the Church of England in Lower Canada, and in fact did not officially give any constitutional privileges to the Anglican Church.⁵⁸ But it did provide for the “permanent appropriation of lands in the said Provinces, for the support and maintenance of a Protestant Clergy . . . equal in value to the seventh part” of all lands granted in every township.⁵⁹ The Act further enabled the “Governor or Lieutenant Governor of each of the said Provinces . . . to constitute and erect, within every Township or Parish . . . one or more Parsonage or Rectory . . . according to the Establishment of the Church of England . . . to endow every such Parsonage or Rectory with so much or such part of the lands so allotted . . .”⁶⁰ These clauses provided the framework for the relations of church and state in both provinces for the next half century, and also the source of much controversy as successive interests worked to benefit from the Clergy Reserves.⁶¹ Indeed John Moir calls the Clergy Reserves clause a “veritable Pandora’s Box of religious dissension in the colony of Upper Canada”.⁶²

⁵⁶ Moir, *British Era*, 61.

⁵⁷ Murphy, “English-Speaking Colonies,” 127.

⁵⁸ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 59.

⁵⁹ *The Constitutional Act, 1791*, cited in Moir, *Church and State in Canada*, 108–10.

⁶⁰ *The Constitutional Act, 1791*, cited in Moir, *Church and State in Canada*, 108–10.

⁶¹ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 59. It should be noted that just what the ambiguous term “Protestant Clergy” within the act meant was a point of contention not only in its day, but up to the present.

⁶² Moir, *British Era*, 62.

Shortly after the advent of the Constitutional Act, the new diocese of Quebec (encompassing both Lower and Upper Canada) received both its first Anglican bishop and a forceful advocate of Church of England establishment in the person of Jacob Mountain.⁶³ Mountain was appointed to the role from England, and immediately set about working to make the Anglican Church the established church in fact as well as in name, as well as to restrict the power of the Catholic bishops.⁶⁴ To achieve these ends the bishop attempted to transplant to Lower and Upper Canada the ecclesiastical traditions of England.⁶⁵ Establishment was one of the key elements of these traditions, and Mountain believed that making this establishment official would best benefit the Anglican Church in Canada.⁶⁶ According to Curtis Fahey, Mountain saw establishment not only as a means of disseminating sound religious teaching, but also as a means of “checking the spread of sectarian ‘enthusiasm,’ maintaining social and political stability, and defending the imperial connection.”⁶⁷

Mountain had the advantage of the title of “Lord Bishop of Quebec,” and the rights to sit on the legislative councils and executive committees of both colonies, and used these advantages to attempt to counteract the prestige and influence of the Catholic bishop within the Lower Canada community, but was never able to achieve his aim of displacing the Catholic Church with an Anglican one in the province.⁶⁸ The Anglican Church never had the numbers to justify the status that it enjoyed in England, and legal expedients could not make up the gap in popular participation between the two

⁶³ Chausse, “French Canada,” 81.

⁶⁴ Chausse, “French Canada,” 81.

⁶⁵ Millman, “Jacob Mountain,” 524.

⁶⁶ Millman, “Jacob Mountain,” 524.

⁶⁷ Fahey, *In His Name*, 10.

⁶⁸ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 212.

churches.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Mountain was able to use the position of influence on the executive council and in the legislative council to advance certain missions, notably the building of the Anglican Cathedral in Quebec City and the founding of Anglican schools for the education of children in the province.⁷⁰ He also worked to strengthen the Anglican parish work and clergy numbers within the diocese to stymie the Methodist preachers who were flooding in from the United States, a “set of ignorant Enthusiasts whose preaching is calculated only to perplex the understanding and corrupt the morals, to relax the nerves of industry and dissolve the bands of Society.”⁷¹ The problems of tithes, rectories, clergy reserves, and education would continue to take up Mountain’s attention as the eighteenth century closed and the nineteenth began.⁷² Mountain would also work closely with Lieutenant Governor John Simcoe and, later, John Strachan, to further the project of Anglican establishment in Upper Canada, and it is there among the Loyalists and immigrants from the British Isles that the most success was to be seen.⁷³

Upper Canada

Upper Canada came into existence with the propagation of the Constitutional Act, 1791. A fresh political entity was incorporated into the British Empire, and a new opportunity was given to the political leadership of the province to shape the ideal colonial society. Upper Canada was created specifically to acknowledge the Loyalist fact within the province, and to endow those Loyalists with the English institutions they were familiar

⁶⁹ Moir, *British Era*, 65.

⁷⁰ Millman, “Jacob Mountain,” 525.

⁷¹ Moir, *British Era*, 66.

⁷² Moir, *British Era*, 66.

⁷³ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 212.

with and that they had left the American colonies to maintain.⁷⁴ Indeed, “Upper Canada would, as far as humanly possible, become another England beyond the Atlantic, with the image and transcript of the English constitution, civil and religious.”⁷⁵

As the British government evaluated the rebellion of the Thirteen Colonies they came to the conclusion that constitutional weaknesses had played a significant role in creating the environment that led to sedition and rebellion.⁷⁶ Democratic elements had been allowed to gain too much authority in opposition to the crown and aristocracy, with consequent disastrous results.⁷⁷ The new Upper Canadian constitution would protect against this problem by making provision for three different checks upon the representative assembly: a landed aristocracy, a financially and politically independent executive branch, and a properly established church, complete with bishops.⁷⁸ The Legislative Council was intended to replicate the House of Lords in England, with hereditary membership given to a strong Anglican, Tory, landholding class who could compose a bulwark against popular agitation in the lower house.⁷⁹ The government assumed that the majority of Loyalists either were or wanted to be part of the established Church of England, and therefore proceeded without taking into account the different denominational loyalties that actually existed.⁸⁰ The model of Church establishment in Canada was based upon three premises:

First, the Church of England was the best of churches because its teaching was more purely evangelical, its liturgy more purely catholic, and its order was more purely apostolic than any other. Second, the established Church of England, as an essential part of the English Constitution with the king as its supreme governor,

⁷⁴ Moir, *British Era*, 80.

⁷⁵ Moir, *British Era*, 80.

⁷⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 14.

⁷⁷ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 14.

⁷⁸ Fahey, *In His Name*, 7.

⁷⁹ Fahey, *In His Name*, 7.

⁸⁰ Moir, *British Era*, 84.

was especially suited to forming fit British citizens. Third, because the Church helped society, society should be helpful to the Church.⁸¹

Had the colonial government better supported and promoted the Church in the American Colonies as a bastion against radical ideologies, it was believed, Britain might still retain them. For this reason the Church of England in BNA should be protected, promoted, and provided for from the government purse.⁸²

As seen above, in keeping with these goals of building and supporting a loyal established Church within the BNA colonies, the government inserted clauses into the Constitutional Act of 1791 to appropriate a seventh of all lands granted for the “support and maintenance of a Protestant clergy,” and also to “constitute and erect, within every township . . . one or more parsonage or rectory . . . according to the Establishment of the Church of England.”⁸³ These measures were hotly contested by Charles James Fox and the rest of the Whig party in the British Parliament, on the grounds that they privileged the Church of England unfairly. Nonetheless, William Pitt, the Tory prime minister, argued that it was vital to encourage the “Protestant clergy of the established Church” through financial support.⁸⁴ By 1836, the total number of acres that were reserved for the use of the clergy amounted to 2.2 million acres of land in Upper Canada, representing a vast store of future wealth as these lands were cleared and put to revenue generating use.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 54.

⁸² Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 54.

⁸³ *The Constitutional Act, 1791*, cited in Moir, *Church and State in Canada*, 108–10

⁸⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 16.

⁸⁵ Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 60. Until 1827 these lands could only be leased, and therefore provided little ready income, as the lands around them were free to qualified settlers. After 1827, some quantities were able to be sold, and the lands began to have value, but by then the situation had changed and the Anglican Church no longer had the sole claim to the proceeds. In principle the reserves were a vast storehouse of wealth for the established Church, but in practice they were wastelands that must wait for tenants before they would bear any fruit for their controllers.

This Tory ideological perspective was amply represented in the choice of the first lieutenant governor for the colony. John Graves Simcoe was a loyalist who had fought against the Americans during the American Rebellion, and he came to Upper Canada ready to ensure that the “most scandalous and swindling transaction that has disgraced the Annals of Mankind” would not be repeated in Upper Canada.⁸⁶ Before Simcoe had even reached Upper Canada he argued strongly for the establishment of the Anglican Church in Upper Canada, as well as the appointment of an Anglican bishop in the region:

I need not, I am sure, Sir, observe that the best security, that all just government has for its existence is founded on the Morality of the People, and that such Morality has no true Basis but when placed upon religious Principles; it is therefore that I have always been extremely anxious, both from political as well as more worthy motives that the Church of England should be essentially established in Upper Canada, and I must be permitted to say, Sir, I received the greatest satisfaction from your expression: “that you do not think that Government complete without a Protestant Bishop,” as I conceive such an institution necessary to the support of the experiment that is now making, whether the British Government cannot support itself by its own Superiority in this distant part of the World.⁸⁷

For Anglican Tories like Simcoe, the establishment of the Church had as much to do with civil society and governmental function as it had to do with religious concerns, as seen by the letter above. Simcoe’s mission was to preserve a healthy British government far away from the centre of the British world in London, and the establishment of the Church and the appointment of a bishop were meant to foster this central purpose. The purpose of the local government from the founding of the colony in 1791 was the development of a provincial society deeply loyal to the Crown and deeply committed to fundamental British values and institutions.⁸⁸ To achieve these ends they believed it was vital to

⁸⁶ Simcoe, *Correspondence Vol. IV*, 116.

⁸⁷ Simcoe, “Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe to Henry Dundas,” in Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 228–30.

⁸⁸ Mills, *Loyalty in Upper Canada*, 12.

reinforce the hierarchical positions of the monarchy and aristocracy within the new Canadian milieu, something that they believed had been lost in the American colonies and had contributed to the revolutionary conflagration.⁸⁹

Simcoe worked diligently not only to establish the Church of England, but also to ensure that Anglican educational institutions would be built to train up the future population of the colony in proper British fashion. To aid this mission he proposed a grant of one thousand pounds toward the building and staffing of two preparatory schools and a university that would be solely staffed by Anglican academics.⁹⁰ Simcoe called for a bishop in his colony who would create these schools and seminaries as a means of discouraging the “Levelling Spirit” that sought to insinuate itself across the border with the fledgling nation to the south.⁹¹ These schemes did not come to fruition under Simcoe’s tenure, but the ideas had been planted and beginnings had been made and awaited John Strachan’s arrival to come to further fruition.⁹²

In addition to taking positive steps for the advancement of the Anglican Church, Simcoe also worked to bar other denominations from carrying out important civil roles. The key area where Simcoe focused was on keeping the right to perform marriages strictly within the hands of the Anglican clergy, an action that was designed to ensure the continued practical precedence of the Church of England, as officiating marriages was one of the key civic functions of the church.⁹³ An act to this effect was passed in 1793. All marriages were limited to the Anglican clergy or to the magistrate if no Anglican

⁸⁹ Mills, *Loyalty in Upper Canada*, 17.

⁹⁰ Moir, *British Era*, 86.

⁹¹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 21.

⁹² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 40.

⁹³ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 31.

clergyman lived within eighteen miles of the couple.⁹⁴ The act proved difficult to maintain, however, as there were only three Anglican clergymen in all of Upper Canada in 1793 and by 1798 it had been extended to cover Dissenting clergy as well, despite Simcoe's objections.⁹⁵

The vast distances and correspondingly sparse population of the colony presented one of the greatest difficulties for Simcoe as he attempted to build and secure the establishment within Upper Canadian society.⁹⁶ Settlements were scattered lightly along the edges of Lakes Erie and Ontario, along the St. Lawrence River, and up the Ottawa valley, and the population grew from only 14,000 to 90,000 between 1791 and 1812.⁹⁷ Within these populations the Church of England made up a definite minority, with the Anglican John Stuart claiming in 1797 that "Upper Canada's inhabitants were principally Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Dutch Calvinists, and New England Sectaries," and that the Anglicans in his own parish were vastly outnumbered by other denominations.⁹⁸ This numerical disadvantage would continue into the nineteenth century.

Despite his idealistic view of British society, Simcoe was a realistic man who saw great benefit in following the colonial model of entrepreneurial innovation and expansion, and he was quite willing to bring in settlers from the new United States to boost settlement numbers, believing that the superior constitutional and civil arrangements of Upper Canada would make converts of any who harboured republican sentiments.⁹⁹ The loyalty of immigrants would be built on an effective land-granting

⁹⁴ Moir, *British Era*, 89.

⁹⁵ Moir, *British Era*, 89.

⁹⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 40.

⁹⁷ Moir, *Enduring Witness*, 65.

⁹⁸ Fahey, *In His Name*, 14.

⁹⁹ Mealing, "Simcoe," 756

system, but also by virtue of the familiar provisions of the British constitution.¹⁰⁰ In order to facilitate this easy transition, Simcoe was further willing to flex aspects of the British system of establishment, rejecting the government collection of the tithe as unnecessary and impolitic in a country with such significant religious pluralism: “I do not consider it possible to render the Perception of Tithes in this Province useful to the Clergy or palatable to the People; the Experiment, I am persuaded, would be most dangerous.”¹⁰¹

Already on the other side of the establishment issue there were men like Richard Cartwright, an Anglican Loyalist from Albany, New York, who saw that establishment would be difficult to achieve in a colony where the Anglican Church was in a distinct minority position regarding both numbers and effectiveness.¹⁰² In a letter to a friend in 1794 he stated that Simcoe’s efforts to recreate a precise model of English society would break upon the large numbers of Dissenters in the colony, and also upon the fact that the Loyalists had grown up in colonies where “there was the most perfect freedom in religious matters,” and that should he push too hard to enforce his will there would most likely be a “general emigration.”¹⁰³ Anglican and Dissenting objections to establishment and other British constitutional measures would continue to be a sticking point in Simcoe and others’ mission of replicating the British Constitution in Upper Canada.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, by the time that his term as lieutenant-governor had ended in 1796, Simcoe had seen many of his plans slowed or stopped by the governments in Quebec City and London, and it

¹⁰⁰ Mealing, “Simcoe,” 756.

¹⁰¹ Simcoe, “Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe to the Duke of Portland,” in Moir, *Church and State*, 151.

¹⁰² Hayes, *Anglicans in Canada*, 53.

¹⁰³ Simcoe, *Correspondence Vol. II*, 109.

¹⁰⁴ Fahey, *In His Name*, 9.

was left to later proponents of establishment to pick up the mission of implanting the British way of life into Upper Canada.¹⁰⁵

The Church of England in Upper Canada prior to the arrival of John Strachan already had a definite idea of its place and purpose within the colony. It found itself within a religiously diverse society that was unwilling to acknowledge its claims of privilege and status. Even Church of England members were less than enthusiastic in support of establishment.¹⁰⁶ Despite these facts, the Church of England maintained optimism regarding the future of the Church in Upper Canada.¹⁰⁷

Though the various social, political, and religious winds were blowing against the Church of England, people like Inglis, Mountain, Simcoe, and, fresh on the scene, Strachan worked to fulfil their vision of an establishment that would build a political and spiritual copy of their British homeland in the New World. In this pursuit they were acting in complete consistency with the prevailing Tory ideology of close, unbreakable union between the church and the state in Britain.¹⁰⁸ As Robert Choquette states, if the Church of England was not officially established in Upper and Lower Canada, it was not for want of effort on the part of the government of Britain, nor of the officials in the province itself.¹⁰⁹ The difficulty lay in the political, ethnic, social, economic, and religious diversity that existed in the provinces, and especially in the preponderance of non-Anglican Protestants in the populations of the two Canadas. No amount of government effort could change these demographic realities, but that did not stop the

¹⁰⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 38–9.

¹⁰⁶ Fahey, *In His Name*, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Fahey, *In His Name*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Fahey, *In His Name*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 165.

strong proponents of establishment from working to achieve that end.¹¹⁰ It is to the foremost of these idealistic Anglicans that this study now turns.

Conclusion

Strachan entered a colonial world where the battle between the Tory Anglican ascendancy and the radical reforming impulse was already well joined. Charles Inglis, Jacob Mountain, John Graves Simcoe, and others had already built a dream of their ideal society for the newly forming colonial world. An Anglican British colony would provide the loyalty and strength to protect itself against the fast growing neighbour to the south, and also provide the stability needed to build the new society that was forming from the diverse backgrounds of British North America. Despite their best efforts, however, the new realities of the colony were already running contrary to their vision. As John Strachan entered into public life in British North America he could look to other people's successes and failures, but have strong hope that with enough willpower and hard work the Anglican Tory ascendancy of the mother country could be replicated in the New World. His own formative years had amply prepared him to become a tenacious advocate for the Anglican Tory worldview, and it is these formative years that the next chapter will study.

¹¹⁰ Choquette, *Canada's Religions*, 165.

CHAPTER 3

STRACHAN'S EARLY LIFE

Introduction

John Strachan grew up in the eighteenth century world, riven by political and religious upheaval that is described in Chapter 1. Born during the American Rebellion, Strachan lived in a world where the unbelievable events of the French Revolution were shaking the foundations of British society, while religious issues were a main point of contention in public and private life. These external forces, coupled with his own experiences of growing up, gaining education, and beginning his professional career would shape his worldview and theology into a solid cast that would guide his life in Upper Canada until he died. At the ripe age of twenty-two years old, John Strachan, school master in Kingston, Upper Canada, undertook an autobiography, detailing his life until that point. This chapter will employ that account, along with the accounts of his contemporaries, to show how Strachan grew, and what the early influences were that shaped his life, theology, and thought.

Strachan's Early Life

John Strachan was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, on April 12th, 1778, the son of respectable, though by no means rich, parents.¹ His father was a member of the non-juring Episcopalian Church, High Church in nature and Tory Jacobite in their traditions,

¹ Unless otherwise cited, this biographical account is based upon Strachan's autobiography, written in 1800 at the age of twenty-two, upon his arrival in Upper Canada. See Strachan, *Autobiography*, Strachan Papers Trinity. This work is a handwritten manuscript and unpublished.

and it was from his father that Strachan imbibed his High Church Tory idea of the world.² His mother was a part of the Relief Kirk, a splinter from the established Presbyterian Church, although apparently not afraid of ritualism, as she made her children cross themselves every night before bed.³ He was born “in the twelfth day of the month at the twelfth hour of the day.” Fennings Taylor notes that this timing is important, for it was around this time that the French recognised the independence of the ‘thirteen rebellious Provinces in America,’ an event that led to the dispersion of the Loyalists to Canada, some of whom would become Strachan’s dearest friends and influences.”⁴ “The sun and moon were both full. It was high water at that instant; moreover it was Sunday and the sacrament was dispensing in the city.”⁵ His mother found these coincidences to be sure signs that young John was destined for great things.⁶ His father was a quarry overseer who was respected and whose integrity Strachan cited as an important example for his own life. It was Strachan’s father who influenced his Episcopalian leanings, taking him to church under the future Bishop Skinner of Aberdeen, who would have a lifelong influence upon Strachan’s view of church and state issues.⁷ “He (John Strachan) cherished a monarchical and loathed a republican form of government; and subsequent observation only increased his admiration of the former and his aversion to the latter. Could he have persuaded men to think as he came to think then would he have established in every church a bishop, and in every state a king.”⁸

² Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 194.

³ Robertson, *Fighting Bishop*, 15.

⁴ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 194.

⁵ Flint, *John Strachan*, 9.

⁶ Flint, *John Strachan*, 9.

⁷ Scadding, *First Bishop*, 14.

⁸ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 195.

Strachan's mother desired that one of her sons should have a liberal education with the purpose of becoming a minister, and John was the boy selected for this task due to a "gravity in me which was necessary in such an office." John's mother was determined that one of the boys should be made a gentleman. After John had gained the requisite knowledge of the English tongue necessary for entering school, a family meeting was convened and the issue of John's education brought to a full discussion. John's father was against the idea, not for want of funds to support the education, but because it would be difficult for a poor Scottish clergyman to find a decent living and chances of advancement. After Strachan's eldest brother spoke in favour of a liberal education for John he was sent to grammar school, where he had to work to catch up with the others in the class. Through much effort he attained the head of the class, a date that he described as the happiest of his life. During that time he also made the acquaintance of several well known educators who influenced Strachan's desire to become a teacher himself.

Strachan entered King's College, Aberdeen, on a bursary, as his father had made this the condition of his continued studies. After his first year of studies he was in the midst of deciding whether to stay in Aberdeen for the summer or go to teach in the home of a rich family, a path his father was against, when his father was killed by an explosion in the quarry and the financial needs of the family made his decision for him. At the tender age of fifteen John left Aberdeen to become a private tutor to the grandchildren of Lady Harriet Gordon, a close relative of the lofty Duke of Gordon. Strachan states, "I have not been able yet to extricate myself from this employment, which after seven years' trial I

dislike as much as I did the first day.”⁹ Strachan re-entered Aberdeen in the fall with seven pounds, ten shillings in summer earnings with which to support himself and his mother. The death of his close friend Montagu Beattie caused him to lose his spirits and descend into depression for a time. His story of the occurrence “neither honourable nor prudent” that brought him out of depression is indicative of Strachan’s temperament throughout his life:

I observed two militia men meeting us. If you happen to laugh as you go past these fellows, said one of the students, one of them will curse you and think you laugh at him. I paid no attention to this but the rest laughed aloud as they passed the man. He threatened them and, taking up a stone, hurled it after us with great violence. The stone nearly struck my leg. I turned about greatly irritated as I had given him no provocation, forgetting I was in bad company. I pitched a stone at his head, which almost struck him. He threw his musket on the ground and came running to beat me. His companion followed his example. As there were six of us, I was wondering at their temerity, but turning round, I perceived my friends all gone except one. I was unable to run and I was now too late. I exhorted my companion to stand firm but he slunk into a house, shutting the door behind him. By this time one of the men had come up, not the laugher, but his neighbour. He did not stop to reason but aimed a blow at my face. This I parried and in return cut his lips on his teeth. I felt new strength and pinned him up to the wall. Just as I was gaining a complete victory, his brother reached us and, coming behind me, struck me on the nose so violently that I staggered back several yards. I turned with fury on this new assailant and was some time successful, for his brother was unwilling to engage me a second time. A stream of blood issuing from my nose incommoded me greatly; and, just as they were attacking me together, a passenger stepped up, offering to be my second, and swore he never saw two greater cowards, two to fall on one and each of them bigger and older was scandalous. I undertook to beat them the one after the other but this they declined, going off, murmuring and spitting blood. Having washed my face I reprehended the cowardice of the students for involving me in a quarrel and leaving me in the lurch. The ferment into which this affair put me and the pride of victory seemed to revive my spirits and I recovered from my distemper in a short time.

As in this case Strachan stood firm when all else thought the cause lost, and fought doggedly to gain the victory, so he would continue to face conflict throughout his life.

⁹ Strachan’s opinion of teaching must have changed as he grew, for education was never far from him throughout the remainder of his life.

After receiving his MA degree from Aberdeen, Strachan moved to the vicinity of St. Andrews to be the parish schoolmaster of the small town of Denino. He stated that “the advantages I reaped (from Aberdeen) were few. I acquired some taste for study and collected a considerable mass of indigested knowledge. I could not boast of my proficiency in any of the branches taught, nor was I entirely ignorant of them.” In accordance with his goal of becoming a minister Strachan entered the faculty of Divinity at St. Andrews University. Though it was a Presbyterian Church of Scotland university, Strachan had no other option for studying divinity if he wanted to stay in Scotland.¹⁰ While at St. Andrews he also taught at the parish school in the town of Denino, where he had what he said to be the misfortune of falling in love. His relationship seems to have progressed to the point of expressions of marital intent before an incident of strain showed Strachan that the young lady was less loyal than he desired. As schoolmaster he was required to send the government a list of young men to be drafted into the militia (this was during the war with Revolutionary France), and as the law was deeply unpopular Strachan refused to send the lists. He ended up in the courts before the matter was settled by the young men voluntarily registering, but in the process he saw that his love interest had taken him from his studies and his career prospects, without a corresponding loyalty from the lady. Strachan decided to move to the village of Kettle to sever the attachment, and he was able to get a job there in the parish school, away from his self-confessed weakness and senselessness in the face of feelings.

Strachan states that though he had relational difficulties in Denino, he gained much from the time:

¹⁰ Melville, *Trinity College*, 27. Melville glosses over some of Strachan’s negative opinions regarding teaching in his early life, so this may be an interpretive gloss.

Hitherto I had rather read than thought; my ideas on religion and politics, on morals and science, if I had any, were confused or ill founded. I had possessed no opportunities of hearing learned conversation. When I read a book, I did not think it could ever be wrong, and was lost in amazement when I found authors contradicting each other. At Denino I learned to think for myself. Dr. Brown corrected many of my false notions. He and Mr. Duncan taught me to use my reason and to use the small share of penetration I possess in distinguishing truth from error. I began to extend my thoughts to abstract and general ideas, to criticise what I read and to summon the author to the bar of reason. I learned to discriminate between hypothesis and facts and to separate the ebullitions of fancy from the deductions of reason. It is not to be supposed that I could or can do these things perfectly, but I began to apply my power; my skill is still increasing. Much as I did, had not my foolish love intervened, I might have done much more.

Dr. James Brown and Mr. Duncan provided Strachan with the opportunity to step into the world of Enlightenment thought, and he developed an open and inquiring attitude that was reflected throughout his life, both in his teaching and in the three-thousand volume library covering broad swathes of scientific and religious texts that he accumulated over his lifetime.¹¹

The minister in charge of the parish was a “lamentable preacher,” but in other ways seems to have agreed with Strachan and gotten on well with him. Taylor, though, recounts the time as one of struggle for a boyish man of nineteen, small of stature and ruddy of complexion, who had to face off against five other competitors for the teaching position, and who succeeded through pure determination.¹² Having won the contest, he was faced with upwards of one hundred and twenty boys, some older than himself, to teach and keep under control.¹³ Strachan began experimenting with new methods of teaching, and developed a system of monitoring that had the older boys tutoring the younger ones, encouraging all to stretch their abilities to their fullest and producing

¹¹ See Clarke, *Opening the Bishop's Books*, for a detailed study of Strachan's library.

¹² Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 195.

¹³ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 196.

excellent results.¹⁴ His educational abilities won him enough recognition that boys were sent from other parishes to enrol under his tutelage, and even the very wealthy people who had previously kept their children home with private tutors sent them to be part of the school.¹⁵ Despite his expressed dislike of teaching he seems to have approached it with his standard attitude of hard work and strict routine, and the school was known not only for educational excellence but also firm discipline.¹⁶

While Strachan was in this post the Reverend Dr. James Brown gained the chair of Natural Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, and offered an assistantship to Strachan.¹⁷ Unfortunately, before Strachan could join Dr. Brown, ill health caused him to step down from the university. This greatly saddened Strachan, whose highest ambition at the time was to attain a university chair for himself.¹⁸ At the same time that the opportunity in Glasgow disappeared, a radical opportunity arose to move to Upper Canada and teach school, with the possibility of a chair in a newly planned university. Seeing no prospects in the Church of Scotland without money or patronage, and still with his aging mother to provide for, Strachan made the fateful decision to cross the Atlantic and join the new colony of Upper Canada.¹⁹ Strachan repeatedly stated that his own expectations for the position were too sanguine, and that he did not know what he was agreeing to when he decided to cross the Atlantic, but on the promise of eighty pounds salary and at most fifteen pupils to teach he was enticed to accept the position, resign

¹⁴ Bethune, *Strachan*, 6.

¹⁵ Bethune, *Strachan*, 6.

¹⁶ Bethune, *Strachan*, 6.

¹⁷ Melville, *Trinity*, 23.

¹⁸ Bethune, *Strachan*, 7.

¹⁹ Flint, *Strachan*, 15.

from Kettle, and in August 1799 bid his mother a fond farewell and took ship for the New World.²⁰

Strachan wrote a letter to Dr. Brown informing him that he was travelling to the New World via New York City, with the intent that if things failed in Upper Canada he might have a retreat prepared.²¹ Strachan made landfall in New York in November and did not seem to like what he saw: “Went into the court; most of the causes respected swindling. The science of cheating seems to be very well understood in the States.”²² Taking the overland route, possibly because of nausea from sea travel, he set out on November 20th for Upper Canada, despite experienced travellers telling him he would not make it there in the midst of winter (Strachan called them “screech owls” and started out anyway).²³ After a harrowing journey in which he almost ran out of money, Strachan arrived in Montreal in December of 1799. “Montreal did not meet my expectations, which being too sanguine are almost always disappointed. I formed in my imagination a city much larger as well as much more elegant.”²⁴ On 31 December 1799, Strachan arrived in Kingston, Upper Canada, to begin his new life as a Canadian schoolteacher.²⁵ “Had I possessed the means,” he afterward told his clergy, “I should have at once returned to Scotland.”²⁶ After teaching school first in Kingston and then Cornwall, Strachan was ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church, and entered into a ministry life

²⁰ Strachan especially notes that his mother was not willing for him to undertake the journey. His autobiography, written in Kingston immediately after his arrival in Upper Canada, has a markedly pessimistic note to it, showing that in 1800 Strachan was not feeling particularly “sanguine” about his prospects of advancement in the New World.

²¹ Strachan, *Letter to Dr. Brown 25 August 1799*.

²² Strachan, *Journal, November 14*.

²³ Flint, *Strachan*, 16.

²⁴ Strachan, *Travel Diary November to December, Strachan Papers*.

²⁵ Bethune, *Strachan*, 9.

²⁶ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 202.

that would place him at the centre of Upper Canadian religious, educational, and political life.²⁷

Strachan's Theological Influences

As Charles McDermott rightly assesses, John Strachan was not a man of original ideas, but rather of action.²⁸ As such he was not well fitted to craft his own unique theological and philosophical view of the world, nor did he feel the need to do so, but rather looked to a combination of wise personal mentors and written ideas to provide the fuel as he developed his firmly held beliefs.²⁹ Though not a man of great theological originality, he was a man of “superior mind, a vigorous intellect, and engaging disposition.”³⁰

McDermott rightly points out that Strachan “was not among those who are shaped by others, but rather among those who shape their own lives through the power of will and follow up decisions with the appropriate activities.”³¹ Indeed by 1803 Strachan's theological beliefs had firmly coalesced around the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Church of England, and from his ordination his loyalty to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England would be unwavering and his resolve to build the Church of England in Upper Canada would be unshakeable.³²

Strachan was a lifelong reader of broad tastes, as shown by the 3,600 volumes of his personal library that he bequeathed to Trinity College upon his death in 1867.³³

Surviving bibliographic records of the Strachan collection show the broad interests one

²⁷ Craig, “John Strachan,” 1.

²⁸ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 59.

²⁹ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 59.

³⁰ Patton, *Life, Labours, and Character*, 9.

³¹ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 59.

³² McDermott, “John Strachan,” 60.

³³ “Strachan Collection Bibliography, Trinity College.” This bibliographic list is unpublished, but was kindly provided by the library staff of Trinity College for the author's use.

would expect from a schoolmaster, but also a deep well of Orthodox High Church Anglican standard texts.³⁴ These books were largely eighteenth-century didactic texts designed to confirm the efficacy and truth of revealed Christianity, particularly Anglican Christianity, in the face of eighteenth-century infidelity and dissent, as well as the ever present menace of the errors of “Romanism.”³⁵ As has already been seen, heterodox teachings and Dissenting doctrine were seen as significant challenges to the Church in the eighteenth century. Strachan’s library also contained several collections of the works of Anglican bishops, such as *The Works of Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exceter*, and also contains many books in Latin and Greek, showing Strachan’s facility in the academic languages.³⁶ Practical and scientific works such as *An Account of Sir Isaac Newton’s Discoveries*, *The Canadian Conveyancer* (a legal compendium for business affairs), *Cours de Mathématiques* (A French language mathematical text), *The Elements of Astronomy*, and *A Course of Lectures on Natural Philosophy and the Mechanical Arts* are found in plenty, illustrating Strachan’s firm belief in broad and practical learning across a variety of subjects.³⁷ A variety of periodicals including *The British Magazine*, *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, *The Annual Register* (a review of current events, politics, and literature, originally edited by Edmund Burke), and *The British Critic* (a theological review and ecclesiastical record) illustrate the many and varied sources of current events across several different fields that informed Strachan’s view of the world beyond Upper Canada.³⁸ Finally, in addition to practical works there are many works of poetry, as well

³⁴ Clarke, “Bishop’s Books,” 11.

³⁵ Clarke, “Bishop’s Books,” 11.

³⁶ Strachan Bibliography.

³⁷ “Strachan Collection Bibliography, Trinity College.”

³⁸ “Strachan Collection Bibliography, Trinity College.”

as textbooks for the purpose of teaching poetic composition.³⁹ This broad library reflects the intellectual labours of one who, though not an ideological originator, was nevertheless determined to be well and broadly informed regarding current events, educated in every form of knowledge, and able to pass that education on to others.⁴⁰

Richard Cartwright, the father of the first boys that Strachan tutored upon arrival in Upper Canada, had significant influence upon Strachan's worldview and beliefs, reinforcing the Loyalist view of the United States as well as firm Anglican Tory ideology.⁴¹ Another key influence upon Strachan was the Reverend John Stuart, Anglican rector of Kingston and the key driver behind Strachan's decision to seek ordination in the Anglican Church.⁴² Stuart's firm convictions on the merits of Anglicanism and the British way of life caused him first to convert from his childhood Presbyterianism, and then to leave the Thirteen Colonies in 1781 for Kingston.⁴³ He was steadfast in his belief in the superiority of the Anglican Church, as seen through his one extant sermon:

Let us therefore firmly adhere to the truths we have been taught and do profess— Though I think no Church infallible, yet if the truths of religion are to be taken from the rules of Holy Scripture, and the platform of the primitive Churches, then the Church of England, both as to doctrine and practice, is undoubtedly the most orthodox in the faith, the freest from idolatry, superstition, and enthusiasm, of all now extant. Let us therefore hold fast and persevere in this communion.⁴⁴

Stuart's faith in the superiority of Anglicanism drove his ministry and his mentorship of Strachan.

³⁹ "Strachan Collection Bibliography, Trinity College."

⁴⁰ Clark, "Bishop's Books," 31.

⁴¹ McDermott, "John Strachan," 54.

⁴² Bethune, *John Strachan*, 13.

⁴³ McDermott, "John Strachan," 56.

⁴⁴ John Stuart, quoted in McDermott, "John Strachan," 56.

As McDermott shows, Strachan appreciated the works of the Oxford Movement, citing from their tracts in his sermons and adopting some of their language.⁴⁵ Despite this appreciation for the movement, Strachan was not unqualified in his approbation for their ideas, and challenged some of the Tractarian teachings on the basis of their departure from the Middle Way that characterised Strachan's ideal of Anglican theology.⁴⁶ This difference would widen to a full breach upon the publication of *Tract 90* and the subsequent conversion of John Henry Newman and others to the Roman Catholic faith. All sympathy for the movement fast fled from Strachan's mind:

I see the bugbear of Puseyism has reached Aberdeen, my dear brother, but almost all that is valuable in the Oxford Tracts was time immemorial the doctrine of the Scotch Episcopalians or Non-Jurants and is to be found in a publication of the present Bishop Skinner's father, the good bishop whom you and I often met in his walks more than fifty years ago. This excellent prelate published a book called *Primitive Truth and Order* in 1786 in which is to be found almost everything that is valuable in the Oxford Tracts for the Times.⁴⁷

Strachan shows through this letter that his interest in the Oxford Movement was limited to where their theology intersected with his own, and he was willing to abandon them as soon as it became plain that their theological journey had led them outside the arms of his "Mother Church."⁴⁸ Strachan's theology had been influenced by Bishop Skinner many years prior, as well as by Cartwright and Stuart, and the *Tracts for the Times* had merely agreed with Strachan's own firm theological emphases. Any claim that Strachan's theology was altered by the Tractarian movement is shown to be false by Strachan's own contentions. That some of his language for that doctrine was influenced by Newman and others is attested by notations on two sermons on the Eucharist written in 1839 that

⁴⁵ McDermott, "John Strachan," 127.

⁴⁶ Strachan, "The Church: Cobourg, Saturday, October 19th." *The Church* III: XVI (1839) 62.

⁴⁷ *SLB*, 1844–49: "Strachan to J. Strachan, August 8, 1844."

⁴⁸ *SLB*, 1839–43: "Strachan to Newman, May 21, 1842."

reference Newman as having influenced the sermons, though McDermott correctly shows that Strachan held the same Eucharistic theology long before the *Tracts for the Times* were published.⁴⁹ The Oxford Movement provided useful supplementary language and conversation partners for Strachan, but his theology was at best supplemented by Tractarian teachings.⁵⁰

As seen above in Strachan's letter to his brother, the writings of Bishop Skinner, as well as the personal interactions he appears to have had with him during his youth in Scotland, led to this prelate's works providing Strachan with a theological foundation for his views regarding the Church and episcopacy. Skinner's general view of the Church shows his influence on Strachan: "But, as there is nothing to enlighten the minds of men in the doctrines of salvation, but the *Word of God*; so there is nothing that can unite their hearts and affections, but the *Church of God*."⁵¹ Additionally, Skinner's abhorrence for infidelity and enthusiasm shows the influence that he had on Strachan:

While, taking a view of the general state of religion in this country, and the danger to which it is exposed, from professed infidels on the one hand, and from the fanatical abettors of enthusiasm on the other, we look back through the mist of modern confusion, to the primitive order and uniformity of the church, and see what necessity there is for our continuing still in the "Apostles' doctrine and fellowship," as the only source of order and uniformity.⁵²

The only sure defence of the Church was faithful maintenance of the primitive faith as found in Scriptures and the history of the Church. Strachan echoed this firm conviction throughout his life, as well as Skinner's dual watch against infidelity and enthusiasm, which was to lead Strachan into conflict with the Methodists and other Dissenters in Upper Canada.

⁴⁹ McDermott, "John Strachan," 135.

⁵⁰ McDermott, "John Strachan," 139.

⁵¹ Skinner, *Primitive Truth*, 11.

⁵² Skinner, *Primitive Truth*, 12.

Strachan was not a theological innovator or inventor.⁵³ Above all things, his primary theological guide and influence was the Book of Common Prayer, the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Anglican Communion, and the ancient Creeds of the Church. Throughout his writings the reverence for these foundation stones of the Anglican communion is clearly evident, and he constantly references them as the basis for the confidence that the clergy of the Church of England in Upper Canada can have that theirs is the purest Church that best represents the primitive faith of its forbears: "With this view, I made the study of the Holy Scriptures, from which all the formularies of our Church are drawn, my daily practice; and after no little enquiry, found her Book of Common Prayer, her Creeds, her *Thirty-Nine Articles*, her ministration of the Holy Sacraments, and her other minor offices in marvellous harmony one to another."⁵⁴ These guiding lights were unmovable for him, and he did not recognise any influence that would attempt to supplant either his faith in the Scriptures or his allegiance to the primitive perfection he found within the Anglican Church. In fact, he spoke strongly against any innovation not only in religion, but in society as a whole, seeing within these changes a downward trend:

The great vice of the present age is the want of Christian Faith and elevation of principle. All is material, tending downwards, and confined to this world. Society is full of suspicion, reckless in its desires, eager for change, and hostile to every thing of a tranquil and settled nature. Whatever is ancient, is despised because it is old; and whatever is new, is valued because of its novelty. This innovating spirit has thrust itself into both politics and religion with fearful and convulsive effect. He who, with respect to Christianity, thinks that truth and order, as taught by the Apostles, is a safer guide than modern rationalism, fanatical delusions, and heartless infidelity; or in politics, that our ancestors were not altogether ignorant of the principles of good government or the true sources of domestic happiness, is pronounced far behind the spirit of the age. A spirit which, being entirely earthly, issues in boundless selfishness and an incessant craving after wealth and power,

⁵³ Elliott-Binns, *Early Evangelicals*, 382.

⁵⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1860*, 16.

and which it seeks to gratify at the expense of every sound principle, while it holds in contempt and disbelief all that is generous and noble in human nature.⁵⁵

Strachan's resistance to religious or constitutional innovation, then, was not merely a reactionary desire to avoid anything new, but a theological belief in the core unchanging nature not only of the Christian faith and the Church, but of the government and constitution that flowed directly from that Christian faith, and whose legitimacy depended on the Church, according to Anglican political theology.⁵⁶

Strachan was just as deeply affected by the French Revolution and the American Rebellion as many others of his age, and this visceral response to religious and constitutional innovation arose from his evaluation of the damage these two movements had caused within their own nations and in the broader world.⁵⁷ By attempting to alter the grounds upon which faith and politics were built, raising natural law and reason in place of revelation and tradition, these movements threatened the very existence not merely of the British, and by extension Canadian, constitution, but the life and strength of the Christian Church itself. The answer to this religious and constitutional innovation was "truth and order, as taught by the Apostles," preserving the integrity of the Church and the constitution by a constant return to the font of all truth, the primitive Church and the Scriptures it produced: "The people have been recalled from the dangerous theories of the age, falsely called liberal, which produce division in religion and anarchy in government, to the sound principles of the Church as committed to her by the Apostles."⁵⁸

In the hands of Bishop Skinner, Reverend John Stuart, and Richard Cartwright, and with the Book of Common Prayer in hand, Strachan was shaped theologically along

⁵⁵ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 48.

⁵⁶ Clark, *English Society*, 141.

⁵⁷ Strachan, *Discourse*, 55–66.

⁵⁸ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 13.

High Church Anglican lines, and he maintained consistent doctrinal stances throughout his life, standing against theological innovation as a matter of faith. As McDermott says, it does not make sense to look for doctrinal development or shift in beliefs in Strachan, as he was theologically consistent from the time that he first formed his views, and it was impossible for him to innovate doctrinally without betraying his own faith in the perfection of the Anglican Communion and the British Constitution.⁵⁹

Party Political Views

Strachan was the son of a Nonjuring Scottish family whose Tory loyalties went back into the seventeenth century.⁶⁰ Consistent with this upbringing, Strachan was not only a firm Anglican, but an ardent and intractable Tory.⁶¹ This political stance, as with his theological positions, grew not from his desire for advancement or loyalty to a party structure, but rather because the Tory ideal of government and the Church were consistent with Strachan's worldview.⁶² Indeed, within his writings the word "Tory" is rarely found, for the party was not the main issue, but the doctrines espoused by the party.

As seen in Chapter 1, the political battles in Britain centred on the dual issues of Church and royal prerogative, with the Whigs famous by the end of the eighteenth century for their irreligion, open favour of disestablishment, and their support of Dissenters, who also did not favour establishment.⁶³ Their Erastian ideal of the role of the Church also ran against Strachan's understanding of the role of the Church, creating

⁵⁹ McDermott, "John Strachan," 157.

⁶⁰ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 1.

⁶¹ Clarke, "Bishop's Books," 31.

⁶² Clarke, "Bishop's Books," 31.

⁶³ Lee, "Parliament, Parties, and Elections," 73.

insurmountable animosities toward Whig thought that Strachan would maintain throughout his life.⁶⁴ Additionally, the ferments of the eighteenth century that took the form of the Wilkes controversy, the American Rebellion, and the French Revolution, were all supported and encouraged by the Whig party (or at least the radical wings of the party in the case of the French Revolution).⁶⁵ Within a very short period of time Strachan had fresh reasons to distrust the levelling and revolutionary spirit to be found within the Whig party, as the Napoleonic wars got under way and the forces of Revolutionary France began to eat away at the independent nations of Europe, and Strachan entered the lists against the ideals of that movement.⁶⁶ Indeed, these Whiggish principles in their ultimate French form produced a "Torrent of anarchy, and next a military despotism, which were in turn, overwhelming the earth."⁶⁷ Added to this antipathy for Whiggish principles that he brought from Britain, the simple distinction of Whigs as supporters of the American Rebellion and Tories as Loyalists ensured that Strachan's political party allegiances were only amplified by close contact with the strong Loyalist communities he dwelt among when he arrived in Upper Canada.⁶⁸

By contrast to the Whigs, the firm support for the Anglican Church and royal prerogative characteristic of the Tory party ensured that Strachan already had a warm affection for their ideals before he ever left Scotland.⁶⁹ Strengthened by the firm identification of loyalty to the Crown and British Constitution with Toryism in Canada, Strachan's political sympathies could not have been placed with any other party.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁴ MacVean, "Erastianism," 193.

⁶⁵ Lee, "Parliament, Parties, and Elections," 73.

⁶⁶ Strachan, "Sermon, 14 March, 1804."

⁶⁷ Strachan, *A Sermon, 3 June, 1814*, 5.

⁶⁸ MacVean, "Erastianism," 191.

⁶⁹ MacVean, "Erastianism," 190.

⁷⁰ MacVean, "Erastianism," 191.

package defence of an aristocratic, landed, Anglican order was a central theme of British Toryism, and resonated well with Strachan's tenacious defence of the establishment of Anglicanism in Upper Canada.⁷¹ At the core of Strachan's political sympathies was always the position and authority of the established Church in the British Constitution.

Strachan paid close attention to events that happened in the rest of the world, and was well aware of the political currents of the eighteenth century, and the thought that lay behind the revolutionary movements that had rocked that century.⁷² The central Tory tenets of passive non-resistance to authority, defence of the established Church, support for the Crown and the royal prerogative, and distrust of democratic and levelling urges were all key aspects of Strachan's political worldview.⁷³ Calls for responsible government and democratic franchise in the name of liberty were Whiggish ideas and Strachan would have no truck with them. Indeed, his comment about the Bishop of Nova Scotia shows his understanding of political affiliation: "He was a good Tory, as all sensible men are."⁷⁴ This single-mindedness in politics, as in every other field, ensured that he was not to be popular with the new men who began to gain power after the War of 1812, but Strachan was not interested in moderation, and treated politics as much as anything else as a zero sum realm where choices were moral and where compromise was utterly intolerable.⁷⁵ The Reform Party of Upper Canada were Whigs by other names for Strachan, and were treated with the same distrust and vehemence as they attempted to

⁷¹ Lee, "Parliament, Parties, and Politics," 77.

⁷² See Strachan, "Sermon, 14 March, 1804."

⁷³ See Blackstone, *Commentaries Vol. 1*, 184–211.

⁷⁴ Strachan, quoted in Bethune, *John Strachan*, 135.

⁷⁵ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 221.

weaken the establishment of the Church through their attacks upon the Clergy Reserves and King's College.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Strachan grew up in the era of great upheaval described in the previous chapters. The Tory Anglican ascendancy was built into his life from birth, even in Scotland. The shock of the American Rebellion and the horror of the French Revolution were present for him in the same way that it was present for every other resident of the British Isles. His travels in the United States only seem to have solidified his opinions regarding democracy, republics, and religious freedom, and his interactions with education did not soften him in his dedication to the Anglican theology that underpinned church and state in the late eighteenth century. His theological and political influences, both in Scotland during his youth and after his arrival in Upper Canada, shaped him into a resolute Anglican Tory, unshakeable in his certainty that there was a right path, and that he was on it. His future career was a testimony to the ideas imbibed in his formative years. It is to a detailed study of his theological beliefs regarding the Church, education, and government that the following chapters will now turn.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 222. See chapters seven and eight.

CHAPTER 4

STRACHAN'S THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

Introduction

As seen in the previous chapter, the Church of England was the centre of Strachan's life from the time of his ordination in 1803 until the day he died, and his doctrinal stance regarding the Church was formed early in his life. Central to his confidence in the Church was his belief in the total legitimacy of the Anglican Church as the purest expression of the primitive Christian faith. This chapter will explore Strachan's beliefs regarding the legitimacy, role, and task of the Anglican Church, showing why Strachan had such confidence in the Church as God's perfect institution for furthering the Gospel ministry in Upper Canada.

Legitimacy of the Church

Strachan's faith in the legitimacy of the Christian Gospel as a whole, and the Anglican Church particularly as the only totally correct expression of Christianity rested upon a confident reading of scripture and church history. The apostolicity, purity of doctrine, and uniqueness of the Anglican Communion were all proof to Strachan of the perfect right of the Anglican Church to be the only established church not only of England, but of every English colony as well. Any right that a church claimed to national status, and especially government support, depended upon these grounds of legitimacy. The following chapter will first establish Strachan's grounds for the legitimacy of the Christian faith, before moving on to his views of the particular legitimacy of the Anglican Church as the most perfect expression of that faith.

Scriptural Authority

Strachan confirmed the general revelation of nature as a sure proof of the existence and worthiness of God: “the sun, the moon, and the stars, the inhabitants of the land and water so wonderfully suited to their different situations, and habits of life, loudly proclaim a first cause of infinite power and wisdom.”¹ This basic understanding of first causes demands a response of worship and thanksgiving for all that humans have: “the content of all nature proves the being of a God, and in the belief of his existence, that of religion is included, for as our benefactor we owe him thanks, but to offer up thanksgiving is the first act of piety.”² Consistent with Christian orthodoxy, Strachan further believed that general revelation was not enough, and he supported this argument by citing all the great philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, who were unable with all their thought to come up with a system for moral living that could compare with the Decalogue.³ But despite the excellence of the Old Testament law, Strachan argues that the person and work of Christ provide the only way for people to truly worship in spirit and in truth.⁴ Special revelation was indeed necessary because humanity had been unable to fulfil the end for which they were created, an assertion Strachan turns to history to reinforce.⁵ Strachan believed in the special revelation of the Bible, saying “nor can it be incredible that God should graciously reveal those things to man, which are essential to his happiness, and which he could never discover, after blessing him with existence, and giving him the earth for his habitation.”⁶ Special revelation was a natural, consistent outflow of God’s desire for humanity to have all they needed to live the upright life. For

¹ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 16.

² Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 16.

³ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 18.

⁴ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 19.

⁵ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 20.

⁶ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 17.

the Anglican Church, the Bible was the ultimate source: "The Holy Scriptures are her bulwark; on them her Book of Common Prayer and Articles rest, and set forth their substance and spirit, for they are the very essence of Gospel truth."⁷ Strachan had a high view of the Scriptures, and was not interested in the trend of biblical criticism that began to come into vogue in the universities and seminaries of the world by the end of his life.⁸ He found those new studies of the Bible to be "erroneous and strange doctrines, lacking that spirit of humility and reverence with which human reason ought ever to approach the study of Divine Truth."⁹

Despite his strong dislike for biblical criticism as it developed in his later life, Strachan realised that the Bible was not always simple, but rather that the truth of the Bible was wrapped in a particular package that required interpretation to correctly understand:

The Bible consists of Narratives, Prophecies, Psalms, and Letters,—in which the divine Doctrine is not delivered in naked and simple propositions but on the contrary, requires a sound judgement to separate its general truths from the particular circumstances in which they are involved. The sacred volume consists not of Articles or Catechism, but declarations, made on certain occasions, and the dealings of God with certain nations or individuals; and from them it is required to deduce the peculiar principles or doctrines which constitute the Christian system.¹⁰

Misinterpretation and error was the result of those who gave themselves rein to interpret freely, without recourse to an authoritative interpretation. Without this authority and stability in interpretation the Church was liable to descend into sectarianism and the fragmentation he saw in the Dissenting churches.¹¹ A correctly grounded Church was

⁷ Strachan, *Charge*, 1847, 32.

⁸ McDermott, "John Strachan," 153.

⁹ Strachan, *Proceedings of the Synod*, 1864, 13.

¹⁰ Strachan, *Address to the Clergy*, 1837, 2–3.

¹¹ Strachan, *Address to the Clergy*, 1837, 3.

necessary for correctly grounded interpretation. Careful study and learned tutelage were the only ways that the minister of the Gospel could rightly divide the Word of God.

Strachan illustrated this truth through the life of the Apostle Paul, who “found it necessary after his conversion to read and meditate upon the Scriptures, and to seclude himself for this study several years before he assumed the office of public instructor.”¹²

Hard work and wise mentorship was the key to interpreting the Bible rightly, as the example of the godly men of old showed: “how much more need have we of much study, prayer, and meditation? God does not supply by miracles, natural deficiencies which care and industry may remedy, and yet the burthen of our profession has been infinitely increased.”¹³ Further to Scriptural revelation, Divine Providence provided a confirmatory aspect of revelation, as God’s orderly plan and moral government proved the truth of the Scriptural message in the daily operation of the world.¹⁴

The Christian Message

The legitimacy of the Church also had to rest on the truth of the basic Christian message.

Strachan approached the Christian faith both as a man of faith and as a person who believed that reason supported faith, rather than standing in opposition to it.¹⁵ As he argued on behalf of the Christian faith to his students he said, “I will not make a single assertion, which I am not ready, if required, to prove to your satisfaction.”¹⁶

In his *The Christian Religion, Recommended in a Letter to His Pupils*, Strachan began arguments for the Christian Gospel with the issue of sin, showing that the damage

¹² Strachan, *Address to the Clergy*, 1837, 3.

¹³ Strachan, *Address to the Clergy*, 1837, 3.

¹⁴ Strachan, “Sermon, 6 January, 1852.”

¹⁵ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 10.

¹⁶ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 10.

done by sin has a far-reaching effect upon the life, pursuits, and character of people.¹⁷ Strachan approached sin with an eighteenth-century Anglican outlook, focused upon reason and rational argument, rather than dwelling dramatically upon the effects of sin upon the soul, or the horrors that awaited the unrepentant sinner.¹⁸ Strachan emphasised that Christianity was not a joyless life, but rather one that embraces and encourages all lawful pleasure and cultivates virtue and strength of character.¹⁹ He acknowledged that sins, those things that “are not lawful” could be pleasurable for a time, but that they are in the long run “destructive both to the mind and body.”²⁰ Lawful Christian gratification, then, is about “contributing to your felicity: If I warn you against those (indulgences) of a sensual kind, it is because they are commonly pernicious, and are forever promising more than they can perform.”²¹ The Christian religion did the great work of “governing the passions and the will,” thereby destroying the ability of sin to control a person’s life.²² Strachan’s contemplations are upon the elevation of the soul that true religion produces, raising one up out of the mire of vice and dissipation and causing the Christian to “Look upon what you have acquired as only the beginning, the seed which should spring up, and enable you to reach to much greater degrees of perfection.”²³ The result of rejecting sin, of turning to the true religion, is that one will be bidden to “be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. She improves all our faculties, and elevates the soul to the

¹⁷ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 11.

¹⁸ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 173.

¹⁹ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 11.

²⁰ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 11.

²¹ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 11.

²² Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 6.

²³ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 12.

contemplation of the most glorious truths. She combines in the characters of her friends everything that is amiable, dignified, and glorious.”²⁴

It is from this discussion of sin and its effects on the world that Strachan approaches the incarnation of Christ. After showing the desperate need not only of divine revelation of the moral law, but divine intervention as well, Strachan turns to the narrative of Christ’s coming to the world:

When the world was in the dismal situation we have been describing, there was born in Judea a poor man named Jesus, supposed to be the son of a carpenter, who, assisted by twelve companions without learning, without education, without the countenance of the powerful, or the approbation of the wise, taught a system of theology the most sublime, and of morals the most perfect, and which was disseminated with a most astonishing rapidity, through all the regions of the East, in direct opposition to the power, the interests, the pleasures, the ambition, the prejudices, and the philosophy of the world, in spite of princes and priests, the force of superstition, and the fury of blind zeal:—A religion which admits no false virtue, however universally admired, and omits no true one, though despised by all the world. A religion which pays no respect to the prejudices of men, throws out no vain allurements to gain proselytes, and admits no criminal indulgence; but fills us with love and gratitude to God, excites our ardent imitation of the divine perfections, makes us sensible to our natural weakness; and dependence, opens our hearts towards all mankind, fills us with sympathy and benevolence towards them, raises our thoughts above the frivolous joys of this life, and presents us with the most glorious prospects beyond the grave.²⁵

This quotation shows the firm roots of Strachan’s faith in the traditional Christian message. Strachan was not a functionary, using the Church to get ahead while not really believing his message, but a sincere believer in the person and work of Christ. Indeed, Charles McDermott argues effectively that the central redemptive act of Christ’s life and atoning death provides the core of Strachan’s theology, shaping his view of the church, the state, and other denominations.²⁶ Strachan’s vision of the faith and the church was not one of superiority over the masses or a religion for the elites, or merely a means of

²⁴ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 12.

²⁵ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 23.

²⁶ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 170.

gaining and keeping power, but rather a holistic faith that brought benefit, growth, and stability to every aspect of life. For Strachan, the Christian faith was about building people toward the divine perfections not through striving, but through the work of God that enabled the Christian to exercise the earthly character of a believer, and to experience the eternal rewards bought by the redeeming work of Christ.²⁷ All actions in every part of life must proceed from faith in the risen and redeeming Christ if they were to be correct, and all actions that did not flow from this central point of faith, whether one claimed to be a Christian or not, were sin and deserving of judgement.²⁸ There could be no separation between one's faith and one's morality, let alone one's public or private deeds. All must be under the authority of Christ and guided by the Gospel, or they were by nature wrong or illegitimate.²⁹ Strachan even went so far as to say that those things that seem to be virtues in a person, if not flowing from "This loyalty of heart, this allegiance of soul to the Father . . . even what seems to be outward virtues still can be selfishness."³⁰ Those who did not have Christian faith could not be trusted to be truly virtuous for "sad experience has proven that who has denied God cannot be trusted by man, that he is the victim of unbridled passions, and insatiable appetites, which inflame and hurry him down the stream of wickedness, and at length plunge him into the gulch of despair."³¹ Strachan could recognise no good in nor brook any tolerance of secularism, atheism, or even a form of Christianity that excluded his understanding of full truth as expressed in the Anglican Church, as to do so was to encourage sinfulness in people and

²⁷ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 24–26.

²⁸ McDermott, "John Strachan," 205.

²⁹ Strachan, "Democracy and Infidelity," cited in McDermott, "John Strachan," 205.

³⁰ Strachan, "Sermon, November 15, 1845."

³¹ Strachan, "Christian Recorder," quoted in McDermott, "John Strachan," 206.

in the nation as a whole.³² McDermott sees this immovable stance as a weakness in Strachan's character that made him unable to accept the "notion of Christ as the pre-existing Word through whom all creation was made," limiting his flexibility when dealing with novel movements or ideas such as nineteenth-century secularism or Ryerson's educational system of the 1850s.³³ As has been shown, however, the Tory Anglican doctrine which shaped Strachan's theology was meant to be a bulwark against the waves of change that infidelity, heterodoxy, and atheism had unleashed upon Europe and the New World throughout the eighteenth century, and which had continued to rock Britain and her colonies in the nineteenth century.³⁴ Strachan could and did point to the results of secularising ideals in France and the United States to show the deep damage that lack of Christian faith at the core of one's actions could lead persons and whole countries to, and by those examples prove the danger of moving from his firm view of true Christian faith as the central element of not only personal but public life as well.³⁵ Infidelity, theological and constitutional innovation, dissent, and societal chaos were all rolled into one in any Tory Anglican mind that had been formed in eighteenth-century Britain.³⁶ As will be seen in the next chapter, this requirement for faith to be at the centre of any well-founded life led Strachan to battle for religion to be at the centre of education, for it was impossible to shape the leaders of the future without shaping their moral and religious beliefs.³⁷

³² McDermott, "John Strachan," 208.

³³ McDermott, "John Strachan," 208.

³⁴ Clark, *English Society*, 347–8.

³⁵ See Strachan, *Charge, 1853*, 20.

³⁶ Clark, *English Society*, 229.

³⁷ Strachan, *Charge, 1853*, 21.

The Christian Gospel represented God's providential, divine, and uniform plan for the restoration of the human race.³⁸ Providence accomplishes God's plan by propagating the pure Christian Gospel to every corner of the world.³⁹ God providentially employed people, families, groups of people, and even nations to be His instruments for the furtherance of His work.⁴⁰ It was in this context that Strachan saw the British nation as God's providentially chosen people to carry out the work of spreading true Christianity to the world.⁴¹ Providence guided the destiny of people, and Providence guided the destiny of nations.⁴²

Another key element of the Christian Gospel that helps to explain Strachan's theological positions and actions was the idea of standing firm in the face of whatever trials or tribulations should arise: "but the sincere Christian walks with a firm pace in the light of the Sun."⁴³ This was possible because the Christian realises that the focus of life is not this world, but eternity:

To the mere philosopher, the world is everything; to the Christian nothing; the former regards as his happiness, his end; the latter, an atom, a shadow that passeth away. Religion is a golden chain, the first link of which is the Supreme Being, and which reacheth to eternity. Without its illuminating ray this world is a riddle, an inexplicable chaos, which bewilders us the more, the deeper we enquire.⁴⁴

This emphasis upon steadfastness and the focus upon eternal life frames Strachan's actions throughout his life. Because eternity was the most important thing, and because

³⁸ Strachan, "Sermon, 6 January, 1852."

³⁹ MacRae, "Religious Foundations," 27.

⁴⁰ MacRae, "Religious Foundations," 27.

⁴¹ Strachan, "Sermon, 7 June, 1832."

⁴² Strachan, "Sermon, 7 February, 1841." Strachan does not use the term "Providence" as frequently as some other preachers and writers of his day, but his doctrine of the Church and the Christian faith in general is strongly providential in nature. Many of his pastoral charges will have one or two references to Providence in 60 pages. This does not speak to Strachan's minimization of the doctrine, but to Strachan's use of other interchangeable ideas such as "God's divine government" as other ways to express the providential idea. See Strachan, *Charge, 1853* for an example of the sparse employment of the word.

⁴³ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 30.

⁴⁴ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 29.

steadfastness in the face of adversity was necessary for any Christian, Strachan was prepared to step out and take a stand against those things that he believed limited the ability of the Christian faith to be effectively spread, because ultimately his only concern had to be that which truly had meaning: eternity and the approbation of the Supreme Being.⁴⁵ Indeed eternity in Strachan's estimation gave the Christian the ability to go through life "imitating his divine perfections, submitting ourselves with patience, cheerfulness, and resignation, to the vicissitudes of the present life."⁴⁶ The idea of a more flexible form of Christian expression such as McDermott champions could not be consistent with Strachan's basic understanding of singular faithfulness to one's duty to God.⁴⁷

The Christian faith is also a necessary prerequisite for both a sound public and private life because it is the place where all are equal before God: "it is no respecter of persons; it enlightens the low as well as the high; breaks down the barrier between the philosopher and the peasant, and tells them both what they ought to do. It tells us to love, to worship, and obey God, and to be inspired with the noble emulation of imitating his divine perfection."⁴⁸ Far from removing or destroying hierarchy in the world, the Gospel makes a way for everyone of every class to come to God in the same way, regardless of their rank, wealth, or power. All are called by love of God to add love of humanity, "that universal charity, which is the foundation of all the comforts of social life, the bond of

⁴⁵ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 29.

⁴⁶ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 31.

⁴⁷ McDermott, "John Strachan," 208.

⁴⁸ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 31.

connexion between earth, and heaven.”⁴⁹ Out of this love for humanity the mission of the Church is brought into focus:

This angelic disposition softens our passions, appeases our resentments, extends our beneficence to the miseries of mankind—it tells us we are all brethren, all children of the same father, and urges us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, be a father to the fatherless, a husband to the widow, the orphan’s stay, and the stranger’s shield; that it is to our glory to be clothed with gentleness, humility, brotherly kindness, moderation, and equity. It tells us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, excites our warmest gratitude to God for his unspeakable kindness; exalts us to the consideration of everlasting justice, and moral excellence, to an heavenly connection with the spiritual world.⁵⁰

The work of the church was not to be self-perpetuation, the amassing of wealth, or other worldly goals, but rather to be moved to preach the truth and care for the people of God’s creation. One who is saved by the redemptive work of Christ cannot help but do these things, as they take on the disposition of Christ and are compelled by the inner light of the Gospel to carry them out. The Church is the body in which all individual Christians work to carry out these natural inclinations of the believer. Strachan believed that “the Christian life is a corporate life,—that it is because they are members of a mystical Society, the Church, that they acquire an interest in the Saviour.”⁵¹ Corporate worship and the Sabbath were especially important for building this unity within the Church body: “Every seventh day God speaks to the fallen world and gives us the foretaste of a better Sabbath, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.”⁵²

Due to his belief that individuals and the nation should benefit from the soundest Christian message and Church structure, Strachan did not stop with the general legitimacy of any form of the Christian faith. Strachan believed strongly in the unique

⁴⁹ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 31.

⁵⁰ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 31.

⁵¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 21.

⁵² Strachan, *Charge, 1853*, 31.

nature of the Anglican Church and its inherent right and duty to be the established church of the province of Upper Canada. In his addresses and writings he referred to the Church as the “Established Church of this Province,” using as his authority the 1791 *Constitutional Act*.⁵³ For Strachan the issue was not whether the Church was or needed to be established, but rather the correct way of putting “Church Establishment on a respectable footing.”⁵⁴ The reason this was important was not the temporal benefit of the Church of England, but rather the necessity for a sound foundation of correct faith if the new and growing colony was to thrive and grow into its rightful place as a city on a hill and a star in the firmament of the British Empire.⁵⁵ The battle was over providing the rightful acknowledgement of the fact that was written in stone in Strachan’s mind, that the Church of England was and always had been the rightful and established church in fact and in law in Upper Canada.⁵⁶ In order to understand that confidence it is necessary to understand Strachan’s theological beliefs regarding the legitimacy of Anglicanism, which centred upon three key ideas: apostolic order, doctrinal purity, and resulting uniqueness of the Anglican Church.⁵⁷

Apostolicity

Strachan believed deeply in the necessity of continuity with the primitive church.⁵⁸ The chief driver of this continuity was the Apostolic Succession, the direct line of faith that extended back to Saint Peter himself, which provided order, dignity, and continuity to the Church throughout the ages, and was the special preserve of the Anglican Church since

⁵³ Strachan, *Address to the Clergy, 1837*, 1.

⁵⁴ Strachan, “Strachan to Bishop Mountain, 19 March, 1816.”

⁵⁵ Strachan, *Sermon on Death of the Lord Bishop*, 17.

⁵⁶ Strachan, “Strachan to Bishop Mountain, 19 March, 1816.”

⁵⁷ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 126.

⁵⁸ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 10.

the Reformation.⁵⁹ “Her government justly claims a divine origin, sanctioned by the authority and practice of the Apostles, which is the law of Christ. The vigilance of the Bishops, animated by zeal, and tempered with discretion, produces the greatest benefits.”⁶⁰ By removing the superfluous doctrinal and practical additions to the faith that the “Romish” church had added over time, but also by preserving those things that were good and healthy from the Roman past, the “Bishops and the Presbyters, aided by the civil authorities, began the Reformation of the Church.”⁶¹

They regarded her as a divine institution, established in all her integrity by our Lord and his Apostles, and unchangeable in all her essential features by human authority. What was superfluous and corrupt, they cleared away; what was wanting, they supplied; and restored to the purity and simplicity of the apostolic ages. They did not, like the Reformers on the Continent, dispense with that Church Government which had prevailed from the beginning, nor did they admit of man’s devices; but guided by the lights of the three first centuries, they restored the faith, and worship, and regimen of the apostolic times, and collecting whatever was valuable in the ancient Creeds and Liturgies, they embodied their labours in the scriptural doctrines and offices of devotion set forth in our book of common prayer, the most valuable and almost the only permanent monument of the Reformation in Protestant Christendom.⁶²

The continuity of the Church of England with the ancient ways of the Church was a steady and central theme for Strachan that supported his firm desire to see the Church of England as the established Church not only of the home country, but also every colony and appendage of the great global empire of Britain.⁶³ Strachan quotes Bishop Hall to say, “we, who are in communion with the Church of England, do make up one body with the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, and faithful Christians of all ages and times: we succeed in their Faith, we glory in their succession, we triumph in this

⁵⁹ Strachan, *Charge, 1847*, 27.

⁶⁰ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 13.

⁶¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 22.

⁶² Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 22.

⁶³ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 22. It is important to note as well the antipathy that Strachan had toward Dissenting congregations was built around this idea of the apostolic perfection of the Anglican Church as the ideal reflection of Primitive Christianity.

glory.”⁶⁴ It was this kind of utter confidence that was to contribute to his battles with Dissenters over the years, as he was unwilling to see in them any kind of apostolic legitimacy.⁶⁵

Episcopacy

Central to Strachan’s understanding of the unique apostolicity of the Church of England was the episcopal form of church government that it enjoyed. As seen above, this was one of Strachan’s arguments for the superiority of the English Church when compared to the various Continental streams of the Reformation. Bishops were first and foremost necessary for the continuation of the hierarchical nature of society and the Church, which was central to God’s universal design.⁶⁶ The role of the bishops was also key to the strength of the parochial ministry of the Church, and ensured that consistency and sound discipline were not allowed to falter.⁶⁷ In his *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop of Quebec*, Strachan used the late bishop as the example of the kind of leadership that made a bishop indispensable to the correct ministry of the Gospel and the health of the Church. Their vigilance, “animated with zeal and tempered with discretion, produces the greatest benefits. The inferior clergy feel the responsibility of their situation, and learn from experience that they are placed under a real and not a nominal inspection, and that they are acting under a watchful shepherd.”⁶⁸ The bishops provided the patriarchal oversight and mild, primitive discipline that harkened back to the Apostles themselves, rooting the church and the ministry of the clergy in the continuation of the same Gospel ministry that

⁶⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 22.

⁶⁵ McKim, “God and Government,” 81.

⁶⁶ McKim, “God and Government,” 80.

⁶⁷ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 14.

⁶⁸ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 13–14.

had, in Strachan's estimation, always been the central mission of the Church.⁶⁹ The bishop was charged with strategic leadership and oversight, ensuring not only that local ministry duties were discharged by the clergy, but that the provision of the Church was fought for and secured, and that fresh clergy were provided. It was also the bishop whose task it was to be involved with the government of the nation, interceding on behalf of the Church, and admonishing the government not only to provide for the religious good of the nation, but also the broader social care of the people under their jurisdiction.⁷⁰ Again, by building "moral and religious feeling" among the inhabitants of the young colonies of the British Empire, the bishops had a special role in encouraging the health and cohesiveness of the entire Empire project, and were vital to the peace and long-term happiness of the people of the entire British nation.⁷¹ Finally, it was the bishop's solemn duty to encourage education at every level, raising up Christian youth who were able to step out into their chosen professions well equipped with knowledge and the moral foundation that would preserve them against all the uncertainties and distractions of the world.⁷² In all these ways the episcopacy played a key role in providing the continuity of apostolicity, and also a key role in the advancement of the Church and the community. Without the legitimacy of an apostolic episcopacy, a church could not claim to be the voice of God to the nation, nor to provide the soundest expression of the primitive Christian faith.⁷³ Strachan's beliefs on these aspects of the bishop's role were key to his dutiful and steadfast approach to ministry in the Church and engagement with government and education in Upper Canada.

⁶⁹ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 20.

⁷⁰ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 20–23.

⁷¹ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 27.

⁷² Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 28.

⁷³ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 22.

Purity of Doctrine

Strachan believed that the Anglican Church contained the purest doctrine of any church on earth. One of the common themes for Strachan was the idea of “primitive truth.”⁷⁴

Strachan was not an innovator seeking new revelation or fresh ways of doing things in Christianity, but rather emphasised the maintenance and ever greater return to the primitive truths of the Christian faith through the pure doctrines of the Anglican Church:

Has it not placed our holy and apostolic Church in direct opposition to Romish tyranny and corruption—to the melancholy superstitions of the Eastern Church—the reckless and deadly innovations of modern Dissenters, and all that is opposed to Gospel purity and truth? She seems like a city on a hill, conspicuous to the whole world, assailed by millions of enemies, unable to prevail, exhibiting a spotless model of the primitive Church, and holding the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints. She will never grow old, but will stand alone in the world—immutable amidst every vicissitude—immovable amidst every fluctuation—one constant star in this universe of growth and decay—unfading and the same—one august, incorruptible, and glorious verity, shining with celestial light over the ocean of uncertainty and change.⁷⁵

The Book of Common Prayer and *Thirty-Nine Articles* were the “very essence of the Gospel truth,—the fervent delineations of the faith once delivered to the saints,—and dispensed by the same ministry which has obtained in the Church since the death of the Apostles.”⁷⁶ The Church of England “embodies in her ministrations the purest form of Christian doctrine; and, not content with demanding of her faithful members that they be good subjects, she aims at something far beyond this, even to make them fellow members with the saints and the household of God.”⁷⁷ There could be no compromise with lesser doctrinal expressions that twisted or weakened the life-changing power of the Christian message.

⁷⁴ Osmond, “Churchmanship,” 51.

⁷⁵ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 14–15.

⁷⁶ Strachan, *Charge, 1847*, 32.

⁷⁷ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 6.

Even within Anglicanism, Strachan was a champion of the traditional paths and doctrines of the Church. While Strachan strove to be a tolerant exponent of the traditional Anglican *Via Media*, his toleration had limits, as seen with the publication of *Essays and Reviews*, a collection of works by Anglican writers that questioned the literal truth of some scriptural passages. Strachan roundly attacked this volume, claiming that it contained “erroneous and strange doctrines” and lacked “that spirit of humility and reverence with which human reason ought ever to approach the study of divine truth.”⁷⁸ In the same vein Strachan denounced the writings of J. W. Colenso, Bishop of Natal, who taught that much of the Old Testament was not historical fact.⁷⁹ Just because someone wore an Anglican surplice did not mean they had the right to innovate and change the primitive perfections of the Church. This was true for Strachan himself, preventing him from tolerating any compromise in his own Anglican ideals or those of others. Nevertheless in these cases Strachan did not precipitate rapid inquisitorial action, but rather asked his church to evaluate and reject those teachings that were inconsistent with the primitive faith of the Church.⁸⁰

Strachan was a strong believer in the doctrinal independence of the Church.⁸¹ As McDermott demonstrates, Strachan assimilated the views of Thomas Chalmers, a Scottish Presbyterian churchman, who argued for firm establishment of the Church within the British nation, but also for complete freedom from doctrinal interference by the Crown or Parliament.⁸² This is consistent with the *Thirty-Nine Articles* which declare “We give not to our Princes the ministering either of God’s Word, or of the sacraments . .

⁷⁸ Strachan, quoted in McDermott, “John Strachan,” 153.

⁷⁹ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 154.

⁸⁰ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 155.

⁸¹ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 346.

⁸² McDermott, “John Strachan,” 347.

.”⁸³ Strachan likewise held this view, which is why, as seen above, he supported the Tractarian movement until Newman and others left the Anglican Church for Rome, and why in his own ministry he took a firm stand against any attempts to interfere with doctrine, not only by the government, but even from within the Church itself.⁸⁴ The doctrines of the Church were precious charges handed down by the primitive Church, and to tolerate any alteration or diminution of them was to break his personal vows and to walk down a path that led to either Dissent or “Romanism.”⁸⁵

Uniqueness of the Anglican Communion

Strachan was firmly convinced of the uniqueness of the Anglican Church and the corresponding duty of the Church had to be established and present in every corner of the British Empire for its own good. “For in all the British Colonies, we are alone entitled, as holding the divine Commission and as the Clergy of the National Church, to be their Teachers, Guides, and Directors in Spiritual things. Nor does it alter the matter that they refuse obedience and resist our authority. The right is not the less; nor can we, without sin, neglect to exercise it.”⁸⁶ It was not just bad for the Anglican Church, but in Strachan’s opinion sin not to do all possible to carry out the mission of the Anglican Church as the established guide and teacher of the nation. The Church of England was God’s providentially chosen and most pure expression of the Christian faith, and therefore had the right and duty to spread the Gospel throughout the world, with all the aid possible from government and people.⁸⁷ The more that people tried to remove the

⁸³ *Thirty-Nine Articles*, XXXVII.

⁸⁴ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 347.

⁸⁵ Strachan, *Charge, 1847*, 32.

⁸⁶ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 12.

⁸⁷ MacRae, “Religious Foundations,” 62.

Church of England from its primacy in Upper Canada, the more should the Anglican clergy increase their zeal for the honour of God and their Redeemer, and the more boldly should they minister wherever they were able.⁸⁸ Indeed, Strachan was even convinced that English Dissenters had in the past acknowledged that the Church of England was “the most prominent and illustrious of all the Protestant Churches, and that they have readily admitted that her martyrs’ liturgy, her articles, and the profound learning and writings of her ministers, have given witness to the truth, such as no other Protestant Church can produce.”⁸⁹ Indeed, the very history of the Church of England from the Reformation showed the purity of the Anglican faith:

Her founders sought not to innovate, but to reform. They were too pious and wise to be carried away by that improvident recklessness which rejects the good, because accompanied with some transient or accidental evil; nor did they cast away the truth of the primitive Church, but separated from it the dross of later times. And this they held fast the foundation laid by the Apostles and Prophets, and to this we continue faithfully to adhere. The pure Gospel has now been the teaching of our Church for three centuries. The Scriptures are free and open to all,—her ministrations are clear and easy to comprehend—she has no novelties or recent institutions to justify or explain—her truth and order, which she exhibits in all her services in every part of the world, are as old as the days of the apostles.⁹⁰

Unlike the other denominations, the Anglican Communion was able to maintain the pure primitive faith. As the Church that was also supposed to be the official established church of the nation this was vital, as untruth and misunderstanding of the Christian message could do just as much damage as infidelity to the moral and civil fabric of the nation.

The preservation of discipline and order in the Church was a key concern for Strachan, and therefore one of the powerful arguments for the unique correctness of

⁸⁸ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 12.

⁸⁹ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 10.

⁹⁰ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 10.

Anglican Church governance.⁹¹ Without discipline and order the Church was wont to wander into either of the two errors of Romanism or enthusiasm and dissent.⁹² It was the strength of the apostolic episcopacy that preserved the order of the Church by “blending with spirituality of the heart due submission to discipline and order.”⁹³ This included the ministry of the clergy within a lawful framework that ensured not only civil order, but doctrinal conformity within the parameters laid down by the Book of Common Prayer and the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Anglican Communion.⁹⁴ This consistency was vital, as when order broke down, or when Dissent was allowed to gain ascendancy, the result in Strachan’s eyes was spiritual and political anarchy, as seen in the horrors of the French Revolution and the chaos (in Strachan’s mind) of the political and judicial system of the United States of America.⁹⁵ Indeed, the cries for “liberty” raised by these revolutionary groups were proven to be false flags by the disorder and anarchy of their actions, especially regarding the Christian Church.⁹⁶

Dissent, “Romanism,” and Infidelity

The legitimacy of the Anglican Church as the most faithful expression of the apostolic ideal ensured that, though harbouring no personal animosity toward religious dissent of either the Roman Catholic or Protestant varieties, as seen in his personal support for the relaxation of restrictions upon Dissenters and Roman Catholics in his pamphlet on the character of George III, Strachan was a fierce opponent of their inclusion within the

⁹¹ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 13.

⁹² Strachan, *Charge, 1847*, 30.

⁹³ Strachan, *Charge, 1847*, 30.

⁹⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 22.

⁹⁵ Strachan, *Discourse*, 49–50.

⁹⁶ Strachan, *Discourse*, 50.

political sphere.⁹⁷ Strachan championed the idea of removal of all civic limitations upon these groups, happy to see them given the right to live and believe as fully equal English citizens.⁹⁸ Strachan was also quite warm in his regard for the British Wesleyan Methodists, who he believed to be loyal citizens and whose doctrines were still built upon the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Anglican Communion.⁹⁹ This warmth of feeling did not extend to the American Methodist Church, however, which he strongly castigated for importing their republican politics along with their preaching.¹⁰⁰ Able to praise the “virtuous sovereign for so readily assenting to all those conciliating measures which served to allay religious controversies which, while they left the constitution secure in church and state, added much to the comfort and happiness of those whom they relieved . . .” he was nevertheless firm in his assertion that “we are called upon no less cheerfully to praise him for resisting a farther concession which he conceived dangerous to his government.”¹⁰¹ Dissenters and “Romanists” could be made comfortable, but if they ever sought to impose themselves between the constitutional unity of the Church of England and the British state in even the minutest form they were to be resisted as a matter of faith and of good government.¹⁰²

Strachan did not accept that the Church of England was ever an offshoot of the Church of Rome, and firmly defended the apostolic roots of English Christianity: “For she never separated from that Church, but was originally an independent branch of the Catholic Church, founded by the Apostles or their immediate successors, and thus she

⁹⁷ Strachan, *Discourse*, 24.

⁹⁸ Strachan, *Discourse*, 25.

⁹⁹ Strachan, *A Speech*, 27.

¹⁰⁰ Strachan, *A Speech*, 27.

¹⁰¹ Strachan, *Discourse*, 25–26.

¹⁰² Strachan, *Discourse*, 26.

continued till the eleventh century, when the Church of Rome assumed ascendancy over her, but which was never fully recognised.”¹⁰³ The Church of Rome to Strachan had always been a usurper of the rightful authority and apostolic integrity of the Church of England, and as such could in no wise be tolerated as an official church gaining authority or influence within the civic life of the nation.¹⁰⁴

Strachan was High Church in his theology, but strongly stood against any appearance of “Romanism” in his church, a charge that was levelled against Trinity College and which he addressed in an 1861 charge to the clergy and laity of the diocese:

Our teaching embraces a full course of theology, and among other things a thorough and clear exposition of the Thirty–Nine Articles, which forms an extensive portion of our range of study, and in which we are especially guarded against all Romanising, or any tendency towards the views, principles, and practices of that corrupt Church. We are taught to regard the position of those who are led astray by her delusions as perilous in the extreme; but while we abhor their principles, we do not hate their persons, or refuse to them the kind and social fruits of that charity which thinketh no evil, and believeth all things.¹⁰⁵

Strachan was not sympathetic to the growing ritualist movement of the 1850s and 60s, recognising in the movement a dilution of the thoughtful, rational faith that he believed so strongly to be the correct Christian attitude.¹⁰⁶

We must deprecate excess and the leaving all to the senses without opportunity for the healthful action of the mind. We should thus have a religion of feeling and passion, and not of conviction. And while we concede the right, where it can be advantageously and satisfactorily exercised, to invest our noble ritual with all the attractions of which it is susceptible, none are justified in going beyond its letter and spirit, none are warranted in making additions to what is laid down, in adopting customs which the Church for centuries has ignored—in restoring vestments which have never, or rarely, been introduced into our reformed communion.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 23.

¹⁰⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Strachan, *Address 1861*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 142.

¹⁰⁷ Strachan, quoted in Henderson, *Documents and Opinions*, 275.

Always the primitive Church was the guiding light for Strachan, and ever he stood against the urge to innovate or alter any aspect of the perfect Anglican tradition that had been handed into his charge to be cared for and propagated.

On top of religious dissent, Strachan also warned his students strongly against the “Enemies of the Gospel” who by “applying to the vanity of men, and rendering irreligion fashionable have lately gained thousands of proselytes, who with all the zeal of new converts are perpetually obtruding upon you, their blasphemy, and their doubts.”¹⁰⁸ He saw in the society around him, not only in Upper Canada but in America, France, and even England, a desire to follow what was fashionable, and to speak of “humanity, liberality, and toleration, while they are persecuting with violence . . .”¹⁰⁹ In his warnings against those who first seek to “calumniate its (Christianity’s) teachers and adherents as a set of dangerous men” it is evident that Strachan had in his mind the violent attacks upon the faith by Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Rousseau, and others who had such an influence not only in France but in the United States, and whose influence no doubt was beginning to be felt in Upper Canada as well.¹¹⁰ Strachan had strong opinions about the “infidel spirit” brought about by the French Revolution. He blamed it not only for the cruelty and death exhibited during the Terror, but also for the fact that it “eats into domestic and social life and destroys our happiness both here and forever.”¹¹¹ Dissenting Protestantism and Roman Catholic falsehood led, in Strachan’s mind, down a slippery path to infidelity and political radicalism, and to the destruction of Christianity seen most completely in the

¹⁰⁸ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 6.

¹¹⁰ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 8.

¹¹¹ Strachan, *Sermon*, 3 January, 1850.

upheavals of Revolutionary France.¹¹² The political battles waged in England that had seen infidels and Dissenters work together to undermine the established Church and the constitutional balance of the nation were well known to Strachan and his contemporaries, and they were anxious to avoid those similar battles in Upper Canada.¹¹³ Religious allegiance and political activism could never be separated, nor could infidelity be held at bay without deploying the full primitive truth found within the Anglican Communion.

The Anglican Church alone stood in Strachan's theology as the legitimate Church of Christ, able to stand for the true redeeming Gospel revealed in Scriptures. It was the apostolic, doctrinally pure, unique vessel that could guarantee the nation against the threat of dissent, infidelity, and impurity. It was the power that above all had been granted the mission to spread the light of the Gospel to the whole world, and Strachan was ready to do all in his power to further its work in the name of God.

Role of the Church

The role of the Church in Strachan's estimation was to be one of "social and religious construction."¹¹⁴ The Church of England was not a mere voluntary society, but in a new and pioneering land it was to be the pioneering Church that would bring the light of the pure and unique Anglican Gospel ministry to every corner of the great British province that was being cut from the wilderness. To do this successfully it had three key roles that it must fill: Propagation of religion, inculcation of civic virtues, and social care.

¹¹² McKim, "God and Government," 81.

¹¹³ McKim, "God and Government," 79.

¹¹⁴ Westfall, *Founding Moment*, 34.

Propagation of Religion

Strachan believed that providing Anglican ministers within the colony was the surest way to increase the overall health of the country: “the establishment of an enlightened Clergy in the Colony would contribute more than any other measure to its happiness and prosperity.”¹¹⁵ The Church must carry out its duty of providing “a regular clergy, and those authorities which appoint and superintend them, important branches of the Church of Christ.”¹¹⁶ By the proper placement of clergy, churches, and parochial schools, “the mass of the population are taught their duty to God and man—to attend to a law, not to be obtained in books, nor to be engraven on tablets of brass—a law which always subsists, which is every moment forcing itself into notice, and which condemns every species of wrong.”¹¹⁷

Strachan was concerned for the missionary enterprise of the Church not only within Upper Canada, but all over the world. Indeed, in a sermon published to celebrate the conclusion of the Crimean War, he lauded the opportunity for a “missionary enterprise” to the Turks, to convert them and “remove the fetters under which the Christian population of the East has groaned for centuries.”¹¹⁸ Strachan believed “the Church of England is essentially Missionary, and enjoys powers and facilities for the exercise of this attribute never possessed before by any other national Establishment.”¹¹⁹ The exclusivity of the Anglican Communion required that missionary endeavour be encouraged, as the healthiest form of religion was to be found when the pure doctrine of

¹¹⁵ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 11.

¹¹⁶ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 16.

¹¹⁷ Strachan, *Sermon in the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 16.

¹¹⁸ Strachan, *Sermon, 4 June, 1856*.

¹¹⁹ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 16.

the Church of England supplanted both “heathen” religion and the imperfect or twisted doctrines of the heterodox, the dissenter, and the Roman Church.¹²⁰

Beyond evangelistic efforts, Strachan was convinced that the way to deepen and widen out the true following of the faith in Upper Canada was through the path of religious education, both through traditional worship and Sunday schools, and also through the public education system, the ultimate pinnacle of which was a university that taught Anglican Protestantism to lay members and future clergy alike.¹²¹ It was ultimately through teaching the truths of the Gospel, going beyond basic teaching of the Articles and the Creeds, that the Church would become strong and that the clergymen so formed would collect “around him the neighbouring settlers, and form a respectable and an increasing congregation.”¹²² This education could not be merely instruction, however, but must also encompass discipline, requiring real change of life from the people who claimed to be followers of Jesus Christ.¹²³ When Christians were told what they should believe and how they should live in order to be saved and to live a moral, godly life, it was incumbent upon them to do so no matter what change this called for in their lives. Such was the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had come in human form and who had given the Church to be the visible, physical embodiment of his Gospel message.¹²⁴

Inculcation of Civic Virtues and Social Care

Strachan further believed it was the role of the established Anglican Church to be the shaper and inculcator of civic virtues. As seen above, Strachan could not conceive of

¹²⁰ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 16.

¹²¹ Strachan, *Letter to the Friends of Religion*, 24.

¹²² Strachan, *Letter to the Friends of Religion*, 24.

¹²³ Strachan, *Charge, 1847*, 39.

¹²⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1847*, 214.

good apart from real faith in Jesus Christ, and this included the civic good of the land.¹²⁵ Therefore it was part of the duty of the Church to diffuse “through her whole population, the most sublime and disinterested principles, which, refining the sentiments and elevating the affections, enable them to subdue selfish passions and appetites, and to pant after the felicity of doing good.”¹²⁶ The Church was to build up the people of the nation with general morality, and with the “tempers of child-like submission, humility, and unselfishness, which no believer in Divine Revelation doubts to be the peculiar features of the evangelical character.”¹²⁷ Not merely should the Church create dutiful subjects of the government, but also people who could live in community within the nation and create peace, harmony, and goodwill amongst all people, allowing the pure fruit of the Gospel to impact their every act in community life.¹²⁸ This was vital because “the laws are negative in their effects: it is religion alone that instils positive good, and breaks the sceptre of selfishness. It is only the practical influence and operation of faith and piety that can soften the heart, and introduce those sacred charities and protecting virtues which are ever blessing and blessed.”¹²⁹ It was the duty of ministers to remember that their people were

members of society and subjects of government. Hence the propriety of enforcing the spirit of true loyalty, contentment, and obedience, of industry, frugality, and self-denial,—the spirit of kindness, generosity, and beneficence, of gentleness, patience, and forbearance,—the spirit of meekness, soberness, and chastity, of courage and magnanimity,—in short, all the qualities, virtues, and principles which become the man and the Christian in his individual, domestic, and social relations, and which naturally flow from love to God and love to our neighbour.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 17.

¹²⁶ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 17.

¹²⁷ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 19.

¹²⁸ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 18.

¹²⁹ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 21.

¹³⁰ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 21.

The Church was the only body capable of deploying these positive virtues within the society, for apart from the Gospel such beliefs and abilities were utterly beyond the scope of human endeavour: “Unless disciplined and improved by religion, we are unfit for the enjoyment of true liberty. Universal experience teaches that impiety leads to anarchy,—superstition to despotism,—and Christianity alone to the establishment of rational and substantial freedom.”¹³¹ It was through the continual preaching of the Christian Gospel, the faithful ministry of the Church, and the steady inculcation of every virtuous principle that the nation would be subdued by the positive and uplifting law of Christ, and that civic good could result.

Strachan’s vision of the Church’s role bears some relationship to the concept of nation-building found in Phyllis Airhart’s history of the United Church of Canada.¹³² But Airhart herself contrasts the more modern idea of a nation building church that encompassed diverse theological expressions in Canada with the particular idea of a national Church established by law and financially supported by the state.¹³³ Where Strachan was seeking to inculcate civic virtues as a function of Britishness, and to build union and unity with the British nation as a whole, the United Church ideal of nation building was about building a unique Canadian religious identity and a church that reflected the “soul of the nation.”¹³⁴ Strachan’s vision of a church as the nation builder was in keeping with the Anglican theological idea that the Church underpins the British constitution and strengthens allegiance to the Crown in Parliament and unity within the

¹³¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 21.

¹³² Airhart, *Soul of a Nation*, 5.

¹³³ Airhart, *Soul of a Nation*, 5.

¹³⁴ Airhart, *Soul of a Nation*, 7.

whole British nation and Empire.¹³⁵ Even as the nation moved towards Confederation and autonomy, Strachan was in the rearguard, championing continued British identity and dependence for the nation of Canada.¹³⁶ As Terry Cook states, imperialists (though that title does not begin to be used as a description until later in the century) like Strachan saw no distinct nationalism separate from the Britannic whole.¹³⁷ Therefore, to Anglican Tories like Strachan the Church had no duty but to build loyalty to and civic virtues consistent with that whole.

Strachan believed that the Church was not only responsible for the care of the spiritual life of the people of the nation, but also that it was the duty of the Church to care for the physical well-being and comfort of the people, and indeed that the two were linked. First, it was in times of sickness, trouble, or death when the thoughts of people turned toward questions of eternity and ultimate destiny, and therefore it was the duty of a minister of the Church to be present and ready to comfort in times of need.¹³⁸ In sickness and death the Church provided not only the hope of the eternal, but also the practical care and support of the people who were going through the hardest of times.¹³⁹ In times of war and upheaval such as had rocked the town of York during the War of 1812 it was the clergy like Strachan who had the duty to step forward and intercede on behalf of the people, preserving not only their souls, but protecting their health and goods from the ravages of the invading armies.¹⁴⁰ Where there were sick, the ministers of the Church must be there to render not only spiritual benefit, but physical attention as well,

¹³⁵ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 21.

¹³⁶ See chapter nine.

¹³⁷ Cook, "Britannic Idealism," 15–31.

¹³⁸ Strachan, *Charge, 1851*, 39.

¹³⁹ Strachan, *Charge, 1851*, 7.

¹⁴⁰ Strachan, "Letter to Dr. Owen, Chaplain-General, 1 January, 1814."

as in the case of the cholera epidemic of the 1850s.¹⁴¹ For this reason, the resources of the Church should be deployed for the common good of the public, especially when it came to the physical buildings and other assets of the Church, as in the case of the War of 1812 when Strachan opened the doors of the church buildings to be hospitals for the sick and wounded, and again during the several outbreaks of cholera when the churches provided the hospitals as well as the spiritual comfort for the care of the sick and dying.¹⁴²

Tasks of the Church

Tasks of Individual Ministers

For Strachan the clergy were anything but gentlemen of ease or high means. The clergy were meant to work hard to carry out the task of ministry that had been given to them, and could expect not wealth, but sustenance and enough to keep themselves from “labouring under cruel embarrassments, and drinking the bitter draught of hopeless poverty and family distress.”¹⁴³ Indeed the ideal clergymen of the Church of England were those who were “active and laborious, living in good feeling and harmony among themselves and with their flocks, seeking out our people in the wilderness, forming them into congregations and parishes, and extending on every side the foundations of our beloved Zion.”¹⁴⁴ Speaking in 1841, even after decades of settlement, Strachan recognised the role of the clergy within the nation to be of the greatest import not only for the spiritual health of the people, but their physical and mental well-being as well:

Our Clergy discharge their functions in offering up prayers, reading the Scriptures, preaching the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, and catechising

¹⁴¹ Strachan, “Sermon 3 January, 1850.”

¹⁴² See Strachan, “Letter to Dr. Owen, Chaplain-General, 1 January, 1814.”

¹⁴³ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 10.

¹⁴⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 7.

the children. Such ministrations are beyond all price! The visit of a Clergyman among our scattered population is a joyful and welcome event to young and old. His counsel and encouragement, amidst all the difficulties and hardships of new settlement, and his friendly sympathy in their concerns rouse them to fresh exertions, by which they are frequently enabled to surmount, with growing patience and contentment, the great obstacles which surround them. From temporal he leads them by degrees to loftier objects than this world can offer, and directs their views from time to eternity. Are they in distress? He approaches in gentleness and love to the bed of sickness and of death; he deals in mercy with the afflicted and the dying, and becomes to the whole of the family a messenger from heaven. At such times they feel the consolation of communicating to this their only friend, their sorrows and disappointments, their hopes and fears. Far removed, perhaps, from their native land,—living often in the thickest of the forest, without a single relative or even an acquaintance, much less a friend,—a withering sense of solitude and desolation at times comes over their hearts, which the Clergyman alone can soften or remove. Such bitter trials open their souls to the truths of the Gospel.—They give to their Clergyman their whole confidence, and this he improves by bringing before them the fleeting nature of present things when compared to the realities of a future world. Hence they learn resignation to the Divine will under passing evils, and become convinced, from sad experience, that this is not their home, but that we have an inheritance which passeth not away, eternal in the heavens.¹⁴⁵

First and foremost Strachan sees the ministry of the clergy in offering prayers, reading the Scriptures, preaching the Gospel, and catechising. These traditional tasks of the clergy must be adhered to if the church is to remain strong and the ministry is to continue to expand in the diocese, but significantly Strachan does not end with these spiritual tasks. He carries on explaining the practical ministry of the clergy in Upper Canada. Unlike a parochial setting in England, people in Upper Canada were far spread and isolated, and the clergyman had to be active and engaged, seeking out the isolated in the midst of the far-flung wastes. This setting requires that the clergyman be well versed in the activities and concerns of the people to whom he is ministering, requiring as much knowledge of agriculture and husbandry as atonement and the heavenly. The goal is not, however, merely making people comfortable as they journey through the world, but

¹⁴⁵ Strachan, *Charge*, 1841, 7.

rather guiding them by steps to the consideration of eternity and the fate of their eternal soul. The ideal colonial clergyman must be a man of letters and a man of deeds, for

Next to God, everything depends upon our conduct and ability. A Clergy, to be truly efficient in a new and rising country like this, must unite many qualities of rare and superior excellence. Their piety must be sincere and consistent, their habits patient and laborious:—they must possess the power of holding Christian conversation with persons of all classes, and be at all times ready to give a reason for the faith they profess. They must be attached to order and discipline, have clear and comprehensive views of the evidences of religion, and a competent acquaintance with the history of the Church of Christ. They must also be well acquainted with the constitution of our own Church, her articles of Faith, her rules and discipline; and that knowledge of the Scriptures which is everywhere expected in the Clergy, though here, from the circumstances of the country, it is particularly required.¹⁴⁶

Strachan had a very demanding standard for diocesan clergy, but as someone who had been a priest in the colony since 1803 he knew very well the many and varied challenges that were to be faced and overcome if a minister was to prove successful in caring for the flock of Christ. With this idea in mind it becomes clear why Strachan was so concerned that a well educated clergy, indigenous to Upper Canada, be trained and equipped. Clergy from the United Kingdom would have a whole culture to learn, as well as being spiritually equipped, while a home-grown clergyman would already understand the needs and idiom of the people he was meant to serve.

In his 1853 address to his clergy he required that each minister establish and teach a Sunday school, not only so that the young could be given basic education, but so that they would be well taught in the “great truths and precepts of Christianity.”¹⁴⁷ They were expected to visit from house to house, as “this apostolic injunction can never be safely omitted, because there are so many benefits gained by such visits to families which

¹⁴⁶ Strachan, *Address to the Clergy*, 1837, 11.

¹⁴⁷ Strachan, *Charge*, 1853, 26–27.

cannot be attained in any other way.”¹⁴⁸ These visits should not focus merely upon the adults, but also look to the children. Through education and visitation the people of the Church of England would come to know the deeper truths of the Gospel and become grounded, so that their experience in public worship would become profitable and the Sabbath day would gain great value for them.¹⁴⁹ It was the duty of the clergy to ensure public worship was carried out with excellence, but it was also vitally important that the clergyman “join in the prayers with our hearts and understandings,” avoiding flippancy or rote discharge of their duties.¹⁵⁰ Preaching must be carried out with faithfulness and fervency, as doing so is to “feed the flame of true devotion, to bestow wings on the soul, and give life to the good affections of the heart.”¹⁵¹ If his clergymen were to follow his guidance in these matters they would

Vastly increase your influence for good, and the whole diocese would present a formidable barrier to the progress of evil. Our office is to bring men out of the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God. We are therefore to be at work in both kingdoms; hence the necessity of our being watchful and diligent in our vocation, prompt in charity, blameless in our conversation, and pure in our doctrine, that we may win the love and respect of our people, and procure from them a ready concurrence and obedience in all things lawful.¹⁵²

At the core of the mission of the diocesan clergy was not the worldly advancement of the Church of England, but the desire to care for the people of Upper Canada in every aspect of their lives. Strachan’s strong belief that it was the duty of the Anglican clergy to carry out this sacred task helps to explain his untiring advocacy for provision for the Church. Without financial support it would be impossible to establish the kind of Christian leadership envisioned in the above quotes. The Clergy Reserves and other means of

¹⁴⁸ Strachan, *Charge*, 1853, 28.

¹⁴⁹ Strachan, *Charge*, 1853, 31.

¹⁵⁰ Strachan, *Charge*, 1853, 31.

¹⁵¹ Strachan, *Charge*, 1853, 33.

¹⁵² Strachan, *Charge*, 1853, 34–34.

supporting the Church became the fuel for the ambitious program of parochial care that Strachan demanded of his clergy in Upper Canada. The active involvement of the clergy of the Church of England in the daily life of their parishioners, even in the political realm, was necessary to ensure that they were caring for every aspect of their health and strength.

Collective Tasks of the Church

The primary collective task of the whole Church was of course the administration of public worship through prayer, the reading of Scripture, and the sacraments.¹⁵³ Strachan begins his list with prayers, as it was in prayer that the Church collectively worshipped, petitioned, and communed with the living God who truly heard and responded to their prayers by rousing, strengthening, and encouraging Christians through the “perplexities and feebleness of our frail and suffering natures.”¹⁵⁴ This prayer must be done in unity, for “it is not as an insulated being or individual, that a Christian is made a recipient of the blessings of Christ’s kingdom, but as a member of that Church for which He died. With us, and with all the members of the Church, He is united by the dearest and most indissoluble ties, and therefore ought we all to unite our prayers together in the public assemblies.”¹⁵⁵ The reading of the Scriptures provides the next vital act of worship, for it is through the Scriptures that “God, by His Word, holds intercourse with His creatures, and continues from age to age to instruct us respecting the ways of His Providence and moral government, and on those sentiments and conduct to which He gives His

¹⁵³ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 24–28.

¹⁵⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 25.

¹⁵⁵ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 25.

approbation.”¹⁵⁶ Finally, the two great sacraments of the Church must be faithfully administered, the Eucharist at every gathering of the Church for corporate worship (though strictly it was only necessary to receive the Lord’s Supper thrice in the year), and baptism at the beginning of life.¹⁵⁷ These ministrations tied the corporate Body of Christ together and ensured the deep spiritual health of every member.

Strachan encouraged his ministers to be active in political life, despite the attacks that some levelled toward the church for “mixing public affairs with religion.”¹⁵⁸ On the contrary, he encouraged members of the church that “the politics which religion employs are for the promotion of human happiness in the most extensive range.”¹⁵⁹ It was the promotion of this happiness, in the fulsome sense of the word, which the Church sought to achieve through active public life. The task of the Church as a whole was to

promote among all men true morality and purity of life, to become the mother of good works, our cordial in affliction, and our comfort in death, to bring us daily into the presence of God and our Saviour that we may believe in his holy name, love him with all our hearts, and by making him the object of our imitation and the foundation of our faith, resemble him on earth, and follow him to heaven.¹⁶⁰

It was necessary for the Church to appoint and equip parochial instructors whose duty it was to ensure that these tasks were carried out not merely by the liturgical work of the Church, but through education, social work, and political engagement, to ensure that the mission of Gospel expansion and community strength could not be overthrown.¹⁶¹ Above all, because the Anglican Church held the distinction of being the purest and most perfect expression of the primitive apostolic church, it was the task and bound duty of the Church of England to acquaint the people of the nation with her true nature and character, and to

¹⁵⁶ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 25.

¹⁵⁷ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 28.

¹⁵⁸ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 8.

¹⁵⁹ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 15.

¹⁶¹ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 16.

help them to understand the deep benefits that accompanied being part of the most perfect expression of the Christian faith.¹⁶² This was not a matter of pride or competition with other denominations, but rather the Christian duty of good shepherds whose mission was to bring the deepest and clearest Christianity, and to shape the purest religion, the highest civic virtues, and the strongest social care for the whole community of the nation.¹⁶³ “It appears to me, then, to be our imperative duty to arm our people, by instructing them in the true nature, privileges, and character of our Church, against the contagion around them, and to convince them that, in belonging to her, they belong to the Church for which Christ died, and through which are tendered grace and salvation to a ruined world.”¹⁶⁴ The task of the Church above all was to provide the deepest care for every single person in the community, drawing them to sound faith (necessarily Anglican), and encouraging them to live that faith in their daily lives.

Strachan and the Anglican Church in Canada had an active relationship with the indigenous peoples of Canada. The Anglican Church under Strachan worked to evangelize, educate, and care for the indigenous peoples, as well as working to encourage friendly relations between the settlers in Upper Canada and the existing population. As James Robertson points out, Strachan was personally respectful towards the native character and persons, and held deep affection for the indigenous peoples as allies during the crucial War of 1812.¹⁶⁵ The treatment of indigenous peoples by the government of the United States was yet another proof to Strachan of their moral inferiority, as Strachan believed theologically and practically that the native peoples were worthy of respect and

¹⁶² Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 23.

¹⁶³ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 23.

¹⁶⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 23.

¹⁶⁵ Robertson, “Strachan’s Views,” 41.

spiritual care by the Anglican Church.¹⁶⁶” It was the task of the collective Church to further the Kingdom of God among the indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

The Church was the primary centre of Strachan’s work and concern. Based on the authority of the Scriptures, Strachan firmly believed the entire Gospel of the redeeming Christ who came to earth to save the world from sin. Strachan recognised the central duty of the Church to preach and teach the Gospel message, and all that it did had to flow from this central faith. The Anglican Church was the most correct, legitimate expression of the Church due to its apostolicity, doctrinal purity, and uniqueness, and therefore it was the duty of every good churchman to do all that was in his power to advance the ability of the Church of England to spread the Gospel message. Strachan saw the roles of this Church, which was by right established, to be first the propagation of religion, the core parochial work of preaching, worshipping, administering the sacraments, and caring for the spiritual needs of the nation. Strachan also saw the role of the Church as the central inculcator of positive civic virtues, doing what the law could not do in making loyal, faithful, moral subjects who would work for the betterment of the entire society. This could only be done through the power of the Christian Gospel, apart from which it was impossible to be virtuous. Finally, it was the role of the Church to care for the social needs of the nation, looking after bodies as well as souls and making sure that the holistic health of the land was preserved. This was the task of individual ministers who must be examples, helpers, counsellors, comforters, prophetic voices, and leaders who would

¹⁶⁶ Robertson, “Strachan’s Views,” 41. The limited scope of this study prevents a deeper treatment of Strachan and the Anglican Church’s relationship with the indigenous peoples of Upper Canada. For an introduction see Robertson, “Strachan’s Views of the Indigenous People

bring their communities to faith and British civilisation at the same time. It was also the task of the collective Church, which must provide the necessary foundation upon which the work of the kingdom of heaven could be built, and into which new believers could be assimilated and strengthened so that they could continue building the earthly nation as they passed on to their ultimate goal of eternal life. All life flowed from the central point of faith, and it was the duty of the Church collectively and ministers particularly to be involved in education and government in order to ensure the Gospel health of the country overall, and people in particular. To do otherwise in Strachan's estimation would be to sin directly against God.

In Strachan's beliefs Dissent and Romanism were the great theological threats to the Church, and through that the nation. The eighteenth-century story of the interrelated theological and political upheavals involved in the Wilkes controversy, the American Rebellion, and the French Revolution, as well as the active infidel and deist movements that had thrived at various times throughout the century had led Strachan and other Anglican Tories to develop a deep suspicion for the levelling and voluntarist principles of the Dissenters, and the long history of Roman Catholics in England had led to a deep-seated antipathy towards either of these groups being given any political influence within the nation. Strachan saw giving any of these groups public space as a sin, not to mention a way to weaken the established Church and by extension the pure message of the Gospel solely espoused by the Anglican Church. Resistance to the encroachments of these denominations into Upper Canadian life was not merely a power decision for Strachan, but an issue of Gospel fidelity and effectiveness for the kingdom of God. Compromise was therefore out of the question as a theological point. Strachan's theology of the

Church directly impacted every other aspect of his life, and he expected faith to be at the centre of every person's life. This fact must be kept in mind as the basic foundation upon which Strachan's theology and thought on the subjects of education and the government were built. These will be treated in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5

STRACHAN'S THEOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Introduction

One of the results of Strachan's theology of the Church was his belief in the vital importance of particularly Christian education. Education was not naturally one of Strachan's bents. In fact, in his early autobiography he writes in several places of his loathing for school teaching and his great desire to find an employment of more significance.¹ Throughout his life, however, Strachan was deeply involved not only in educating himself, but in furthering the cause of education. This was based upon his sincere belief that education was one of the key elements that made for strong Christians and a healthy society. J. L. H. Henderson points out that Strachan had a very Scottish view of education, with an emphasis not just upon the classics, but also upon practical learning.² It was not enough to train only the mind, but the heart and soul must be formed for the greatest benefit to be reaped from practical acquisition of knowledge.³ As with his theological beliefs, his beliefs regarding education were not formed independently, but rather garnered from observation and wide reading in other people's educational ideas.⁴ Above all, Strachan was concerned to develop an effective and comprehensive educational system for Upper Canada that would form Christian, practical, and virtuous subjects who could advance the well-being of the whole nation. The following chapter will explore Strachan's beliefs regarding the grounds of educational legitimacy, as well as the role and tasks of education in an Anglican Tory society.

¹ Strachan, *Autobiography*, in Henderson, *Documents and Opinions*, 8.

² Henderson, *Documents and Opinions*, 116.

³ Henderson, *Documents and Opinions*, 116.

⁴ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 53.

The Legitimacy of Education

Just as with the Church, Strachan was firm regarding the legitimacy of education within the nation. All education had to flow from basic principles, and if those educational practices departed from the grounds of legitimacy they should be opposed with every fibre of the being. Educational legitimacy revolved around three central imperatives: It had to be Christian, Practical, and Loyal.

For education to be legitimate, the first requirement was that it should be Christian. Strachan believed passionately in religious education throughout his long tenure in Upper Canada, firmly emphasising that Christianity must be a key element in the holistic education of every child if they were to be formed into well-rounded citizens of the nation. "The Church and the School-master must go hand in hand. It is our paramount duty to train up a child in the way he should go, and to bring our youth up in the fear and admonition of the Lord . . . to teach the rising generation to read, write, and cast accounts, and their duty to God and man, is to make them good members of society and candidates for heaven."⁵ This belief flowed from Strachan's understanding that Christianity had been the driving force behind education from the very beginning:

It was reserved for Christianity to suggest and put into practice the sublime work of educating a whole people . . . Accordingly, the Christian Church has, in every country, where it has been established, shown a becoming solicitude for the education of youth, and been at great pains in directing their minds to a knowledge of the leading and important doctrines of the Holy Scriptures.⁶

In this understanding of education Strachan was consistent with the existing reality in the home country, where the only real commonality among many educational models was the

⁵ Strachan, *Charge*, 1844, 41.

⁶ Strachan, *Christian Record*, 1819–1820, I, 43.

religious nature of the schools.⁷ Bringing up children in the faith was vital to avoid the creation of reprobates whose entire lives would be twisted by the lack of a firm foundation in the Scriptures and religion.⁸ The eighteenth-century ideal of education was focused primarily on this impartation of virtue and healthy religious habits, and Strachan was fully in agreement with that ideal.⁹ It was the duty of good parents and a godly society to ensure that every child had the opportunity to receive a Christian education.¹⁰ Strachan could not countenance an educational system that was not explicitly Christian in its nature, and his vociferous rejection of the secularist education bills of Egerton Ryerson revolved around the issue of the utter illegitimacy of education that was not explicitly founded upon a Christian worldview, and that did not publicly declare that Christian nature in the curriculum or structure of the educational system.¹¹ In the work of people like Ryerson, Strachan recognised the same attempts that were being made by freethinkers, deists, radicals, and Dissenters to separate the Church from the school system in England.¹² It was the duty of the Church and every Christian person to preserve the legitimacy of education by standing publicly against any attempt to remove God and the Church from a central, public place in education.

Another key component of the legitimacy of education for Strachan was that it was practical, actually providing the necessary equipment to carry out every variety of calling within the nation.¹³ This required that the educational system not merely be a funnel for young persons to step from one level to the next, from Primary, to Grammar,

⁷ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 45.

⁸ Strachan, *A Speech*, 41.

⁹ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 47.

¹⁰ Strachan, *A Speech*, 41.

¹¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1853*, 16.

¹² Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 7.

¹³ Strachan, *Charge, 1851*, 40.

to University, but that it also provide the necessary skills for those whose calling did not necessitate higher education.¹⁴ Education could not merely be education for education's sake, but must always keep in mind the practical purpose of preparing young people for future employment and citizenship within the nation.¹⁵ This was a decided departure from the English educational ideal, which did not view the impartation of practical knowledge as necessary for the production of educated people, and betrays Strachan's Scottish upbringing, where practical education was a much greater part of the educational values.¹⁶

Finally, Strachan believed that legitimate education must be loyal. One of the chief reasons why Strachan believed that it was necessary to form a university within the province of Upper Canada was because of his firm belief that educational institutions, and educators themselves, must be loyal subjects of the Crown if they were to produce the desired educational and moral effects in their students.¹⁷ It was the duty of any educational institution and every educator to inculcate habits of loyalty and true love for the "Parent State," producing greater intelligence and superior public virtue and qualities that would elevate the government and civil life of the nation.¹⁸ If this could not be achieved then the improper fascination with "liberty" would lead to licentiousness and an antipathy to all things that an Englishman should naturally be drawn towards.¹⁹

A Christian, practical, and loyal educational system would ensure that the content and context of education would be rightly delineated, and the system could not be

¹⁴ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 3.

¹⁵ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 4.

¹⁶ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 45.

¹⁷ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 5.

¹⁸ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 8.

¹⁹ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 6–7.

infiltrated by the infidelity and secularism that Strachan had seen both in the United States and in the French nation. Strachan was determined that by building education on the right grounds of legitimacy a system could be produced wherein “a door to a liberal education would be opened to all the inhabitants, and the children of the farmer and mechanic might be found deservedly filling the highest offices of the Colony . . .”²⁰ The common good of the whole polity would be strengthened by a properly founded educational system that could carry out its roles and tasks in the sure knowledge of their greater mission.

The Role of Education

The necessary foundation of legitimacy in education led to specific roles that education must have if it were to be a well-rounded and healthy system. Strachan can be seen throughout his long tenure as an educator to have upheld three particular roles for educational institutions built upon the core aspects of educational legitimacy: Education in religion, description of knowledge, and the creation of good citizens. Each of these roles corresponded to one of the basic grounds of legitimacy, and if all three were not properly maintained then Strachan saw the system as broken.

Education in Religion

Strachan believed firmly that education must be carried out with a religious foundation built into every aspect, but more so that educational institutions were responsible, through the close involvement of the Church, to actually educate young people in religion.²¹

Because humans were essentially religious beings, it was vital that “the religious culture

²⁰ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 7.

²¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 40

ought to form the principal part of his education, whether private or domestic, social or public.”²² Fennings Taylor says that Strachan saw the “school, the college, the university,” as the “porch of the Church, and the Church was the vestibule of heaven.”²³ Strachan believed that the whole course of instruction was to be blended with religious teaching, so that every new aspect of knowledge should reflect the Christian Gospel and add to the strength of the young person’s faith.²⁴ As Purdy points out, religion and education were the “obverse and reverse sides of the same coin.”²⁵ He pointed to the Scottish parochial school system as an example: “It is not the degree of knowledge imparted, but that the whole system of the Scotch Parochial Schools has religion for its basis, that religion is the primary object of instruction, and that they are placed under the immediate superintendence of the Clergy.”²⁶ His plan for the University of King’s College revolved around this central belief, and when the idea was stymied by the Legislative Assembly he championed Trinity College as a way to ensure that secularism would not triumph in Upper Canada.²⁷ He was convinced that the divorce of religion from education undertaken in the new University of Toronto was incompatible with a Christian worldview, and rendered the university “totally unfit for the education of the children of Churchmen, or indeed of any sincere Christian to whatever denomination he belongs.”²⁸ By contrast, he reinforced his theological vision of education in the new Trinity College, specifically expecting that a university that understood the correct role of religion in education would not “confine itself to instruction in human science, but (be) a

²² Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 40.

²³ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 228.

²⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 40.

²⁵ Purdy, “Strachan and Education,” 54.

²⁶ Strachan, *A Speech*, 28.

²⁷ Strachan, *Secular State of the Church*, 28.

²⁸ Strachan, *Secular State of the Church*, 28.

University of which the religious character shall be known and acknowledged, in which her pure and reasonable service shall elevate and sanctify the labours of the teacher and the scholar.”²⁹

Description of Knowledge

Strachan agreed with many standard theorists of his day that the “first object of education is to give men and women such instruction as shall serve the purpose of their temporal advancement in the present life, and shall enable them to pursue with efficiency any calling to which they may turn their attention.”³⁰ This primary role of the educational system could be carried out by the “description of knowledge of the practical utility of which there can be no doubt,” in a way that does not require any particular doctrinal basis or metaphysical freight.³¹ Strachan was not, therefore, opposed to practical education and believed every person from all denominations deserved a good education for the betterment of the country as a whole.³² However, for morality and correct civic responsibility to be taught to students it was vitally necessary that religion, by which Strachan meant Protestant Christianity, be taught to every pupil in the school system.³³ Indeed, more than just the impartation of knowledge, Strachan believed that the role of education was to “give your pupils a moral training favourable to the good order of society, to the performance of their duties to God and man, and to become useful to them here and in the hereafter.”³⁴ The goal of Strachan’s schools was never merely to teach rote knowledge, but to develop young men and women who were able to think and to

²⁹ Strachan, *Church University*, 5–6.

³⁰ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 15.

³¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 15.

³² McDermott, “John Strachan,” 332.

³³ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 16.

³⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 16.

“derive clear and accurate judgements based upon observation and experimentation.”³⁵

By developing the capacity of the student to think clearly, and by providing the content of knowledge from a firmly Christian worldview so that their thought would be well grounded, the pupils would be fitted to further every branch of Upper Canadian society. This well-rounded education would create not merely functional economic units, but also citizens who would have a positive impact on the country and the world.³⁶ Indeed, any system of education must be imperfect if it did not include proper instruction in “their duty, both to God and to man, based on a Christian foundation.”³⁷ The established Church had to be a key player then not only in religious education, but in every aspect of the impartation of practical knowledge as well.³⁸

Creation of Good Citizens

Strachan believed that the role of Canadian education should not only be as an inculcator of knowledge and the incubator of religion, but also that it should instil love of country, respect for the constitution, and duty towards the British Crown and Government.³⁹

What indeed can be more important to the true prosperity of the Province, than the careful education of its youth? In what other way can we ever obtain a well-instructed population by which to preserve our excellent constitution and our connexion with the British Empire, and give that respectable character to the country which arises from an intelligent magistracy and from having public situations filled by men of ability and information?⁴⁰

Good parochial schools would ensure this greatest of temporal benefit for the nation, with the gaols quickly becoming comparatively empty, the courts relieved of the business of

³⁵ Purdy, “Strachan and Education,” 59.

³⁶ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 16.

³⁷ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 19.

³⁸ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 333.

³⁹ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 6.

⁴⁰ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 6.

prosecution due to greater morality, and the need for policing and the detection and punishment of crime drastically reduced, with the added reduction of loss of property and personal injury.⁴¹ Additionally, the pupils of such a school would rally round in times of disturbance, either external or internal, and support the government in defence and the restoration of peace and order.⁴² Students would be models of obedience to lawful authority while carrying out all domestic and social duties and eschewing any desire for rash innovation or revolutionary upheaval in the social or political realms.⁴³ All these benefits were tied to the effectiveness of the school system, and the effectiveness of the school system was determined first and foremost by its close relationship with the Church of England, whose clergy must be as closely involved in the education of the young as they were in formal worship.⁴⁴

It was further necessary for this reason that universities should be created within British North America, as the need to send the young men and women of the country into the United States for training had the unfortunate side effect of placing them in the hands of teachers who would not encourage loyalty to the Crown or the British constitutional system.⁴⁵ “In the United States politics pervade the whole system of education; the school books from the very first elements are stuffed with praises of their own institutions and breathe hatred for everything English.”⁴⁶ Home-grown educational institutions manned by the Church were therefore a key element of strong political health according to Strachan.

⁴¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 41.

⁴² Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 41.

⁴³ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 41.

⁴⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1844*, 39.

⁴⁵ Strachan, *A Brief History*, 1.

⁴⁶ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 5.

The Tasks of Education

In order to ensure that the children of the province were well educated, Strachan saw a twofold mission for primary education. First, the schools must provide students with the necessary acquisition of knowledge, that they might be formed and equipped for their various callings in the world.⁴⁷ This education must be extended to children of all classes and financial backgrounds, as the good of the nation could be best secured by allowing every subject to advance to their greatest potential.⁴⁸ This reflected Strachan's upbringing in the Scottish Presbyterian educational system.⁴⁹ Second, schools must inculcate true morality, based upon Anglican Christian doctrine, in order to produce godly citizens who would be able to stand both against the ills of immorality in all forms, and to build a more prosperous and healthy province as part of the greater British Empire.⁵⁰ Strachan's ideal of education was that children educated in a grammar school in Upper Canada would not in any way be inferior to those taught in the great English public schools, and that they would be able to enter an English university with no problems.⁵¹

To accomplish this, it was necessary for you to be accustomed frequently to depend upon, and think for yourselves: accordingly, I have always encouraged this disposition, which when preserved within due bounds, is one of the greatest benefits that can possibly be acquired. To enable you to think with advantage, I not only regulated your tasks in such a manner as to exercise your judgement, but extended your views beyond the meagre routine of study usually adopted in schools; for, in my opinion, several branches of science may be taught with advantage at a much earlier age than is generally supposed. We made a mystery of nothing: on the contrary, we entered minutely into every particular, and patiently explained by what progressive steps certain results were obtained.⁵²

⁴⁷ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 19.

⁴⁸ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 5.

⁴⁹ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 51.

⁵⁰ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 6.

⁵¹ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 4.

⁵² Strachan, *Cobourg Tribute*, 26.

Strachan's letter to A. N. Bethune, rector of Cobourg, on the subject of grammar school curriculum shows his determination that the whole range of knowledge should be included within the purview of a good education. English, French, Greek, and Latin were all to be taught to the pupils, as well as civil and natural history, mathematics, rhetoric, geography, mapmaking, practical bookkeeping, poetry, astronomy, surveying, and navigation, as well as much more.⁵³ One of the reasons given by Strachan for the wide range of topics is that it enabled every pupil to find something that they were good at and therefore to excel and be rewarded for their efforts.⁵⁴ As seen, Strachan saw education as more than mere impartation of knowledge, and he was keen to develop the minds and attainments of his pupils so that they could leave school as productive members of the Church and society. The variety of studies opened the world of learning up to the young pupils and encouraged them to reach beyond their present abilities to develop greater purposes.⁵⁵ Once again the task was rooted in the theological mission of building completely formed souls who were not merely educated but who had developed the moral qualities necessary to be a pious and patriotic subject of the British Empire, who above all things loved and knew God.⁵⁶

The great object of the whole system was to make the Scholars good as well as wise; to lead them to the habitual exercise of that practical virtue which is founded upon the Divine principles of Christianity. To this all other attainments ought to be subordinate, and the teacher should never forget that his instruction should not be merely for time, but also for eternity.⁵⁷

The patient and kind work of the teacher would ensure the rich reward of seeing their pupils come into positions of importance and responsibility in the nation, and though they

⁵³ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 5-7.

⁵⁴ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 34.

⁵⁵ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 36.

⁵⁶ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 36.

⁵⁷ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 44.

might not see the fruit immediately, they could trust that their educational endeavours would lead to the healthiest society possible.⁵⁸ Strachan even quotes Locke to say that “of all the men we meet with, nine parts out of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education.”⁵⁹

The method by which young people were to be educated in the Christian faith was vital for Strachan. He was not content to have his clergy “merely teaching the articles of faith and forms of devotion. These can be very soon learned by the children; but without a tender and minute explanation they do not reach the heart.”⁶⁰ Indeed, he warned that

Young people who are taught in this way are apt to consider themselves possessed of religion, when it has as yet no sure foundation; and finding that it does not enable them to withstand temptation, nor when they have sinned, does it excite a lively remorse and repentance, they infer that it is useless and become indifferent. Hence, when assailed by wicked companions, they easily fall into transgression. Again, when they find themselves defenceless against ordinary cavils, and feel surprised at their inability to answer them, instead of seeking more correct information, they too frequently fall into corrupt unbelief, which they discover to be more acceptable to their passions and a solace to their ignorance.⁶¹

Strachan looked to the primitive Church for his model of religious education as well as his model of the Church: “The teachers receive great encouragement when the minister catechises in public. It is the mode of instruction which was universal in the first ages of the Church, nor is it long since it was general in our own.”⁶² The methods of the primitive Church were the surest path to follow if the Church wanted to strengthen its teaching as well as its other spiritual ministries. Innovation was not the ideal, rather a conservative return to the old paths after a wandering away into error.⁶³

⁵⁸ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 45.

⁵⁹ Strachan, *Grammar Schools*, 45.

⁶⁰ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 20.

⁶¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 21.

⁶² Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 21.

⁶³ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 21.

Strachan was deeply concerned about the inroads being made by infidelity and secularism in the education of young people. He recognised the growth of irreligion as one of the key detriments to society as a whole, and to the British connection and British culture of Upper Canada in particular. In an 1807 publication entitled *The Christian Religion, Recommended in a Letter to My Pupils*, Strachan warned strongly against the deceptions of heterodox and atheist unbelievers who would seek to pull them from the path of faith in Christ. First he warned them that these unbelievers would attempt to use argument to shake the young person's faith.⁶⁴ Failing this, as Strachan was sure they would do because the arguments of infidelity cannot stand up to truth, he warned that the unbelievers would turn to ridicule to win the day:

If you meet with a few unbelievers of greater abilities, and more improved intellects, you will find them prostituting their talents in the cause of vice and industriously collecting jests and sophisms against religion which they are careful to repeat in the ears of the young and inexperienced, to draw them from the truth. They know that with young and uncultivated minds, ridicule has frequently more weight than the strongest arguments. Besides, to argue correctly is beyond their strength, and against their inclinations.⁶⁵

After warning his students not to be dismayed if they should lose an argument on religion due to lacking the skills of debate necessary to reveal the falsehoods of unbelievers, he went on to make a detailed itinerary of the tactics used by unbelievers to influence the young:

It generally happens that their first step to sap the foundation of religion in the minds of the young, is to calumniate its teachers and adherents as a set of dangerous men, directed by deceit or blinded with superstition, to whom no principles belong but intolerance, bigotry, and narrowness of mind. These bold assertions, and specious invectives, although at first despised, begin at last to be credited. We hear the calumny so often united with its object, that the mention of the one almost mechanically introduces the other and we are berated into dangerous prejudices, rather by a principle of association, than a decision of the

⁶⁴ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 6.

⁶⁵ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 7.

judgement. If you love candour, freedom of discussion, truth, and universal benevolence; if you desire an exemption from prejudice and advancement in real mental improvement; join yourselves to us, say modern skeptics, for we only profess them. The unsuspecting youth look up to them with admiration, and implicitly believe their assertions, for not able steadily to examine the justice of their professions or their imputations against religion, they are fascinated with the appearance of generosity and hating the artifice and baseness, with which their new friends tell them religion is defended, they become ashamed of believing it, and long to be numbered among those conspicuous for liberality of sentiment and freedom of research.⁶⁶

This detailed study of the tactics of the freethinkers and unbelievers of his day shows that Strachan was well aware of the religious controversies of the previous century, especially with the success of the ideas of such writers as Thomas Paine, and also shows that Strachan was aware of the victory of orthodoxy over heterodoxy in the field of English public debate thanks to a combination of the work of the Anglican divines of the eighteenth century, the political action of those like Edmund Burke, and the horrible revelation of the dangers of irreligion and sophistry in the dechristianising fervour of the French Revolution. Strachan was not battling against a strong current of free thought and well-developed educational atheism in the halls of Upper Canada education, for indeed education in Upper Canada was still in its infancy in 1807. Rather, he was aware of the long struggle throughout the eighteenth century in England, and also the forces that had risen to prominence in the United States and especially France as a result of the American Rebellion and French Revolutions, as seen in the previous section. The task of education, however, was not merely to teach knowledge, but also to prepare young people against the lies and attacks of those who wanted to tear down true Christian faith and to replace belief in God with freethinking and infidelity. Educators must prepare their charges to

⁶⁶ Strachan, *The Christian Religion*, 8.

enter this world of doubt and infidelity with every tool of practical and religious education to hand.

Universities

Strachan was greatly concerned that the province should produce its own clergy, but in order to do so he believed it was paramount that the clergy should receive a first-rate education: "It is nevertheless essential to the true interests of religion, to have a well educated clergy, for, without learning, they cannot discharge with fidelity the functions of that high office."⁶⁷ Additionally, Strachan recognised that a home-grown university education for every eligible member of Upper Canadian society would increase the pool of effective people who could build and strengthen every aspect of Canadian society.⁶⁸ Especially presciently, Strachan realised that the nature of the Canadian reality meant that it would not be great landowners or industrialists who would govern the country, but that lawyers would take the chief role in the colonial political institutions.⁶⁹ Therefore, to effectively train these future leaders in the province would enable them to be "collected together at the University, become acquainted with each other, and familiar with similar views and modes of thinking, and be taught from precept and example to venerate and love our Parent State."⁷⁰ Strachan believed that the two or three years a student would normally spend in university before going on into their professional lives were "undoubtedly the most important and critical period of their whole lives."⁷¹ Above all else, Strachan was concerned that this time be used not only to inculcate knowledge of

⁶⁷ Strachan, *Address to the Clergy*, 1837, 2.

⁶⁸ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 4.

⁶⁹ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 8.

⁷⁰ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 8.

⁷¹ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 5.

practical things, but that the religious and moral consciousnesses of the students should be formed in an environment that would nurture the purest form of Christian faith and civic virtue.⁷²

Strachan's drive to build a university in Upper Canada was not primarily about the impartation of knowledge, or the prestige or power of the province or the Church within the province. Rather, it was the best means by which Strachan felt it was possible to amply supply the one hundred and twelve extra clergymen that Strachan believed were necessary for Upper Canada (as of 1827), and also to ensure this steady flow of locally educated luminaries who would grace the political and civic realms of the nation.⁷³

Strachan firmly believed that the only effective way to build the Church in Upper Canada was to train and equip Upper Canadian youths to be effective ministers within Upper Canada.⁷⁴ The King's College then was a means to further the work of the Gospel, not merely education, which explains Strachan's visceral reaction to any attempt to remove Anglican religious education from the central position in the King's College curriculum.⁷⁵

Conclusion

As this chapter shows, education was a vital concern to Strachan as a key aspect of his political theology. This education had to be legitimate, founded on Christian faith, the impartation of practical knowledge that would benefit the country as a whole, and loyalty to the Crown and government. Its role was to teach the religion of the nation, which to Strachan was Anglican Christianity, to impart practical knowledge through a carefully

⁷² Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 5.

⁷³ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 22.

⁷⁴ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 22.

⁷⁵ Strachan, *Pastoral Letter*, 1850, 3.

prepared course of instruction in a broad range of topics and skills, and to instil within the students the civic virtues that would allow them to be not merely knowledgeable, but able to deploy that knowledge in every field of civic life. The tasks of the educational institution and the teachers employed therein must be shaped toward these key ideas. Infidelity and secularism had to be staved off through teaching truth and sound morality. Teachers had to produce practically able scholars through description of knowledge, and produce faithful followers of Jesus, by which all other virtues would grow and flower and produce the strongest, best equipped, best educated nation in the world, that would not only reflect credit upon her people, but be a light and example of the perfections of the “glorious constitution” of Britain to the whole world. Strachan’s theology of education, as with his theology of the Church, was built on faithfulness to the Gospel, to the Anglican Church as the best expression of the Gospel ministry, and to the furtherance of the civic well-being of the nation. To do other than to educate out of those beliefs would have been to sin against God and to betray his sovereign and nation. Education was to Strachan the bridge that tied the Church and the state closely together and ensured that they both remained healthy and continued to understand their place in the “glorious constitution.”⁷⁶ It is now to Strachan’s theology of politics and the state that this study turns.

⁷⁶ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 10.

CHAPTER 6

STRACHAN'S THEOLOGY OF POLITICS

Introduction

Over the majority of Strachan's sixty-seven years in Upper Canada he was involved in some way with politics and government, including as a member of the executive and legislative councils, as well as in the realm of public education. Strachan's actions as a politician must be viewed through the lens of his theology of government and politics if any sense is to be made of his activities and choices. In addition, it must be recognised that he was widely read in the political theory and practical arguments of the day, as illustrated by his references to Locke, Montesquieu, Blackstone, and the revolutionary works of Rousseau and Voltaire in the appendices of his *Discourse on the Character of King George*.¹ Though not an originator of new theological or political ideology, he was far from an uneducated or narrow thinker on the subject of politics. In order to facilitate this study, this chapter will review Strachan's theology of government first by studying his understanding of the grounds of legitimacy for a government, followed by his idea of the role of politics and government, and finally the tasks that the government should fulfil to facilitate their role. This task is complicated by the nature of Strachan's corpus, with no single document containing a complete explication of his theory and theology of government. Nevertheless, by studying the whole of Strachan's extant correspondence and publications it is possible to develop a firm picture of his theology of government. It can justly be called a theology, as for Strachan the source and ground of all political

¹ Strachan, *Discourse*, 55–65.

legitimacy was to be found in God, and was to be buttressed through the work of God's representative institution, the national Church.

The Legitimacy of Government: The Constitution

For Strachan, the constitution of Britain was "our glorious constitution," and any attempt at improvement could do nothing but produce "the most deplorable anarchy and disorder."² In a sermon preached on 14 March 1804, on a day marked for contrition and prayer as Britain braved war against Bonaparte's Revolutionary France, Strachan directly attributed the British constitution to the blessing of an almighty God who had given the British nation the most perfect system of government as blessing for their faithfulness.³ It was the elements of the constitution that provided true legitimacy in Strachan's theology of government.

The Church

In keeping with standard Anglican political theology, Strachan viewed the established Church not as an element grafted on to the constitution, but the foundational element of that constitution. Within the perfect felicity granted by God the nation finds "an admirable fabric," "uniting security with liberty, vigour with mildness, insuring to all the peaceable enjoyment of their rights and guarding them against injustice and violence."⁴ The direct reason for the rich blessings of the constitution was the British nation's faithfulness to God, and the inclusion of the Church as a central element of that constitution. It was the unbendingly religious, particularly Anglican nature of the

² Strachan, "Sermon, 14 March, 1804."

³ Strachan, "Sermon, 14 March, 1804."

⁴ Strachan, "Sermon, 14 March, 1804."

constitution that enabled Britain to thrive in the past and would continue to give the strength for the future:

Let us cultivate true religion which, while it prevents us from putting too much confidence in human exertions, directs them in the most effectual manner and gives a noble energy to all we do, which nothing else can impart—those habits of diligence, industry, and disinterestedness which religion engenders are the best protections of any state—prudence and temperance are then preferred to rashness and pleasure—all the excellent dispositions of our nature are brought into action—kindness, benevolence, compassion, and charity take the place of pride, ostentation, cruelty, and parsimony—every person interests himself for the good of the whole community and is willing to forgo his case and hazard his life for the safety of his country.⁵

For Strachan, one of the great underpinnings of the legitimacy of the government was the process by which the constitution had been formed:

Our constitution, modelled after that of Great Britain, partakes of all the advantages which an experience of several centuries had accumulated. It is not, therefore, the work of a day; it rests upon old and tried foundations, the more durable, because visionary empirics have not been allowed to touch them. No fine spun theories of metaphysicians, which promise much and end in misery, have shared in its formation; such men may destroy, but they can never build.⁶

This development that had led to the most glorious and perfect constitution was not simply the implementation of earthly ideals, but rather the healthy growth of a nation that had willingly devoted itself to the glory of God and the pursuit of the most perfect expression of his Church, which could be found in the institution of the Anglican Church.⁷

Consistent with the process by which the constitution had been formed, Strachan saw the noble principle of a patriotism rooted in self sacrifice and the virtues that flow from religion to be key to the maintenance of the liberty that flowed from the

⁵ Strachan, "Sermon, 14 March, 1804"

⁶ Strachan, *Discourse*, 39.

⁷ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 12.

constitution.⁸ This patriotism was self-sacrificial, and commanded the best that could come from a nation whose values were correctly tempered by the truth that could only be found in the Gospel.⁹ The constitution was not founded by the people for the people, as with the American document that Strachan had such a strong antipathy towards, but was instituted by God not only to bless the nation but to provide for their complete health, physically through law and good government and spiritually through the ministrations of the established Church.¹⁰ Strachan's views on these issues reflected the Anglican political theology of the day and the standard eighteenth century understanding of the constitution as expressed by statesmen like Edmund Burke.¹¹ Strachan believed that the established church was not just a necessary component of the constitution, but that it provided the foundation upon which the constitution was built.¹² "No country can be called Christian, which does not give public support to Christianity . . ."¹³ This was the key element of the British constitution: the indissoluble union of the Church and the State, the "Brightest ornament of the British Constitution, and ought to be the glory of every Christian Government."¹⁴ From this glorious root extended every other branch of the great British governmental system that to Strachan was so necessary for the survival and health of the "glorious constitution," first through the trunk of the Crown and extending by royal prerogative to the Parliament.¹⁵ As Fennings Taylor points out, Strachan firmly believed the Church must be part of the constitution not to make the Church political, but to make

⁸ Strachan, "Sermon 14 March, 1804."

⁹ Strachan, "Sermon 14 March, 1804."

¹⁰ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 13.

¹¹ Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution*, 91.

¹² Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 17.

¹³ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 17.

¹⁴ Strachan, *Letter to Lewis*, 3.

¹⁵ Strachan, "Sermon 14 March, 1804."

the state religious.¹⁶ The “glorious constitution” would thrive as long as this principle of legitimacy was maintained.

The Crown

Strachan’s view of government and legitimacy is consistent with the standard Tory view that recognised the Crown as the true earthly source of legitimacy and also the true embodiment of the British unwritten constitution.¹⁷ The king was the “guardian of freemen and the father of his people,” not a despot but a defender.¹⁸ The king was the “faithful guardian and dispenser of all the benefits flowing from the most perfect form of government.”¹⁹ For Strachan in 1810 one of the felicitous grounds of confidence in the Crown was the personal integrity of the king. In his *Discourse on the Character of King George the Third*, Strachan states: “I must confess that I am not among the number of those who can admit that he who is neither a good husband nor an affectionate parent, can acquit himself uprightly in a public station: or that the monarch whose private deportment sanctions licentiousness and dissipation can ever be a patriot king.”²⁰ He goes on to say, “if we do not find him presenting, to his people, a pattern of the purest morals, elevating their minds by his active piety, and cherishing that spirit of liberty which renders the British nation the envy and admiration of the world, we shall not require you to join us in pouring forth our thanksgivings to God for preserving him so long among us.”²¹

¹⁶ Taylor, *First Three Bishops*, 218.

¹⁷ Strachan, *Discourse*, 43.

¹⁸ Strachan, *Discourse*, 43.

¹⁹ Strachan, *Discourse*, 38.

²⁰ Strachan, *Discourse*, 8.

²¹ Strachan, *Discourse*, 9.

Strachan further believed that it was impossible to love a sovereign who was wicked, and it was impossible for a sovereign who had surrendered obedience to and faith in God to govern with proper restraint. One might be feared and obeyed from that fear, but the affection of the subject could never be secured by one who had lost respect for God and his law and betrayed so much in their actions.²² “If religion and virtue have lost their power over him, what shall restrain him or what shall prevent him from violating the most sacred rights and liberties of his people?”²³ The Crown must necessarily bow the knee before God, and maintain affection for the Church if it was to be constitutionally consistent and healthy as the head of the nation.

The Parliament

For Strachan, consistent with the thought of Burke and other conservative Anglicans, the legitimacy of Parliament depended directly upon the Crown, for it was by the royal prerogative that the Parliament had the right and privilege of being involved in legislating for the good of the nation.²⁴ Further, the Parliament must depend upon the king’s good will, as it was his duty to provide through his exhortations, authority, and example the life and strength of the parliamentary administration. As an instrument of the prerogative of the Crown, and an organ to implement the effective government of the king’s realms, rather than as an organ of the popular will, the Parliament to Strachan was a vital piece of the greater British constitution, but lost its legitimacy the moment it

²² Strachan, *Discourse*, 13.

²³ Strachan, *Discourse*, 13.

²⁴ Strachan, *Discourse*, 45.

attempted to alter its position in that constitution or step outside of the appropriate position of the government and the loyal opposition to that government.²⁵

Noticeably absent in Strachan's understanding of government legitimacy, even regarding the Parliament, is any idea of democratic legitimacy. Rather, Strachan found democratic ideals and "so-called 'Responsible Government'" to be highly distasteful if not pernicious, and believed that these democratic theories led to the breakdown not only of the constitution but also of civil society as a whole.²⁶

I have profited by my neighbourhood to democracy. In point of real happiness the British are far superior to the inhabitants of this celebrated republic . . . the frequency of their elections keeps them in a continual broil. To promote the interests of their factions they do not hesitate to fabricate the grossest falsehoods and most horrid slanders . . . I am as friendly as ever to true liberty, but experience and observation teach me to modify my improvements.²⁷

The result of democratic fervour in Strachan's eyes confirmed the common eighteenth-century Tory opinions regarding democratic innovations that had been built during the close encounters with Wilkesite mobs, American republicans, and French revolutionaries, convincing him firsthand that the increase of democracy did not provide greater liberty, better law or more peace.

The British Constitution, flowing from God through the prerogative of the Crown, assisted by a parliament that was able to legislate for the good of all its subjects, was indeed for Strachan the "best practical form of government that ever existed, those who understand it best must love it best, and such will not hesitate to defend it at the hazard of

²⁵ Strachan, *Discourse*, 45.

²⁶ Strachan, *Discourse*, 56.

²⁷ Strachan, "Letter to Dr. Brown, 20 October, 1807," SP.

their lives.”²⁸ Any attempt to weaken any aspect of the unified constitutional settlement was an attempt to destroy the whole in Strachan’s eyes.

The Empire

Strachan’s position on the Empire was consistent with that to be found in a normal citizen of the British home country. It was not part of the constitution, but rather deemed to be an outgrowth of the blessing of God upon the British nation.²⁹ It was also permanently linked to the Crown, yet another reason why the monarchy must be preserved in all its traditional prerogatives.³⁰ In his language he spoke often of the Empire as though it was something out in the rest of the world, but he saw Upper Canada as a part of the British nation, as much a copy of the Home country as could be possible.³¹ Strachan believed strongly in the providential mission of the British nation to be the new Israel, bringing about a “Universal Empire of religious opinion,” in opposition to the “Universal Empire of Arms.”³² To Strachan the success of the British Empire was linked to the future peace and prosperity of the entire world.³³ Britain was the chosen nation, destined to be the new Israel in a world that was falling to republicanism, and religious and political innovations of every kind.³⁴ Britain was the sole world power to withstand the tyranny and godlessness of Revolutionary France and Napoleon, and had proven by its actions that the right faith had led to the right government, and that the “Glorious Constitution” was

²⁸ Strachan, *Discourse*, 56.

²⁹ MacRae, “Religious Foundation,” 81.

³⁰ MacRae, “Religious Foundation,” 79.

³¹ MacRae, “Religious Foundation,” 82.

³² Strachan, “Sermon 3 January, 1850.”

³³ Robertson, “Strachan’s View,” 44.

³⁴ MacRae, “Religious Foundation,” 81.

divinely blessed to bring about the greatest good for the earth.³⁵ The Empire was under the Crown, and Upper Canada was part of the great British nation that spanned the seas. While he used the same language to discuss the rest of the British Empire around the world, for Strachan the Empire was less of a concern than the home country and the British nation. The language of Empire is therefore less common than that of nation or the British people in the works of Strachan.³⁶ The separation of Canada from the Empire in Strachan's thought can be seen in his petition to the Parliament regarding King's College, where he discusses the "greatest evil to Canada and the British Empire."³⁷ The latter-nineteenth century emphasis on Empire was not so much part of Strachan's thinking, but rather like Burke and other late eighteenth century thinkers his thought was firmly on the British nation.³⁸

Particular to Strachan's worldview was a strong British identity. Just as J. G. A. Pocock says that no Baptist in the peripheries of the Empire would have recognised any history written of their experience that did not place British identity at the forefront, the same is true with Strachan and other Anglican Tories.³⁹ Continuity between Britain and Upper Canada was at the centre of Strachan and other Anglican Tories' mission to replicate the "Glorious Constitution" in Upper Canada. David Armitage's discussion on the ideology of Empire brings out this same element of British identity.⁴⁰ A key difference between Strachan's view of the British nation and later ideologies of Empire was that Empire ideology sought a method of creating a unity in the midst of diversity,

³⁵ Strachan, "Sermon 14 March, 1804."

³⁶ See MacRae, "Religious Foundations" for more on Strachan's understanding of Empire.

³⁷ Strachan, *Pastoral Letter*, 1850, 31.

³⁸ See Burke, *Reflections*, for an example of eighteenth century views of the nation and the Empire. Dennis McKim discusses this idea of "old world" influences on the church in Canada in his discussion of late nineteenth century Presbyterianism. See McKim, "Righteousness," 49.

³⁹ Pocock, *Discovery of Islands*, 42.

⁴⁰ Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 171.

while Strachan was working diligently to create an Anglican Tory British unity within Upper Canada that was a perfect analogue of British society, leading him to emphasize the nation over the Empire.⁴¹ As the century progressed the idea of Empire as being synonymous with the British nation became more pronounced, and by the end of the century if Strachan had lived he would most likely have been using the same language of Empire that had become the prime expression of British nationalism in the colonies.⁴² As Carl Berger shows, the idea of imperialism did not come into vogue in Canada until after Confederation in 1867, the year in which Strachan died.⁴³

The Role of Politics and Government

Strachan wrote in 1810 that the properties of a good government were “the most extensive civil liberty, dispatch, secrecy, energy, wisdom, and union.”⁴⁴ It was the role of government to work and act in ways that ensured these core traits were present within their constitutions, and to Strachan this was most eminently true of the British government, headed by the Crown and joined by the other two houses of Parliament in the ideal governing structure.⁴⁵

Good Governance

Strachan argued that the foundation of true liberty was not to be found in the American ideals of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, but rather in the administration of a

⁴¹ See Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 171 for further discussion of the ideology of Empire.

⁴² See Cole, “Nationalistic Imperialists,” 44–49.

⁴³ Berger, *Sense of Power*, 4.

⁴⁴ Strachan, *Discourse*, iv.

⁴⁵ Strachan, *Discourse*, iv.

strict and impartial justice and the formation of righteous laws.⁴⁶ This even-handed and fair justice flowed outward from the person of the monarch, and created liberty not through the application of theories or high-minded platitudes, but through the protection of personal property and the equality before the law of everyone from the king to the person of the lowest station.⁴⁷ It was Strachan's personal witness of the party faction and corruption in the courts of New York State that contributed to his poor view of American democratic ideals: "The American juries commonly enquire the political opinions of the litigators and give it to their friend, or if politics be out of the question, they decide in favour of the poorer; we do not say but that justice may be sometimes obtained, but her preference in their courts is rare."⁴⁸ In contrast he lauded the government of England and the colonies that reflected its constitution as the most noble and Christian structure in the world, especially in its conscious conjoining of the Church and the government within the grand constitutional bond.⁴⁹

Strachan had a high view of the ability of government to be a force for good in the world. Responding to the victory in the Crimean war, Strachan hoped the government would ensure that

Justice must be separated from ferocity, punishment from revenge. . . . Industry will be encouraged; agriculture promoted and commerce extended. From a more correct knowledge of political economy systems of taxation less oppressive and unjust will be introduced, monopolies destroyed . . . and the advantage of individuals be made subservient to the good of the whole.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Strachan, *Discourse*, 50.

⁴⁷ Strachan, *Discourse*, 50.

⁴⁸ Strachan, *Discourse*, 51.

⁴⁹ Strachan, *Sermon*, 3 June, 1814, 9.

⁵⁰ Strachan, *Sermon*, 4 June, 1856.

Strachan was not, however, a utopian when it came to government, recognising that “a government is like a family which cannot always flow smoothly.”⁵¹ Indeed, it was foolish to seek perfection, especially by destroying the existing order and attempting to raise up a new, experimental model in its place:

In fine the present age has demonstrated that no great and decided amelioration of the lower classes of society can be reasonably expected; much improved they certainly may be; but that foolish perfectibility with which they have been deluded can never be realised. Of the two experiments made in America and France to constitute governments productive of virtue and happiness only . . . [both] have completely failed. In the former the most base and wretched policy is pursued; and the latter ended in a military despotism. It is by peaceable and gradual steps and not by revolutions that the most solid improvements in the science of government can be obtained.⁵²

Rather than striving for ideals, the government must truly govern wisely, maintaining and preserving the constitution that had been so carefully grown and developed over centuries, valuing the past and looking toward only the most careful and incremental changes. Strachan rarely criticised the government of Britain publicly, and when he did so it was generally in an indirect way.⁵³ This is consistent with the Anglican Tory ideal of non-resistance and passive obedience, even in the face of frustration as he tried to achieve a healthy Anglican Tory society in Upper Canada. When the government was unwilling to recognise the role of religion in good governance, however, Strachan was not afraid to speak against the practice, as in the case of India: “The possession of India imposed on our country three great objects: the extension of commerce, the well-being of the people and the propagation of Christianity . . . we have in a manner ignored the two last and confined our policy almost exclusively to the first—the securing of our temporal

⁵¹ Strachan, *Sermon*, 4 June, 1856.

⁵² Strachan, *Sermon*, 4 June, 1856.

⁵³ MacRae, “Religious Foundation,” 87.

interests.”⁵⁴ Strachan does not claim here that any of these three interests are illegitimate, but rather that all three must be equally represented in the considerations of empire and the role of government. The well-being of the people temporally must be paired with their spiritual well-being as the Gospel is preached and people are brought to saving knowledge of Christ. Indeed, though Strachan was willing to recognise the work of the colonial government as one “far superior in administering justice and in protecting person and property to any other government ever known or enjoyed in India,” this was not enough, and the Indian Mutiny showed that “in the future the government of India shall rest upon a religious basis and upon no other.”⁵⁵ Without the proper establishment of Christianity as the guiding light of the Empire, there was no way that the British nation could expect to be blessed or to find success in their endeavours, and the Mutiny was a testimony to the disaster that would attend single-minded disregard of religion as the foundation of a properly formed society.⁵⁶ The role of government to provide good governance and correct administration of justice, as with all other things, came back to faith and especially the established Church as the core foundational requirement to ensure that they were properly situated.

Provision for the Church

The spiritual and political dangers that awaited an impious nation made it vitally necessary that the government maintain support for the established Church within every province of the empire, providing the same benefits as it did in the home country.⁵⁷ This provision in Strachan’s eyes was not about furthering the private, worldly interests of the

⁵⁴ Strachan, *Sermon*, 27 November, 1857.

⁵⁵ Strachan, *Sermon*, 27 November, 1857.

⁵⁶ Strachan, *Sermon*, 27 November, 1857.

⁵⁷ Strachan, *Letter to Reverend Lee*, 4.

Church of England over against any other group or denomination, but rather was necessary for the entire good of every subject of the Crown, wherever they were to be found:

As the Supreme Being has been pleased to communicate his will, it is the duty of every Christian Government, to support such a religious establishment, as may best secure the benefits of this revelation to all their subjects. Now, as this divine revelation is intended to promote among all men true morality and purity of life, to become the mother of good works, our cordial in affliction, and our comfort in death, to bring us daily into the presence of God and our saviour, that we may believe in his holy name, love him with all our hearts, and by making him the object of our imitation and the foundation of our faith, resemble him on earth and follow him to heaven; an establishment which produces these excellent effects ought to be cherished by every good government, in its own defence, as the guardian and nourisher of the purest social, and domestic virtues.⁵⁸

The need for government support of the Church was plain, as he felt that it was not possible in places like Upper Canada, where the population was predominantly poor, to support the necessary number of clergymen to provide for the spiritual needs not only of the settler families, but also the missionary numbers to bring the Gospel to the indigenous inhabitants of the land.⁵⁹ Indeed, in his 1830 letter to Thomas Frankland Lewis in defence of the Clergy Reserves, Strachan saw the poverty of the population not only as a hindrance to voluntary support, but also saw it as a burden that should not be placed upon the people of the country when it was in fact the duty of the government to provide for the Church, as indeed had been done through the Clergy Reserves.⁶⁰ Strachan agreed with Thomas Chalmers that irreligion could not be conquered without proper financial support, as those who were irreligious would not provide for the clergy, and the clergy were necessary to root out irreligion.⁶¹ The European style parish system provided the

⁵⁸ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 15–16.

⁵⁹ Strachan, *Letter to Reverend Lee*, 5.

⁶⁰ Strachan, *Letter to Lewis*, 81.

⁶¹ McDermott, "John Strachan," 336.

necessary secure and robust access of every citizen to the church, and more importantly provided enough clergy that they could go out and bring people to faith through regular and close community connection.⁶² Those places with people in the most financial need were indeed most in need of the ministry of the Church, not only due to its spiritual work, but the educational and social care work that accompanied and augmented it.⁶³ Further, as seen above, both the “glorious constitution” of Britain, and the Constitution Act of 1791 included the Church as a part of the constitutional establishment within the nation, requiring that the government ensure that enough money was provided to enable the expansion not only of the clergy, but of the general work of the Church in education and social care.⁶⁴ This argument was especially compelling in the age of the American Rebellion and the French Revolution. On the one hand the lack of a firm establishment in the American colonies was thought by some to be a reason why the colonies had rebelled, as the lack of proper religious teaching that supported piety and loyalty to the king weakened ties to the home country. On the other hand the French had so completely rooted out their religion from the land that the shocking excesses of the revolutionary upheaval, the Terror, and Napoleon’s assault upon Europe had occurred.⁶⁵ In a speech before the legislature of Upper Canada, Strachan defended established Christianity as the surest defence for the government and constitution: “Is not Christianity a continual lesson of obedience to the laws and submission to constituted authorities, and has it not been the primary object of all enemies to regular government to destroy the influence of religious principles, and to pull down religious establishments? To effect this, they have ever

⁶² McDermott, “John Strachan,” 336.

⁶³ McDermott, “John Strachan,” 337.

⁶⁴ Strachan, *Letter to Reverend Lee*, 5.

⁶⁵ Strachan, “Sermon 14 March, 1804.”

considered the consummation of victory.”⁶⁶ Should the government shirk their duty of provision for the Church and concern for the spiritual well-being of their people that could only be truly secured through the established Anglican Church, they were not merely being fiscally foolish, but spiritually and politically rash with the future of the nation, both in the colonies and at home.⁶⁷

Strachan believed that the Church must be integrally connected to the government in order to protect the nation from the excesses of unbridled passion:

The great work of religion is to govern the passions and the will. It is from its very nature a restraint on all authority, unless purely and faithfully exercised, because it comes in the name of a Divine Law. To subdue, mortify, and direct human nature is its great object. It is, therefore, always opposed to what is incorrectly called liberty, unless under its guidance, and to arrange and accomplish this is the mission and hope of the Christian Church. This of necessity brings religion into contact with politics, for they are inseparable in the nature of man.⁶⁸

This divine mandate to subdue the passions and will of humanity ensured that the government could not run rampant, enacting law and ruling in a manner merely pleasing to itself. The Divine Law cited by Strachan provided a check that no constitutional innovation or decision of the legislature could overturn. This is consistent with the traditional Anglican understanding of law as descending to humanity from God via special revelation, rather than the ideas of “liberty” referenced above by Strachan, that emphasised a law rising from the Lockean idea of the social contract made by the governed.⁶⁹ Above all, Strachan believed that no amount of human will could truly separate the church from the state, for as seen above, religion cannot be removed from the nature of humanity. It was “our duty to maintain the connection between Church and

⁶⁶ Strachan, *A Speech*, 28.

⁶⁷ Strachan, *Letter to Lewis*, 4.

⁶⁸ Strachan, *Charge, 1856*, 6.

⁶⁹ See Section One discussion of these principles.

State.”⁷⁰ The Church of England, as the faithful reader and prescriber of the holy Scriptures, as the Church that conformed all of her prayers and sermons to the standards of those Scriptures, was the best preservative of peace, pleasantness, and subordination within the nation, and was also the best fitted to spread the Gospel through the “spiritual wastes of the Province.”⁷¹ It was the bound duty and official role of government to ensure that the Church was provided for, that the role of good government and care for the well-being of the people could properly be executed.

Rebellions and the Established Church

For Strachan, the breakdown of society was a guaranteed result of the people of a nation falling away from faith and turning to self-gratification and avarice.⁷² The people of a nation had to be maintained in the virtues that were inculcated by the Christian faith, but when those virtues were lost, and when the ordered constitution and laws of the nation prohibited the full enjoyment of their base desires, “They continually aim at self gratification and when this is opposed, they breed the most rancorous discontent—they become the friends of change and innovation that amidst the disorder of society they may be satiated.”⁷³ For Strachan the source of desire for change and innovation was not the elevation of the nation, but rather the pursuit of selfish pleasure and personal gain. As his examples of this evil he looked first to the United States of America, so recently fallen to rebellion against their sovereign over taxation, and to France, where the complete breakdown of society had produced the final rise of Napoleon, the conqueror who was

⁷⁰ Strachan, quoted in McDermott, “John Strachan,” 341.

⁷¹ Strachan, quoted in McDermott, “John Strachan,” 342.

⁷² Strachan, “Sermon 14 March, 1804.”

⁷³ Strachan, “Sermon 14 March, 1804.”

ranging across Europe, ever increasing his territory but never satisfying his greed.⁷⁴

These examples provided Strachan not merely with a political enemy, but with a theological example of the total interconnectedness between a nation's faith and values on the one hand, and their political decisions and destinies on the other.

Should a nation choose the path of rebellion rather than the way of the Lord, Strachan was confident that the same God who visited judgement upon individuals for falling into sin and complacency would likewise judge whole nations. In his sermon of 14 March 1804, Strachan reminded his parishioners that it was God who was the controller of peace and war, and the bringer of judgement, and forsaking God and his precepts was the root of every kind of calamity, especially war.⁷⁵ The pursuit of wealth and power over against the inculcation of virtue and obedience to God was the direct cause for the collapse of the peace of Britain, and could even be seen as the source of the potential destruction of the country if the lesson was not learned and the national course reversed.⁷⁶ A nation could not follow the rebellious path of innovation and alteration of the constitution and the basic requirements of civic life without incurring the loving chastisement of God. If the nation still would not listen, that chastisement would continue to grow and to bite into the national good until the nation returned their allegiance to God.⁷⁷

Strachan believed that the lack of government support for establishment and religious education were key contributors to the American Rebellion:

Our parent state . . . has allowed a powerful nation to grow up in this quarter of the world with scarcely an endeavour to promote its spiritual advancement. The

⁷⁴ Strachan, "Sermon 14 March, 1804."

⁷⁵ Strachan, "Sermon 14 March, 1804."

⁷⁶ Strachan, "Sermon 14 March, 1804."

⁷⁷ Strachan, "Sermon, 14 March, 1804."

first inhabitants quitted their native land for the purposes of commerce and aggrandisement both public and private and in such matters they were readily recognised but they were left in utter destitution of the means of grace . . . Is it then to be wondered that liberalism, fraud, and infidelity increased and that these again promoted discontent, sedition, anarchy, successful revolt, and the dismemberment of the Empire?⁷⁸

These same forces were a continual danger to Upper Canada, as shown by the rebellion of 1837, which copied its aims from the new nation to the south. The cure was obvious to Strachan:

Had it been otherwise—had the British nation really acted as a Christian people with one heart what glorious things might have been effected in North America. The brightest imagination is unable to picture the scenes of peace and happiness . . . these provinces instead of being exposed to traitorous conspiracies both from without and from within would have presented a Christian Society built up in righteousness. Sad indeed are the judgements which have for some time been upon us.⁷⁹

While it was too late to save the former colonies of the United States from their fate, the implications were clear for the governments of Upper Canada and Britain: the same fate awaited British North America if they were to continue to ignore a cornerstone of the British Constitution in the government of the New World. Rebellion flowed from irreligion in Strachan's eyes.⁸⁰

Provision for Education

To Strachan, provision for an educational system was part of the mission of government, and he was actively involved in the development of the national program. Contrary to the characterisation of Strachan as a backward reactionary, in this idea he was quite modern

⁷⁸ Strachan, *Sermon, 14 December, 1837*. This sermon was preached in Toronto on a fast day proclaimed because of the recent rebellion and various attacks from the United States.

⁷⁹ Strachan, *Sermon, 14 December, 1837*.

⁸⁰ Strachan, *Sermon, 3 July, 1825*.

for his time, and even ahead of the trends in Britain.⁸¹ He believed that the government should provide not merely for the basic education of the youth of the country, but that those with particular aptitude should have suitable secondary and post-secondary institutions provided for them through the government purse.⁸² This complete provision provided “an establishment of incalculable religious, moral, and political light.”⁸³ The provision should be funnelled through the Church, however, ensuring that though the funds came from the government, the actual educating should remain firmly in the hands of the Church, to ensure that religion and civic virtue continued to have their places alongside the impartation of practical knowledge.⁸⁴

One of the key roles that Strachan saw for the colonial government within education was the provision of religious instruction by providing clergy for the Anglican Church throughout the British Empire.⁸⁵

Religious instruction should be made sufficient and commensurate with the wants of the people in every part of the empire; nor should it be thought a matter of indifference in colonial policy, or even of secondary consideration. It should take the lead of all others; for to form colonies under the guidance of Christian principles is one of the noblest and most beneficial purposes which governments can fulfil . . . and one fourth of the human race being thus reclaimed, the remainder will gradually follow, and this the whole earth become the garden of the Lord.⁸⁶

This provision would not only provide for the immediate spiritual needs of the colonies, but actively ensure that the British Empire would continue as a loyal and productive support of the home country, and as Strachan states, ultimately lead to the spread of the Christian message to every person on earth. It is important to note that it was not merely

⁸¹ Purdy, “Strachan and Education,” 44.

⁸² Purdy, “Strachan and Education,” 3.

⁸³ Strachan, “Letter to John Richardson, 14 February, 1815.”

⁸⁴ Purdy, “Strachan and Education,” 50.

⁸⁵ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 20.

⁸⁶ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 21.

evangelism that Strachan envisioned, but government support for the education of the people of the colonies through the work of the clergy. This educational enterprise was the surest way, in Strachan's eyes, to build a great society. The government was not suited to directly provide educational services, but rather one of the reasons why it should provide for the established Church was that the Church should have the money to create an effective system of schools for all ages.⁸⁷ Though the educational system must be open to people of all denominations and backgrounds, the established Church was the safe pair of hands that would ensure the piety, loyalty, and ability of each student that entered into the school system.⁸⁸ Indeed, when Egerton Ryerson ultimately introduced a secular education system for Canada, Strachan rejected it not merely because it shut the Church out of education, but because it sowed the seeds of the ultimate degradation and destruction of Upper Canadian society as a whole.⁸⁹

The Task of Government

For Strachan's view of the task of government it is pertinent first to look to the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. The Articles give to "The King's Majesty the chief power in this Realm of England, and other of his dominions, unto who the chief government of all estates of the Realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain . . ."⁹⁰ They further give "that prerogative, which we see to have been given always to all godly princes in holy Scriptures by God himself; that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal,

⁸⁷ Strachan, "Letter to John Richardson, 14 February, 1815."

⁸⁸ Strachan, "Letter to John Richardson, 14 February, 1815."

⁸⁹ Strachan, *Charge, 1851*, 41.

⁹⁰ *Thirty-Nine Articles*, XXXVII.

and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers.”⁹¹ Strachan was fully in agreement with this understanding of the task of the government, as shown by his draft constitution for a theoretical united British North America. Strachan believed that a government should have the power to do the following:

To lay on and collect taxes . . .; to pay the debts and provide for the general peace and welfare of the different provinces; To establish uniform commercial regulations . . .; To establish uniform laws of bankruptcy throughout the provinces . . .; To determine all disputes or questions of revenue that may arise between the provinces; To regulate the navigation of rivers and lakes common to two or more provinces . . .; To open internal communications for the general advantage—such as roads, canals, etc.; To provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws, to suppress insurrection, and to repel invasion, and to adopt and establish a uniform system of militia laws.⁹²

From the above it is possible to see that Strachan was chiefly concerned that the government carry out its traditional tasks, and avoid entering into fields where it did not belong. The collection of taxes was rightly housed with the government, and the provision of the general peace and welfare of the province through the distribution of those taxes was consistent with Strachan’s understanding of the government as provider in both education and the establishment. It is also evident that Strachan saw no direct task for the government in religious work, social care, or religious teaching outside of that provision of funds. The tasks of the government ceased with the collection and distribution of funds to the appropriate recipients. In addition to the collection and distribution of funds, the provision of efficient regulation of commerce and the opening up of internal communications was consistent with the theology of government provided in the Anglican article on government. Again, the duty to wield the sword through the militia, both to execute the laws internally and to defend the land from external threats is

⁹¹ *Thirty-Nine Articles*, XXXVII.

⁹² Strachan, *Observations on a Union*, in Henderson, *Documents and Opinions*, 166–7.

a solidly Anglican Tory outlook upon the mission and ministry of the government. Strachan did not look to the government to provide social welfare or other bodily or spiritual care, but merely the monetary provision to enable enough workers to do so through the correct constitutional body, the Church.⁹³ When the government shirked the tasks that their role of provider required of them, the Church must not abandon their own roles and tasks to the government, but shoulder the burden of finding the provision so that they could continue to carry out the tasks granted to them by God.⁹⁴ All of the duties of government flowed from this central idea of God ordaining certain tasks to be carried out by either the Church or the government, and it was a theological problem for one to take up the tasks of the other, as it was not merely a constitutional violation but a violation of God's order as well.

Conclusion

As with every other aspect of his thought, Strachan founded his view of government on the basic legitimacy of the British Constitution, which produced not merely a system of government, but an ideal and thoroughly Christian foundation for the life of the nation. Founded on the truth of the Scriptures, the British Constitution was thoroughly Anglican in nature, and to maintain its unity and balance God, through his representative on earth, the Church, must be the fountain of all authority and activity. The threefold union of Church, Crown, and Parliament produced a system of government that could nurture the most healthy and balanced national life to be found anywhere on earth. The Constitution had formed not through the ideological efforts of philosophers and intellectuals, but had

⁹³ Strachan, *Charge, 1851*, 38.

⁹⁴ Strachan, *Charge, 1851*, 36.

grown like an English oak over hundreds of years, nurtured by the careful cultivation of the Church, Crown, and Parliament. If the province of Upper Canada was to prosper then the mission of the government was to replicate this perfect balance, providing provision for the Church and education, and good governance and wise administration of justice for every subject. By providing for the spiritual and physical health of the nation through an adequately supported established Church the government would ensure a loyal, law-abiding, and productive populace. By providing for a complete, religiously founded and practical education through the ministrations of the Church the government could ensure not only a capable population, but one that was moral and industrious, capable of leading the world in practical innovation and energy. By managing commerce, justice, and defence the government would provide a suitable field for the province to grow strong and healthy. By carrying out the tasks granted to them by the Crown, and remembering their central allegiance to the Christian faith, the government of Upper Canada could produce a model Anglican Tory nation, an example to the whole world of the superior liberty to be found in the British constitution of Church, Crown, and Parliament.

Strachan's theological beliefs regarding Church, education, and politics, the unity that made up his political theology, are best understood by studying not only his ideas, but also the way that he lived out his ideas in practice. The following chapters will study three cases in which Strachan put his political theology into practice: The Clergy Reserves, King's College, and the fight against Responsible government. These three cases studies will show how Strachan practiced his political theology in the Church, education, and government spheres. They also provide examples of how he refused to stray from his formative theological positions, despite intense pressures to do so.

CHAPTER 7

STRACHAN THE CHURCHMAN: THE CLERGY RESERVES AND THE FIGHT FOR ESTABLISHMENT

Introduction

The Clergy Reserves of Upper Canada provided the Church of England with a massive source of potential support that, once mature, would ensure the salaries of all Anglican clergy in the province. In addition they would provide for the building and maintenance of a parish church system throughout Upper Canada. Established well before Strachan arrived in the province, the Reserves had not produced much money, nor had they been a source of controversy in the untamed land that Strachan found in 1800. With the close of the War of 1812, however, the Reserves would become a serious concern for Strachan as he sought to build the Anglican establishment that he believed should and did exist in Upper Canada. At the same time they would come under attack from various different sources, secular and religious. More than any other issue, the Reserves would be at the centre of the fight for establishment, and provide an opportunity for Strachan to defend his theology of the Church and its role in society against the Reform idea of voluntarist and disestablished religion.

The First Rumbblings: 1817–1825

The Clergy Reserves had been dutifully apportioned throughout Upper Canada, in a checkerboard pattern that ensured their even distribution, but also their intrusion upon patterns of settlement.¹ While land was plentiful and being given away for free, these reserves were left wild, and apart from some small leases with the purpose of stealing the

¹ Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 9.

timber from the land, they were practically unused before the War of 1812.² Because Imperial policy disallowed sale of the lands there was no way to cause them to produce revenue, so that beyond the slight bother of wild territory in the midst of settlement they excited little comment.³ The government was content to allow the land to sit idle until the inevitable rise of land prices and continuing settlement made the land more valuable.⁴ Money was always an issue for the Church, and Strachan spent much time trying to drum up support for new clergy in a land that could not support them through giving alone.⁵

Beginning with the legislative session of 1817, however, complaints began to be voiced by members of the Legislative Assembly of the province, centred on the problems that the Reserves were creating as people tried to cut a new society from the virgin lands of Upper Canada. This problem was made more difficult by the evenly spaced plots of wild land waiting for the day when they would produce funds for the Church and the government.⁶ Over two million acres of wild land, evenly spread, intruded upon the settlement of townships.⁷ While the issue would be ongoing, the government worked to mitigate it through land exchange and other means, removing this primary problem from contention. The government never sought to block people from improving the province, but the mere existence of the lands proved to be a difficulty.⁸ Colonel Robert Nichol nevertheless encouraged the Assembly to petition London that some of the Reserves be sold to pay for the construction of churches. Proposals that the money so raised actually be used for secular purposes soon followed and Strachan became worried that the result

² Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 10.

³ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 50.

⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 91.

⁵ SLB, 1812–1834: “Strachan to Bishop Mountain, 15 September, 1815.”

⁶ Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 10.

⁷ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 85.

⁸ Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 11.

of such agitation would be the stripping away of one of the key props of Anglican Church establishment in the province.⁹ In addition to the concerns regarding establishment, the confiscation of Church lands echoed the tactics of the French Revolution, where expropriation of Roman Catholic Church property had been the first step in systematic dechristianisation. This had supposedly been done “for the nation,” to relieve the budgetary deficit that was weighing down the people of France.¹⁰ Most telling in the French example was that the idea was brought forward not by viscerally anti-Christian people, but by Talleyrand, himself a Roman Catholic bishop.¹¹ The proposals in the Assembly used the same language of toleration and public service, but Strachan, as with most Britons of his age, was keenly aware that in France expropriation had been the first step down the road to a period of full dechristianisation and the fall of the French Church.

In order to stop any challenge of Anglican rights to the Reserves, in 1819 Strachan was already beginning a campaign to secure firmer Church control over the lands. To do so Strachan convinced the British Government to found the Clergy Corporation of Upper Canada. This body was responsible for the management of the Clergy Reserves, with the idea of providing a steadier income from and simpler management of the allotted land than had previously been possible.¹² Strachan was appointed as the chairman of the Corporation, and set about attempting to build up more suitable revenue for the Church.¹³ Also in 1819 Strachan included in his *A Visit to Upper Canada*, published under his brother’s name, a short argument regarding the legal right of

⁹ Henderson, *John Strachan*, 30.

¹⁰ Schama, *Citizens*, 483.

¹¹ Schama, *Citizens*, 483.

¹² Flint, *Strachan*, 84.

¹³ Henderson, *John Strachan*, 30.

the Church of England to all the lands of the Reserves.¹⁴ This publication is important as it shows that Strachan's political theology regarding establishment was already set, and makes it clear that Strachan was interested in the Reserves due to the potential they had for providing new clergy for the developing townships of Upper Canada, places that did not as yet have any Gospel ministry.¹⁵ Strachan envisioned an ever-growing wave of clergy coming from the British Isles or being trained in Upper Canada and taking their places in parishes across the province, totally free from the need to impose upon the limited resources of their parishioners to support and develop the Church. Indeed, the Canadian system would be preferable to Britain, where all Church of England members paid tithes by legal requirement.¹⁶ Though Strachan recognised that people of other denominations might resent the Church of England being established and preferred through land grants, he believed that the Church could overcome their objections by conscientious ministry. Enemies would soon be brought to friendship through faithful service to the community, leading to universal recognition of the benefits of an established Church.¹⁷ Indeed, Strachan's theological understanding of the Church would permit no other view. Strachan was working for one Church, building an interconnected network of parishes across the country, the image and transcript of the English nation, with social, political, religious, and intellectual influence that was able to shape the society towards ever greater holiness: "The Establishment is formed, not for the purpose of making the Church political, but for the purpose of making the state religious."¹⁸

¹⁴ Strachan, *Visit to Upper Canada*, 123–6.

¹⁵ Strachan, *Visit to Upper Canada*, 125.

¹⁶ Strachan, *Visit to Upper Canada*, 125.

¹⁷ Henderson, *John Strachan*, 31.

¹⁸ Strachan, quoted in Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 218.

In 1819, the true issue of the Clergy Reserves reared its head for the first time as a Presbyterian congregation in Niagara sought a grant of £100 out of the proceeds of the Clergy Reserves, on the argument that they were members of the established Church of Scotland.¹⁹ The lieutenant governor referred the issue to the law officers of the Crown, who made the decision that Presbyterians had a claim to the Reserves. The law officers did not, however, believe that Dissenters had any claim upon the Reserve lands.²⁰ The decision regarding the Kirk was quietly hidden by the lieutenant governor, and the Church of England continued to maintain its sole right to the lands.²¹

In 1824, there was a fresh attempt by the Presbyterians to receive money from the Reserves. The Assembly supported the claims, but Strachan was determined in his defence of the Reserve income, arguing that giving in to the claims of the Presbyterians would not only intrude on the rights and privileges of the Church granted by the king and Parliament, but above all else that it would cripple the extension of "that form of Christian worship and doctrine which we solemnly believe to be the most pure form of Christianity existing in the world, certainly the most compatible with our form of government."²² The issue for Strachan was not the advancement of his Church at all cost in the face of the opposition of other denominations, though of course he was determined that it would advance, but rather that the purest form of Christianity should be the only one that received the help and support of the government. Strachan was theologically opposed to allowing others to partake in the Reserves, because every penny had to be spent on furthering the best representative of the Primitive Church in its purity of doctrine

¹⁹ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 86.

²⁰ French, *Parsons and Politics*, 111.

²¹ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 86.

²² Strachan to Maitland, quoted in Flint, *Strachan*, 85.

and apostolic succession. The Presbyterians, merely by being established in Scotland, could not mount a claim against the theological credentials of the Church of England.

In 1824, Strachan attempted to solve the vexing problems of lack of production and contested ownership of the Reserves by travelling to England to argue his case directly before the colonial authorities.²³ Strachan's plan was to sell large portions of the Reserves, ensuring that the public could no longer complain that they were impeding development, and also that money could be raised to hire more clergymen to work in Upper Canada. Strachan wrote to Robert Wilmot Horton in the Colonial Office that "an authority to sell would I am persuaded enable us to get in a few years so much ahead of the Sectaries that they could never again become formidable."²⁴ In 1825, Lord Bathurst, with Strachan's advice, attempted to put the problem to rest by ordering the institution of rectories in every township, to be placed on a sure footing and to establish the Church of England in practice, as well as in theory. Sir Peregrine Maitland, however, did not feel that he could carry out that action without setting off a storm within the colony.²⁵ A. N. Bethune reports that many, even outside of the Church of England, believed that if the matter had been speedily taken in hand in 1825, the long-term problem of the Reserves would have been solved.²⁶ The problem of uncertainty was more significant than the Reserves question itself at that point because people were ready for a solution to the problem.

Even as Strachan was trying to gain authority to sell the reserves himself, he had to resist the efforts of the British government to sell a large portion to the newly formed

²³ Flint, *Strachan*, 85.

²⁴ Strachan to Horton, quoted in Fahey, *In His Name*, 64.

²⁵ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 94.

²⁶ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 95.

Canada Company for a bargain rate, which he managed to do.²⁷ Because the Crown Reserves had been removed from the government and into a private company's hands, however, the Clergy Reserves became an even larger bone of contention.²⁸ Strachan returned to Canada without securing the rights of sale he had wished for, but with the Reserves intact and able to be maintained for another day. These early skirmishes showed Strachan that the real power to deal with the Reserves lay in the Parliament of Britain and the Colonial Office, providing him the answer to future arguments with the Upper Canada Assembly. With the hindsight of years, Bethune commented that Strachan's early battles for the Reserves had saved £150,000 for the Church, which in the end went to the province after the Reserves were confiscated.²⁹

The early struggle for the proceeds of the Reserves has been used as an illustration of Strachan's wrong-headed intransigence by Alan Wilson and others.³⁰ Strachan was never a good politician, able to routinely compromise and come to pragmatic solutions. Though he was active in politics, he was never willing to compromise or move from his firm stance once taken. It is important to remember, however, that Strachan was theologically committed to the idea that the Church of England was not only the established Church in the province, but also that every penny of the proceeds must be used for the furtherance of the Church as the purest and therefore healthiest form of Christianity in Upper Canada. In 1825, Jacob Mountain, Bishop of Quebec, died and Strachan's sermon on his death illustrated his firm beliefs regarding the

²⁷ Henderson, *Strachan*, 36.

²⁸ Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 15.

²⁹ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 102.

³⁰ Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 15.

duty of the Church of England to fight against the perceived evils being brought into the province by foreign Dissenters.

The 1820s and 30s, Establishment, and Denominational Controversy

Strachan's sermon in celebration of Mountain's life caused a firestorm of controversy within the province. In the sermon Strachan argued that an established Anglican Church was the necessary cornerstone of peace, loyalty, and security not only for the province, but indeed the whole British Empire.³¹ Speaking directly against the imperial government's willingness to allow the Scottish Presbyterian Church to share in the proceeds of the Reserves, he made a detailed argument regarding the Anglican Church's status as the most true, most holy, most faithful representation of the primitive Church.³² Strachan argued that it would be practically inconsistent and spiritually wrong for the government to support any other denomination than the Anglican Church, as all others were lesser expressions of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic faith, and widening denominational support would only lead to a breakdown of union, discipline, and order within the Church and the nation.³³ Strachan's theology of Church and state was on full display in the sermon, as he painted a picture of a perfectly loyal, healthy, Anglican Tory colony that would support the home country and grow into a true reflection of England and the English constitution.³⁴ The Clergy Reserves would provide the central plank that would support the ever expanding work of the Church.

Strachan also used the sermon to castigate other denominations, especially the Methodists. Strachan claimed that the influence of the Church of England was

³¹ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 11.

³² McDermott, "John Strachan," 327.

³³ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 13.

³⁴ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 17.

frequently broken or injured by numbers of uneducated itinerant Preachers, who, leaving their steady employment, betake themselves to preaching the Gospel from idleness, or a zeal without knowledge, by which they are induced without any preparation, to teach what they do not know, and which, from their pride, they disdain to learn.³⁵

Strachan also saw denominationalism as a path that led to doctrinal weakness:

In the more populous parts of the province the Bishop saw with concern the prevalence of opinions which, under the name of liberality, disregarded that uniformity of the plan on which the Church of Christ was founded, and which proceeding from laxity of principle to doubt, commonly ends in profligate indifference.³⁶

Finally, Strachan bemoaned the small number of Church of England clergymen and the consequent advantages of other denominations:

What can fifty-three clergymen do, scattered over a country of greater extent than Great Britain? Is it to be wondered at that under such circumstances, the religious benefits of the Ecclesiastical Establishment of England are little known or felt, and that Sectaries of all descriptions are increasing on every side? And when it is considered that the religious teachers of the other denominations of Christians, a very few respectable Ministers of the Church of Scotland excepted, come almost universally from the Republican States of America, where they gather their knowledge and form their sentiments, it is quite evident, that if the Imperial Government does not immediately step forward with efficient help, the mass of the population will be nurtured and instructed in hostility to our Parent Church, nor will it be long till they imbibe opinions any thing but favourable to the political institutions of England.³⁷

The sermon perfectly presented Strachan's belief that the Anglican Church represented not merely one of several options in a voluntarist world, but the only correct expression of the apostolic faith. It was necessary not only for the good of the Church but the good of the country that all impediments to the advancement of the Anglican mission in Canada should be removed, and anyone who would slow that advance by imposing a different way had to be resisted on theological as well as practical grounds. This helps to

³⁵ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 26.

³⁶ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 26.

³⁷ Strachan, *Sermon on the Death of the Lord Bishop*, 26.

explain Strachan's lack of personal enmity towards individual Dissenters, while he was still deeply opposed to Dissenting "sects" as a whole. Especially problematic to him were the Methodists, some of whose circuit riders had proven to be politically unreliable and disloyal during the War of 1812, and who would continue to be effective supporters of the spreading of anti-Tory petitions and other political activities throughout the 20s and 30s.³⁸ The fact that Dissenting congregations sought to influence the future of the Clergy Reserves was also solid proof in Strachan's eyes of their negative influence upon the province. In a world merely a decade removed from a war in which the province had been invaded by the enemy, and not far removed from the great republican revolutionary upheaval that had caused the Loyalists to flee for their lives from the American colonies, the government must do everything in its power to preserve and elevate the Anglican Church as the purest expression of Christianity and the firmest bulwark of loyalty.

Strachan's view of Upper Canada expressed in the sermon caused outrage among the other denominations in the province. Egerton Ryerson, a young Methodist minister (and convert from the Church of England) was the only one who responded in print, but his "review" in the *Colonial Advocate* was a bold attack on Strachan's worldview. "I was drawn and forced into the controversy on the Clergy Reserves and equal civil and religious rights and privileges among all religious persuasions in Upper Canada."³⁹ Ryerson believed, having read Blackstone's *Commentaries* and Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy*, that the establishment of the Church in Canada would go against British liberty and the constitution.⁴⁰ Ryerson began his attack, however, not with the accusations against his denomination, but rather against the doctrine of apostolic

³⁸ See Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 46.

³⁹ Ryerson, *My Life*, 47.

⁴⁰ Ryerson, *My Life*, 47.

succession that Strachan held so dearly as one of the proofs of the Church of England's perfection.⁴¹ After challenging the rights of the Church theologically, he then turned to the constitution and argued that the Church was not established in fact, nor should it be.⁴² He deployed the same kind of arguments that had been advanced by Deists and other Dissenters in the Whig party in England to argue that the Church of England had no better claim to special rights than any other denomination. These arguments were being used at that time in England regarding Catholic Emancipation and the Test and Corporations Act.⁴³ He firmly claimed that the Methodists and other Dissenters were loyal, and that the Church of England was a "religious despotism" that should not be allowed to prosper in Canada.⁴⁴

Such arguments were not calculated to win Strachan's favour, and in fact reinforced the picture formed by Strachan and others like him that Dissenters were out to destroy the very foundation of Church and state in the name of "liberty." The result of Ryerson's broadside was increasing division between Reformers, who championed the destruction of the Clergy Reserves as the most practical method of destroying the established Church, and Anglicans who were deeply displeased by this assault upon their rights and doctrine.⁴⁵ In 1826, Strachan also published his *Observations on the Provision Made for the Maintenance of a Protestant Clergy*, an estimation of the strengths of all the denominations in Upper Canada.⁴⁶ This chart was part of a letter that countered arguments made to the Imperial Parliament by the Church of Scotland that the Church of

⁴¹ French, *Parsons and Politics*, 112.

⁴² Ryerson, *My Life*, 48.

⁴³ See Clark, *English Society*, 391.

⁴⁴ Ryerson, *My Life*, 50.

⁴⁵ French, *Parsons and Politics*, 113.

⁴⁶ Strachan, *Observations*, 25.

England in Canada had no real congregations at all, and that the Clergy Reserves should therefore be turned over to the Kirk.⁴⁷ Strachan's rebuttal repeated the same arguments made in the sermon of 1825: that the people of the districts abandoned Dissenting churches as soon as a Church of England congregation arrived; and that with few exceptions the Dissenting ministers were not only religious radicals and enthusiasts but also political radicals who disseminated doctrines hostile to Crown, Parliament, and country alongside their enthusiastic and uneducated utterances.⁴⁸ Again Strachan's arguments were not only religious, that the Church was active and was defeating the forces of "Romish" doctrine and Dissenting enthusiasm, but also that the Church was providing loyalty, stability, and consistency with the British Constitution, ensuring the long-term peace of the province and protecting against the forces of republicanism.⁴⁹ The Clergy Reserves would one day distribute an ever-growing provision to this force, but if the meagre income taken from these lands was shared it would be theologically inconsistent, since the Reserves should be the domain of the best possible Church, and it would be constitutionally problematic because it would involve stripping a Crown grant from the rightful owner.⁵⁰ Strachan especially challenged any movement to allow the Kirk to join in the Reserves, as it would lead to "Congregationalists, Seceders, Irish Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Moravians, Universalists, Quakers, Tunkers etc." also adding their names to the list, requesting a piece of the land that they previously

⁴⁷ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 91.

⁴⁸ Strachan, *Observations*, 25.

⁴⁹ Strachan, *Observations*, 3.

⁵⁰ Strachan, *Observations*, 13.

would not have considered. Strachan even pointed out that those denominations were far more numerous than the Presbyterians.⁵¹

Strachan's accompanying chart of denominational strength led to a fresh firestorm of opposition as the denominations challenged his claim that the Church of England was the dominant Church in Canada.⁵² Gerald Craig argues that Strachan's intemperate language in the sermon and the *Observations* did his cause incalculable harm by creating indignation where none had existed before.⁵³ Strachan's actions were certainly responsible for bringing Ryerson into the lists against him, and they did cause a backlash that encouraged a Reform-Dissenting alliance that ultimately led to the destruction of the establishment. But Ryerson's opening salvo against Strachan also used all the language, doctrinal and political, that Strachan and other Tories linked to radicalism and republicanism, confirming Strachan's determination to fight tenaciously for the establishment. In addition, Mackenzie, the other great attacker of Strachan's sermon and chart, was famous as a staunch enemy of anything Strachan did, calling him a "demon," "hypocrite," "the Governor's Jackal," and assaulting him for his firm Anglican Toryism.⁵⁴ Mackenzie found every opportunity, real or imagined, to vilify Strachan, and was the leader of the press attacks upon Strachan in this as in every other instance until he had to flee the country after his failed rebellion. Like Ryerson his credibility as an unbiased voice of opposition was weakened by the fact that he was espousing the very

⁵¹ Strachan, *Observations*, 15.

⁵² Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 15.

⁵³ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 173.

⁵⁴ Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, 53.

ideas that Strachan was determined to resist, in Mackenzie's case republicanism, the destruction of establishment, and the diminution of the Royal Prerogative.⁵⁵

Strachan answered the fury against him in a speech before the Legislative Council, systematically presenting the arguments he used in England and explaining his defence of the Clergy Reserves before Parliament.⁵⁶ Strachan also told the story of how his chart came about, and what its purpose had been. Strachan stated that he had written the letter as a private resource for a Member of Parliament, and that his primary purpose was not a complete catalogue of all the clergymen in the province, but particularly those of the Church of Scotland who were asking for a share of the Reserves. Other figures were merely incidental and unimportant, as others, especially the Methodists, were not attempting to gain a share in the Reserves (at that time).⁵⁷ He realised that in hindsight he should not have even mentioned them, but he challenged those who accused him of a deliberate lie as people who willingly wanted to see the worst, even giving an example of a meeting with a Member of Parliament who had attacked him but then admitted that his accusations of deliberate falsehood were unfounded after a discussion with Strachan.⁵⁸ He admitted that the information he had given was out of date by the time it was published in Canada, but that this was the fault of time passing, not the inaccuracy of his statements at the moment.⁵⁹ He answered the charge that he was personally hostile to the men of other denominations by stating his deep affections for several Presbyterians, as well as for some notable Roman Catholics in the province, showing how he had

⁵⁵ Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, 64. See chapter nine for further details on Mackenzie's agitation against Strachan and his other dealings.

⁵⁶ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 2–12.

⁵⁷ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 20.

⁵⁸ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 19.

⁵⁹ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 20.

advocated for them as people who had certain rights within the constitution.⁶⁰ Despite this personal friendship and goodwill, however, he was utterly implacable in his determination to do his duty for the Church that he was charged to build and defend:

But if any shall infer from the friendship I have always shewn to the Kirk of Scotland, and my moderation in the present controversy, that I am luke-warm in the cause of the Established Church, or that I want decision and fortitude to avow my principles, they will find themselves egregiously mistaken. In private life I shall continue kind, as I have ever been, to all denominations, but in supporting the just rights of the Established Church I shall proceed boldly and fearlessly, and spurn, as I have hitherto done, that cold calculating selfish prudence which would deter me from standing up in her defence.⁶¹

Strachan was never going to allow the rights and privileges of the established Church to be sacrificed to his desire for an easy life or to avoid the calumnies of such men as Mackenzie. The Clergy Reserves were the sole property of the Church of England, given as their private preserve by the Royal Prerogative:

This I conscientiously believe, and so believing I will take every lawful means to maintain the property so conferred by the greatest Statesman that England ever produced; and no clamour, no calumny, shall alter my purpose. They may indeed induce me to redouble my exertions but never to relax them.⁶²

The Scottish boy who stood against the militiamen with bare fists was again standing for what he believed no matter what others thought or insinuated against him.

Strachan also stood by his comments on the Methodists, taking great pains to emphasise his respect for the Wesleyan Methodists of England, who he believed were decent and hardworking shepherds, but confirming his earlier accusations against those from the United States:

So long as they are found proposing the most slanderous resolutions at public meetings, and going round the country persuading ignorant people to sign petitions which contain them, and so long as any of them continue to exhibit a

⁶⁰ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 22.

⁶¹ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 26.

⁶² Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 27.

rancorous spirit against other denominations. Have not the Methodists in this Province in connexion with the American conference ever shewn themselves the enemies of the Established Church?—Are they not at this moment labouring to separate religion from the State, with which it ought to ever be firmly united, since one of its great objects is to give stability to good government, nor can it be separated with impunity in any Christian country?⁶³

Strachan was ready to battle the assault upon the Anglican Tory ideal that he espoused, and he could not and would not give countenance to a body that actively worked to subvert the British Constitution, “an essential part of which is an Established Church.”⁶⁴ Ryerson’s ideal of disestablishment and religious equality was anathema to Strachan’s theological worldview.

Strachan finished his defence by reminding the Council of the core rights of private property, the rule of law, and the Royal Prerogative, all of which would be irreparably weakened if the Clergy Reserves were to be torn from the Church of England, their rightful owner.⁶⁵ He closed the speech with a summary of his mission in Upper Canada:

Honorable Gentlemen:—Devoted through life to my King, and the Civil and Ecclesiastical constitution of my Country—at peace with God, and my own conscience, I can bear with equanimity, calumny, and reproach, and if necessary still greater evils; but, I am nevertheless jealous of that unsullied reputation which I brought with me from Scotland, and which I trust I will carry with me to the Grave. This laudable jealousy, and my respect for public opinion, when founded on correct information, have induced me to make this appeal to the justice and candour of your Honourable House. I am anxious to retain the good opinion of those who know me best, and with whom I have acted for so many years, and I feel proudly conscious, that I deserve the friendship and esteem of all honourable men, and the approbation of the whole province.⁶⁶

Strachan showed in his defence his firm theological view of the righteousness of the Church of England, and also displayed his own personal piety and implacability in the

⁶³ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 28.

⁶⁴ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 33.

⁶⁵ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 36.

⁶⁶ Strachan, *Speech*, 1828, 42.

face of those things or people that he believed to be wrong. A. N. Bethune states that the defence was generally well received, and that Strachan rose in the public estimation because of the speech.⁶⁷ Methodists and members of the Kirk, however, were even more incensed and engaged in a campaign of petitioning that would add even more fuel to the charges Strachan levelled against them as agitators and enemies of the Church of England.⁶⁸ Regardless of the controversy, Strachan's view regarding establishment and the Clergy Reserves had won the day, and the denominational attacks were ineffective in the face of the Tory governments in Canada and at home in Britain. All that would change with the passage of the Reform Act and the accession of the Whigs to power in England.⁶⁹ Anglican privilege was beginning to be whittled away in the homeland, and Canada would follow that national trend.⁷⁰ The Clergy Reserves had become an even more important tool of opposition to the Established Church, and the Kirk had shown how to break the Church of England's hold on them. Subsequent attacks would be aimed at dividing the Reserves among all denominations, thereby challenging the Anglican claim to unique status. Dissenters, secularisers, and Reformers joined forces to attack the Church, the chief defender of the Anglican Tory establishment, through the Clergy Reserves, a central part of its armour.⁷¹

Throughout the 1830s the agitation around the Clergy Reserves continued to grow, especially in 1836 after Sir John Colborne announced the permanent endowment of forty-four rectories that could not be taken from the Church even if the Reserves were

⁶⁷ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 128.

⁶⁸ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 175.

⁶⁹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 175.

⁷⁰ Fahey, *In His Name*, 74.

⁷¹ Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 16.

somehow wrested from its hands.⁷² These rectories provided fresh fuel for the opposition who saw the Reserves not only as a bulwark of the Church, but also as a roadblock to their plans of reforming the political system.⁷³ The sense that the Reformers were losing their case against the Church caused William Lyon Mackenzie and others to focus their attacks more sharply on the one target. John Rolph, leader of the Reform party in the Assembly, provides a perfect example of the stinging attacks against the idea of Church establishment, building his arguments on the Enlightenment principles of Natural Religion: “Let it not, Sir, be forgotten, that from the beginning of the world to the coming of the Messiah, natural religion was open to mankind—its great truths were expressed in the most intelligible hieroglyphics in the earth and in the heavens.”⁷⁴ Rolph went on to claim that Church establishment was but the continuation of paganism and the destruction of true religion in the name of halting religious liberty and free thought.⁷⁵ After eviscerating the Church of England he equally assaulted all state involvement with religion, warning that “as the church under Constantine was corrupted and impaired, so will our religion droop under the patronage with which you may overshadow it.”⁷⁶ Rolph leapfrogged the argument of 1836, contenting himself not with equal sharing of the Reserves among all the denominations of Upper Canada, but arguing instead that religion had no room in the financial considerations of the state, and that Reserves should be seized and sold for the furtherance of secular educational efforts.⁷⁷

⁷² Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 17.

⁷³ Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 17.

⁷⁴ Rolph, quoted in Lindsay, *Clergy Reserves*, iv.

⁷⁵ Rolph, quoted in Lindsay, *Clergy Reserves*, v.

⁷⁶ Rolph, quoted in Lindsay, *Clergy Reserves*, ix.

⁷⁷ Rolph, quoted in Lindsay, *Clergy Reserves*, xv.

Mackenzie told his supporters during his rebellion to “Stick true to the cause of Liberty, and you shall every man of you have three hundred Acres of Land and a piece out of the Clergy Reserves!”⁷⁸ Throughout that period Strachan corresponded volubly with people in England who could support the Church’s claims, and did all he could to secure the Reserves beyond any doubt for the Church of England.⁷⁹ In his newspaper *The Church*, Strachan wrote numerous articles defending the established Church as a preservative against the evils of republicanism, and also the surest defence against sin and vice in the nation.⁸⁰ Despite the continued attempts of the Legislative Assembly to remove the Reserves from the Church, the Legislative Council, headed by Strachan’s protégé Speaker John Beverly Robinson, steadfastly blocked them from succeeding in their attempts at secularisation.⁸¹

The Rebellion of 1837 only stiffened Strachan’s resolve to fight for the establishment, as it provided a fresh proof that the forces of Dissent and Reform arrayed against the Church’s ownership of the Reserves were disloyal, and that the only defence was the recognition of the Church as the one true established religion of the nation:

What are the conclusions? They are the following. That there is no true loyalty, or submission to the laws, that does not result from Scriptural principles. That the Church of England, which prescribes the reading aloud of the entire Holy Scriptures in the course of every year, and conforms all her prayers and preaching to the unerring standard of the Bible, best preserves the people in the ways of pleasantness, peace, and subordination, and best teaches these principles. That she should be provided with the means of reclaiming the spiritual wastes of the Province.⁸²

⁷⁸ Wilson, *Clergy Reserves*, 18.

⁷⁹ See Strachan, *Letter to Dr. Lee*; and Strachan, *Letter to Thomas Lewis*, for two lengthy arguments in favour of the Church’s right to the Reserves.

⁸⁰ Strachan, quoted in McDermott, “John Strachan,” 341.

⁸¹ Robinson, *John Beverly Robinson*, 177.

⁸² Strachan, *The Church*, 9 December, 1837, quoted in McDermott, “John Strachan,” 342.

Strachan still believed that democracy and infidelity could and must be defeated by a strongly endowed and healthy establishment that would bring all the refinements of the perfect British Constitution to Canada. The victory of this view seemed to be complete with the destruction of the rebellion, but the Anglican Tories reckoned without Lord Durham.

1841, the Durham Report, and Strachan's Defeat

Strachan's appointment as bishop in 1839 gave him more authority to speak for the Church of England, but the union of the two Canadas that resulted from Lord Durham's report not only stripped him of his seat on the Legislative Council, but also endangered the Church of England's hold on the Reserves. Durham, a radical Whig peer, largely consulted Reformers in the process of creating his report (see chapter 9). Due to this, he recommended first that the Crown should disavow any establishment of the Church within the colonies.⁸³ He also argued, in accord with the Reformers and Dissenters of the province, that the Reserves should be confiscated, sold, and the money given to the Legislative Assembly to be disposed of as they saw fit.⁸⁴ Despite the fact that both houses of the Provincial Legislature dealt scathingly with Durham's report, finding it full of falsehoods and misapprehensions of the state of Upper Canada, in the end the British government accepted its recommendations and united the two Canadas.⁸⁵ Poulett Thomson, soon to be Lord Sydenham, first Governor General of the united Province of Canada, decided that he would ensure the final solution of the Clergy Reserves problem. They were "the one great overwhelming grievance—the root of all the troubles of the

⁸³ Durham, *Durham's Report*, 97.

⁸⁴ Durham, *Durham's Report*, 97.

⁸⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 272.

Province—the cause of the Rebellion—the never failing watchword of the hustings—the perpetual source of discord, strife, and hatred,” and he was determined to permanently end the controversy.⁸⁶ Accordingly, Thomson declared half of the Reserves fund to be the joint property of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, and the other half to be divided among the other Protestant denominations. The bill was able to pass the legislature, and the Reserves funds were officially parcelled out, dealing a blow to Strachan’s hopes of a secure establishment, and undercutting all of his legal arguments for the Church of England’s unique status in Canada.⁸⁷

Strachan responded to the “spoliation” of the Reserves during his 1841 *Charge* to his clergy:

During the last year the perplexing question of the Clergy Reserves has been finally settled. Whether the best course was or was not taken in that settlement, it would be of little importance now to inquire. It was, beyond doubt, most desirable that an end should be put to the unhappy controversy which had arisen on the subject. Those who have desired to see the interests of the Church protected and her efficiency increased, have, at least, the satisfaction of reflecting that, before the decision was come to, every consideration, which it was just and necessary to keep in view, was zealously and anxiously brought to the notice of the Government and of Parliament. It only remains for us to urge, in a just and Christian spirit, whatever may seem best for turning to the greatest advantage, in support of what we believe to be the true religion, such privileges and provisions as are still left.

It is a matter of grateful remembrance to us, that during the controversy growing out of the Church property, which continued nearly twenty years, we never permitted the bitter and unchristian treatment of our enemies to betray us into the like unworthy conduct. Our people, as well as the Clergy, continued patient and tranquil. No exciting meetings were held. No appeals to the passions were made; but, quietly placing our claims before the constitutional authorities, we declared ourselves, at all times, ready to bow to their decision, however severe it might be deemed. We never permitted ourselves to forget our Lord’s kingdom is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Thomson, quoted in Craig, *Upper Canada*, 273.

⁸⁷ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 274.

⁸⁸ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 8.

In defeat Strachan still followed the Anglican Tory theology of passive obedience and non-resistance. He continued to argue for the rights of the Church but charged his clergy that it was their duty to submit to provisions of the law, support Her Majesty, and work for the good of the country: “So long as it remains the law of the land, we are bound, by all the principles of reason and duty, not merely to yield it willing obedience, but to use every honest exertion to make it work beneficially, and produce the good results anticipated by its promoters.”⁸⁹ It is a stark contrast to the vitriol expressed by Mackenzie and Rolph on the backs of their political defeats. Despite this willingness to submit, Strachan believed he recognised in the law the “fierce war carried on against the Church by the united force of all sects and divisions of nominal Christians and infidels, unnatural and criminal as it is” that had done so much to change the English social and political landscape, and he was not willing to allow the law to pass without naming these forces and decrying their influence.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, he maintained his trust in the sovereignty of God.

Strachan also reminded his clergy that the whole purpose of the establishment was never meant to be power for the sake of power, but support for the work of the Gospel and the furtherance of Christian civilisation in Canada, the same goals that he had always held.⁹¹ The primitive Church remained his example, and he called the Church to rally toward the ever greater ministry of the Christian faith as the appropriate answer to persecution.⁹² Strachan was not abandoning the fight, but he was consistently following through his political theology, not willing to abandon belief for the sake of the

⁸⁹ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 10.

⁹⁰ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 15.

⁹¹ Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 9.

⁹² Strachan, *Charge, 1841*, 15.

advancement of his own position. These actions contradict the accusation levelled by his enemies that he would do anything to win his point.

The union of the Canadas spelled the end of the Anglican Tory world of Upper Canada, and the future was increasingly bleak for Strachan's idea of Church establishment.⁹³ Though Strachan and others championed the continuing vision of an established Church and the Tory worldview, they were increasingly marginalised in the political order of the united Canada, where the Reformers of Upper and Lower Canada were intent upon finishing the work they had started in destroying any remaining privileges of the Church of England and championing the voluntary principle in provincial church life.⁹⁴ Through the last part of the 1840s the Reserves started actually paying dividends, but with the arrival of surplus the Reformers once again began calling for the complete secularisation of the Reserves and the confiscation of the money for secular purposes.⁹⁵ In addition, the voluntarist denominations, though able to claim a portion of the Reserve money, were firmly determined to see that no church should benefit from public funds, whether they had a legal right or not, and demanded that state money should be used for public projects.⁹⁶ Despite Strachan's willingness to bow to the law and allow all denominations to share in the Reserves, there would be no satisfaction among Dissenters and Reformers until the Reserves were completely taken out of the hands of religion of any kind.

By 1851, Reformers were confident enough that Charles Lindsay, a central figure in Reform politics, could write glowingly of "a quarter century of patriotic efforts to raze

⁹³ Fahey, *In His Name*, 163.

⁹⁴ Fahey, *In His Name*, 164.

⁹⁵ Flint, *Strachan*, 145.

⁹⁶ Flint, *Strachan*, 145.

the foundations of a hierarchy of which the Clergy Reserves furnished the materials.”⁹⁷ Lindsay charged the Church and the Tory party with carrying out an “avowedly political act” in the desire to establish the Church, something that was indeed avowed and a cornerstone of Anglican political theology, but that the Reformers viewed as a mortal sin.⁹⁸ Through the rest of his pamphlet he argued that any support of religion by the state was utterly beyond the pale in Upper Canada, and called for the completion of the work begun in 1840 by the full confiscation of all Reserves and their proceeds for the uses of education.⁹⁹ Lindsay and other Reformers managed to press their point home with an Imperial government that was tired of the issue, and the English Parliament gave the Canadian Parliament the power to do as they liked with the Reserves.¹⁰⁰ Strachan negotiated one last time, securing a lump sum of £245,614 from the Canadian Government as the share of the clergy who had been supported by the Reserves. Even this money was angrily contested by the Reformers, but Strachan fought his corner and secured one small victory from the defeat of his dream of establishment and an Anglican Tory nation.¹⁰¹ “Like one of old he regarded not the consequences, but refused to acquiesce in measures that had the taint and flavour of sacrilege. He left to those who chose to assume the responsibility, the work of appropriating to secular uses what had solemnly been set apart for sacred ones.”¹⁰² Strachan declared his final response to the loss of the Reserves in his *Charge* of 1856, showing that after 56 years of living and fighting for establishment in Canada none of his theology had changed:

⁹⁷ Lindsay, *Clergy Reserves*, 1.

⁹⁸ Lindsay, *Clergy Reserves*, 5.

⁹⁹ Lindsay, *Clergy Reserves*, 35.

¹⁰⁰ Strachan, *Letter to Newcastle*, 8.

¹⁰¹ Flint, *Strachan*, 147.

¹⁰² Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 226.

The Legislature has declared by solemn enactment what it calls the separation of Church and State. This divorcement was coupled with the confiscation of her property . . . If it was the intention of the Legislature to place the Church entirely free, and on a perfect equality with all other denominations, they have failed,—because the branch of the United Church of England and Ireland in Canada has connections with the Mother Church and the Constitution of the Empire which the Colonial authorities are incompetent to dissolve. . . . But, though we have been made independent as it were by violence, the act affects nothing more than our connection with the Colonial Government, and therefore we shall continue as faithfully as ever to acknowledge the Royal Prerogative, so far as it can be applied to the Church in the Colonies . . . The great work of religion is to govern the passions and the will. It is from its very nature a restraint on all authority, unless purely and faithfully exercised, because it comes in the name of Divine Law. To subdue, mortify, and direct human nature is its great object. It is, therefore, always opposed to what is incorrectly called liberty, unless under its own guidance, and to arrange and accomplish this is the mission and hope of the Christian Church. This of necessity brings religion in contact with politics, for they are inseparable in the nature of man. Hence he that is loose in the one, will be loose in the other; and therefore those who reject religion and a salutary obedience to her commands, can never be good subjects, good citizens, nor good members of society. . . . The prevailing spirit of the times is the casting off of all authority, and substituting in its place, the widest diversity of opinions on all subjects, religious and social. Now, surely this cannot be of God.¹⁰³

Still the Church was the bulwark of the constitution. Still the Church was uniquely linked to the state. Still the Royal Prerogative and the Tory worldview must shape the thoughts of the true churchman. Politics and the Church were irrevocably linked, and no legislation could change reality. Though there was a new spirit at work in the nation, Strachan would not bow to its imperatives. As Fennings Taylor stated, the bishop “never ratted, but bravely fought his cause to the last.”¹⁰⁴

Alas, like the gourd of Jonah, the picture that Dr. Strachan painted of the parochial system in Canada, was as evanescent as it was beautiful, as perishable as it was fair, for he had no sooner taken his seat in the councils of his country, than the first shock of the moral earthquake was felt which ere long was to destroy the fabric which his fancy had fashioned, and leave amidst the debris,

¹⁰³ Strachan, *Charge*, 1856, 5–6.

¹⁰⁴ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 227.

“leaded” as it were “in the rock,” the old imperishable words, “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”¹⁰⁵

The Clergy Reserves controversy truly showed Strachan’s unflinching determination and unwavering belief.

Conclusion

The Clergy Reserves controversy was not merely a struggle over land or money, but a battle between two conflicting visions of the Canadian future. Strachan was fighting for an Anglican Tory world, where a single established Church worked hand in hand with the government to bring what he believed to be the purest preacher of the Gospel and the most sublime builder of civilisation into ascendancy in Canada. On the other side of the fight were those who saw establishment as “ecclesiastical despotism,” and whose fight against Church ownership of the Clergy Reserves was about “equal civil and religious rights of all denominations . . .” and stopping the “erection of a dominant church establishment supported by the state in Upper Canada.”¹⁰⁶ Strachan’s enemies saw his defence of the Clergy Reserves as a prime example of him as an “imperious and obdurate Tory,” unable or unwilling to compromise due to his own pursuit of authority.¹⁰⁷ That Strachan was influential with all governors, even those who began by attempting to stay aloof from him, was proof to Dunham and others of the corruption and illiberality of the Anglican Tory group in Upper Canada.¹⁰⁸ But the argument that one group of people with strongly theological political views were wrong to block their opposition from gaining control of government and undertaking projects that were anathema to them is

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 220.

¹⁰⁶ Ryerson, *My Life*, 49.

¹⁰⁷ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 123.

inconsistent, when considered against the strongly theological (or anti-theological in some cases) political views held by Egerton Ryerson, William Lyon Mackenzie, or Robert Baldwin. In the case of Church establishment, Strachan was engaged against people whose expressed intention was to destroy the institutions that he believed were central to a godly and healthy society.

The players paralleled and parroted the language and tactics of the Tories and Whigs in England, with the same core issues at stake on both sides of the Atlantic. As long as the Tories maintained their ascendancy in England, Strachan and the Anglican Tory group in Upper Canada held their ground. When the Tories lost the battle against religious and electoral reform in England, it was only a matter of time before the same defeat would be meted out against the defenders of the Tory way in Upper Canada. Strachan never wavered in his belief that the establishment of the Church of England in Canada was not only a fact, but also the healthiest thing for the entire Upper Canadian society, and that the result would be pure Christianity, deep and abiding loyalty, and a prosperous civil society. As Fennings Taylor pointed out, from 1818 until 1854, when the battle was irreversibly lost, Strachan fought courageously for his cause. "Even when it was lost in the estimation of his supporters, and when compromise was advisable as well as possible, he still declined to be a party to what he believed was politically a great evil, and morally a great sin."¹⁰⁹ Even though compromise might have produced better long-term results, Strachan was theologically committed to the supremacy of the Church of England as the established religion, and he would not compromise his beliefs even for the sake of ease or support. Despite his tenacity, the Reserves and the idea of establishment were destroyed, and Strachan was left to build a voluntary Church from the ashes of his loss,

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 226.

determinedly pressing forward with the ministry of his Church despite all setbacks and disappointments. The Clergy Reserves were not the only issue that Strachan worked passionately for, and it is to his battle for a Church university that this study now turns.

CHAPTER 8

STRACHAN THE EDUCATOR: KING'S COLLEGE AND THE FIGHT FOR CHURCH EDUCATION

Introduction

As the previous chapter shows, Strachan worked tenaciously to build an established Church in Canada, but he also worked to secure an Anglican Tory future for Upper Canada through other areas. Strachan's political theology required a deep engagement with education, for to him it was the bridge between the Church and the political realm. Above any other educational objective Strachan believed that there was the need to create a university that would train young Canadians in religious and practical knowledge, to create a numerous and home-grown Anglican clergy, and to form future generations of students who could step into every aspect of life and build the province through their diligent endeavours. This chapter will study Strachan's determined attempts over fifty years to found and maintain a Church university, a mission designed to support and strengthen the Anglican Tory world that he believed should be built in Upper Canada.

Strachan and the Early Education System in Upper Canada

Strachan arrived in Canada to take up a post as a school teacher, enticed not only by the promise of a school of willing pupils and a salary that was far greater than what he could make at home, but also the idea that a university would soon be founded in the colony.¹ Governor Simcoe had foreseen the need for a publicly supported university in the province, and had made plans accordingly, even as the low population of Upper Canada

¹ Flint, *Strachan*, 15.

at the time made the plan impractical.² In 1797, two hundred and fifty thousand acres of land was set aside as the endowment for a university in Upper Canada by the provincial legislature.³ In a letter to Bishop Mountain, Simcoe wrote that

The people of this province enjoy the forms as well as the privileges of the British Constitution. They have the means of governing themselves, provided that they shall become sufficiently capable and enlightened to understand their relative situation, and manage their own power to the public interest. To this end a liberal education seems indispensably necessary, and the completion of such education requires the establishment of a University, to inculcate sound religious principles, pure morals, and refined manners.⁴

From the beginning of the idea, the Anglican Tory plan for a university was that it would build religion and loyalty and create a better society, not merely provide a place for the inculcation of knowledge.

Strachan arrived in Upper Canada to find that the plan of a university was impractical in the short term, and settled down to teach, first in Kingston and then Cornwall.⁵ Strachan's concern for education and especially for the establishment of a university continued to grow, and prior to the War of 1812 he tried three times to goad the provincial legislature into founding a university.⁶ Additionally he had written to the Marquis of Wellesley in 1812 to share his views regarding the need for a university and to request his help in building the project.⁷ Within the letter Strachan suggested two liberal ideas that would ultimately be rejected by the British government in the granting of the Charter for King's College: 1. Allowing French and English students to study together in order to build understanding and cement inter-colonial peace, and 2. Having no religious tests or qualifications for any pupil who would wish to attend the school,

² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 54.

³ Burwash, "Origin and Development," 10.

⁴ Simcoe to Mountain, 30 April 1795, quoted in Melville, *Trinity College*, 36.

⁵ Henderson, *Strachan*, 7.

⁶ Fahey, *In His Name*, 67.

⁷ Strachan, "Strachan to Wellesley, 1 November, 1812."

thereby allowing not only Dissenters but also Roman Catholics to attend the university without religious hindrance.⁸ These proposals were revolutionary for their time, as religious tests were still being required in Oxford and Cambridge, as well as the other colonial colleges.⁹ The broadness of the aims expressed in Strachan's letter challenge the charge made against him that he was not interested in seeing the children of Dissenters and Roman Catholics receive a quality education. On the contrary, from Strachan's statements in the letter it can be seen that he believed the best thing for the children of the colony was that they should be mingled together under proper tutelage and educated to value the connexion with the home country, as well as internal calm and harmony.¹⁰ Though nothing would come from the plans at the time, they set the foundation for his future ideas regarding the university, and he would continue to bring up the concept in correspondence.¹¹

Strachan was concerned with all levels of education, and especially that students would not be taught by American teachers using American books to imbibe anti-British ideas.¹² In 1816, Strachan encouraged the legislature to give money for better schools, and the process of providing consistent primary and secondary education advanced.¹³ A systematic plan for schools written by Strachan was approved, and "National Schools" were instituted, providing practical education from a firmly Anglican Tory point of view.¹⁴ With his appointment as the President of the Board of General Superintendence of Education Strachan was able to further his plans to advance education for all classes of

⁸ SLB, 1812-27: "Strachan to Marquis of Wellesley, 1 November, 1812."

⁹ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 173.

¹⁰ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 173.

¹¹ Strachan, "Strachan to Sam Sherwood, Adam Stuart, and James Stuart, 14 February, 1815."

¹² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 182.

¹³ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 182.

¹⁴ Wilson, "Education in Upper Canada," 205.

people in the province, following the Scottish model he was familiar with.¹⁵ The board had the authority to supervise school lands and finances, control teaching appointments, and choose the textbooks used in the schools.¹⁶ Due to this it came under attack by the Reform party in the legislature because of the Anglican Tory dominance over education, but for the time Strachan had made a start at creating the first long-term plan for a provincial educational system.¹⁷

As discussed in chapter 5, Strachan was deeply concerned that the young men and women of Upper Canada who travelled to the United States for education would imbibe republican ideals along with their practical education, and that the result would be a growing weakness in Upper Canadian political life.¹⁸ The primary way to avoid this lamentable situation was the foundation of a home grown Anglican-controlled university that would be able to educate the people of Upper Canada according to proper Anglican Tory principles.¹⁹ As a Scotsman Strachan also believed that education should be classical and practical, and that the Church had to be responsible for providing the actual education, even though the state should provide the money for it.²⁰ The time had come to fulfil the wishes first expressed by Governor Simcoe and seek a fully functional university for Upper Canada.

The Genesis of King's College

From 1818 to 1826, Strachan worked to organise the plan for a university and to build up the support necessary to get the idea off the ground. Strachan had already helped to found

¹⁵ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 104.

¹⁶ Wilson, "Education in Upper Canada," 205.

¹⁷ Wilson, "Education in Upper Canada," 205.

¹⁸ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 12.

¹⁹ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 12.

²⁰ Henderson, *Documents and Opinions*, 116.

McGill College, named for his brother-in-law James McGill, who had left a bequest for its founding at Strachan's suggestion.²¹ It was even envisioned that Strachan would become the first president of the institution, but he felt that he would be of far more use to the Church in Upper Canada as a clergyman and member of the government than as a president of a university in Montreal.²² Strachan envisioned a broad curriculum, extending past the classics and encompassing history, the sciences, mathematics, philosophy, and medicine, and requiring three full years of residential education.²³ He was anxious that the university would be founded "on a very liberal scale, so that all denominations of Christians may be enabled, without any sacrifice of conscience or of feeling, to attend the prelections of the different Professors."²⁴ This once again shows that Strachan was not against the existence of other denominations, nor of the belief that the children of those people should not be educated. What he firmly expected was the primacy of the Church of England in the choosing of professors and other staff of the college, to ensure that the Church maintained its position as the established Church of the province.

Lieutenant Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland proved to be an able and close ally in the plan, especially since the university would have the right to send a member to the Assembly, giving the government a person who could speak on their behalf in that body.²⁵ Maitland commissioned a report from the Executive Council, of which Strachan was a primary member. The report stated that

²¹ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 6.

²² Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 183.

²³ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 179.

²⁴ Strachan, *Christian Recorder*, July 1819, 176.

²⁵ Melville, *Trinity*, 39.

The population and circumstances of the colony call for such a measure . . . the Council are fully persuaded that the effects of the university, even on a moderate scale, but possessing sufficient recommendations to attract to it the sons of the most opulent families would soon be visible in greater intelligence and more confirmed principles of Loyalty to those who would be called to the various public duties of Magistrates and Legislature, and in Members of the learned Professions whose principles and conduct have inevitably so great an influence in Society.

It is quite evident that such an institution in alliance with the Church would tend to establish a most affectionate connexion between this colony and the Parent State and become a nursery to the various professions and from the natural relations with an increasing clergy would gradually infuse into the whole population a tone and feeling entirely English, and by a judicious selection of Elementary Books issuing from its Press render it certain that the first feelings, sentiments, and opinions of youth should be British.²⁶

The wording of the report shows that Strachan's educational theology had been translated into the official policy of the Executive Council of the province, providing him with an apparent victory for his belief that education would provide the bridge that linked the Church with the government in an unbreakable and ever growing bond. An educational system that was Christian, loyal, and practical would be crowned with a fine institution of higher education that would provide a true replica of the "Glorious Constitution" in Canada.

Maitland asked Strachan to write a personal report detailing the reasons why he believed a university was necessary. Strachan responded with the reasons that would shortly be published in a pamphlet for general public consumption, but also appended a plan for putting the theory of a university into practice. Strachan planned for a university that could begin small, on the Scottish model, and scale up as the student numbers grew. He planned for four professors including the president, and one each for Law, Medicine,

²⁶ PAC: Executive Council State Book, 3 February 1826.

and Divinity.²⁷ Strachan also included an outline of study, delineating the basic courses that should be provided: 1. Classical Literature, including English Composition; 2. Mathematics, Practical and Theoretic; 3. Natural History, including Botany; 4. Natural Philosophy and Chemistry; 5. Moral Philosophy and Divinity; 6. Surgery and Anatomy; 7. Civil and Public Law.²⁸ Other recommendations were that the university have a Royal Charter to lend it dignity and so that it might be able to confer academic honours and degrees, and that it should be made to emulate Oxford and Cambridge as closely as possible so that students from the university in Upper Canada could carry on their studies in England if they wished.²⁹ The professors of Surgery and Anatomy, and of Civil and Public Law would be professionals residing and practising in York.³⁰ Strachan also planned for the Church of England to be the central player in the university. The bishop of the diocese would be appointed visitor, the principal and professors, excluding those of Medicine and Law, would all be Church of England clergymen, and no tutor, teacher, or officer should ever be employed if they were not members of the Church.³¹ Finally, Strachan recommended that the waste reserves that had been granted to the future university should be traded for productive land that would provide for the total £3,650 starting annual expenditure that he envisioned for the university.³² Strachan was determined that the university would be a model of quality education, scrupulous loyalty to Britain, and faithfulness to the Church of England.

²⁷ Strachan, "Report," 82.

²⁸ Strachan, "Report," 82-3.

²⁹ Strachan, "Report," 83.

³⁰ Strachan, "Report," 83.

³¹ Strachan, "Report," 83.

³² Strachan, "Report," 82.

Maitland seems to have agreed with Strachan's broad goals and accepted his recommendations, as in 1826 Strachan was sent to England to secure a Royal Charter for the university, as well as to ensure that the university endowment would be sufficient to provide for the future needs of the institution.³³ Mackenzie used the visit to spread vitriol against Strachan and wrote a scathing attack upon "The Episcopal clergy of the colonies [who] enjoy themselves right pleasantly trotting and ailing backwards and forwards between the land of promotion and British America . . . His real errand is best known to himself and those who act with him upon the petite theatre here."³⁴

Strachan arrived in England right as the tide of radicalism and anti-church sentiment was building to a crescendo. The attacks upon the Test and Corporation Acts, the demands for the repeal of anti-Catholic legislation, and the drive for electoral reform were infusing British politics and driving an agenda that the Anglican Tory establishment was fighting with every available tool.³⁵ Indeed, the University of London had just been established as a non-sectarian university, but it had to be incorporated as a limited liability company and was unable to grant degrees until 1836 when the Whig parliament provided an avenue that would be followed by the future University of Toronto (see below).³⁶

When Strachan brought his draft Charter for the university to the Colonial Office and the Archbishop of Canterbury it was rejected as being too liberal and too different from the existing standards of university education, Oxford and Cambridge. They inserted the need for religious tests to be applied to the school, as well as basic religious

³³ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 3.

³⁴ Mackenzie, quoted in Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 7.

³⁵ Clarke, *English Society*, 350.

³⁶ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 9.

qualifications. Additionally, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel demanded that the Archdeacon of York be president of the institution, meaning Strachan would have the presidency himself.³⁷ Strachan had argued that these offices should be separate, as he could guess the kind of reception the news of his appointment as president of the provincial university would receive in the presses of Mackenzie and other opponents of the government.³⁸ After much wrangling Strachan was able to gain the agreement of the government to at least limit religious tests to the professors and students within the Faculty of Divinity, allowing a broader pool of professors and students in the majority of the university (though because the professors were required to be university graduates it practically meant they were either Anglican or Presbyterian).³⁹

In order to gain support for his mission, Strachan not only lobbied the government extensively, but also published a pamphlet for the benefit of the British public. Within he stated the arguments that had already become cemented in his theology and thought regarding the need for a university. First, it would protect the young and impressionable students of the colony from the influence of republicanism. Second, it would provide opportunities for education for those who were too poor to be sent overseas or to the United States to be taught. Third, it would complete the comprehensive plan for education that already included common and grammar schools. Fourth, it would elevate the public sentiments and feelings of the colony, civilising and securing the province as an advanced British society. Fifth, it would provide the trained doctors, lawyers, and clergymen that were needed to build the professional classes in Upper Canada, as well as

³⁷ Wilson, "Education in Upper Canada," 206.

³⁸ Wilson, "Education in Upper Canada," 206.

³⁹ Wilson, "Education in Upper Canada," 206.

providing potential members for the Assembly.⁴⁰ Above all other considerations, however, stood the fact that the university would strengthen the Church of England and its mission to bring the light of the Gospel ministry to every corner of the province. As a missionary college the school would equip young men to go out into the far corners of the province that they already called home and spread the good news of Jesus Christ.⁴¹ Just as significantly, the university would provide a bastion against the influence of Roman Catholicism, so powerful in Lower Canada, and ensure the ongoing Protestant nature of the colony.⁴² The religious, public, and economic health of the province would all be advanced through the foundation, and the home country would continue to gain from a thriving and advancing colony across the Atlantic.

After much wrangling with the government, the Charter of the new King's College of York was granted. An annual monetary grant of one thousand pounds from the Canada Company was provided to secure its financial stability, and Strachan was to be its first president.⁴³ In addition, the university was endowed with 225,944 acres of valuable Crown Reserves, exchanging the poorer quality lands that had been given to it in the original university endowment of 1797.⁴⁴ The Charter stated that the purpose of King's College was "for the education and instruction of youth and students in arts and faculties," and that establishments "for the education of youth in the principles of the Christian religion, and for their instruction in the various branches of science and literature which are taught in our Universities in this kingdom would greatly conduce to

⁴⁰ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 5–10.

⁴¹ Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 11.

⁴² Strachan, *Appeal to the Friends of Religion*, 19.

⁴³ Flint, *Strachan*, 95.

⁴⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 184.

the welfare of our said province.”⁴⁵ The Archdeacon of York was to be the president “for all times.”⁴⁶ All members of the governing council of the university would have to “sign and subscribe” to the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Church of England. Students, however, were able to be of any denomination, including Roman Catholics, unless they were part of the Faculty of Divinity.⁴⁷ This made the Charter more liberal than Oxford, Cambridge, and the King’s Colleges of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, but still kept the university firmly in the hands of the Church. The Charter clearly reflects Strachan’s Anglican Tory educational theology. The university would not merely be a place of impartation of knowledge, but the students would be shaped into Christian, loyal, capable members of the Upper Canada community.

Strachan returned to the colony in July 1827, and predictably was assaulted by Mackenzie and other critics as a Judas who had brought an abomination back from England.⁴⁸ Judson Purdy argues that the core incitement of anger against King’s and the Charter was actually the gigantic endowment of land that came with it: “God and mammon contested for the support of all parties in the matter.”⁴⁹ If the university had been unendowed then the core issue of Anglican hegemony would not have been nearly as serious. The Assembly likewise attacked Strachan over the charter, seeing it as further proof of Strachan’s determination to ride roughshod over the Dissenting denominations of Canada. They promptly issued an address to the king and asked that he cancel the Charter in favour of one that did not require religious tests, and they also advocated with the Canada Committee of the British House of Commons to urge that religious tests

⁴⁵ King’s College Charter, quoted in Robinson, *John Beverly Robinson*, 343.

⁴⁶ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 8.

⁴⁷ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 8.

⁴⁸ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 10.

⁴⁹ Purdy, “Strachan and Education,” 213.

should not be required of the president, faculty, or any other official of the university and that the Church of Scotland should have equal representation in the Faculty of Divinity.⁵⁰

Despite these noises, Strachan and Maitland appointed a committee and began work to purchase land and design the buildings for King's.⁵¹ With a site selected, building stone chosen, and plans by an eminent English architect sent over from England, Strachan reported in 1828 that the doors of the university were about to open.⁵²

Opposition to King's College

Strachan's Charter for the university continued to be a lightning rod for opposition, and in particular young Egerton Ryerson, who had already attacked Strachan so forcefully over the sermon on the death of the Bishop of Quebec in 1825, deployed his pen to attack Strachan's whole educational policy.⁵³ Especially irksome to the Methodists in Canada was Strachan's letter, written in support of the Church of England's control of the university and the Clergy Reserves, which even Strachan said had been "hastily prepared" for the incoming Colonial Secretary.⁵⁴ Ryerson wrote eight letters that systematically challenged Strachan's view that the Church was by law established and that it was the most populous of all the denominations. He savaged Strachan's arguments in his ecclesiastical chart, and challenged the validity of a university chartered in the Old World fashion, with the Church of England dominant, when the Church was not actually in the majority.⁵⁵ "Considering the statements you have made, would it not be generally thought paramount to establishing the Inquisition in Canada to tolerate your ill-founded

⁵⁰ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 184.

⁵¹ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 12.

⁵² Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 13.

⁵³ French, *Parsons and Politics*, 122.

⁵⁴ Sissons, *Life and Letters*, I, 83.

⁵⁵ Sissons, *Life and Letters I*, 85.

University altogether under the control of the Church of England clergy, with you at its head?"⁵⁶ As with his attacks on the Clergy Reserves, Ryerson firmly challenged the idea that the Church had the right to use its political influence to draw people into its fold through education and government support of its activities.⁵⁷ Further, Ryerson and others implied that Strachan's goal was to exclude people of other denominations from education, not just in the university but in the grammar schools as well.⁵⁸ All these attacks, coupled with Mackenzie's continued vituperation in the *Colonial Advocate*, ensured that the university was tarnished in the popular opinion. While the Methodists and Reformers banded together and claimed that they were concerned about education, they were using the same tactics that were being employed by Dissenters and Radicals in England as they worked to separate the Church from the state.⁵⁹ The storm that was whipped up against Strachan's supposed wicked intent would help to win the Reformers the election of 1828, and would also provide the excuse to that Assembly to block any further progress in opening the university to students.⁶⁰

In their determined attempts to ensure that the Church of England would not have control over the university, Dissenting denominations and Reformers joined forces, coming to the conclusion that the only way to exclude the Church of England from control was to ban any religious nature at all from the institution. From the continued agitation in the Assembly a consensus began to form that argued for a state-supported secular university, a novel idea in the Western world of the day.⁶¹ This became a new

⁵⁶ Ryerson, quoted in French, *Parsons and Politics*, 123.

⁵⁷ French, *Parsons and Politics*, 122.

⁵⁸ French, *Parsons and Politics*, 123.

⁵⁹ Clarke, *English Society*, 350.

⁶⁰ French, *Parsons and Politics*, 123.

⁶¹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 185.

front in the political battle between the Anglican Tory government and the Reforming minority, supported by the Dissenting churches, especially the Methodists.⁶² Ryerson and company, as well as other Dissenting churches, worked with the Reformers to create petitioning campaigns in order to sway the new Whig government in Britain to their designs.⁶³ Robert Baldwin, educated by Strachan in his Cornwall Grammar School but from a prominent Reforming family, began his own campaign to remove the Church from the university by working with the Friends of Religious Liberty to petition for the change of the Charter.⁶⁴ Despite repeated attempts by the Whig government of England to make him relinquish the Charter in order to make one that was more suited to the demands of the Reformers in Upper Canada, Strachan determinedly refused to surrender it or to make any serious alterations to the terms that he had fought for.⁶⁵ The university was the “porch of the Church, and the Church was the vestibule of heaven. They were in his esteem the essential parts of a prescribed pathway through which mortal man might pass from the ‘city of destruction’ to the ‘Mount of God.’”⁶⁶ Strachan was theologically committed to the idea that the university must be a Church institution, and that every aspect of it must necessarily be guided by clergymen, as the goal was not merely to educate, but to elevate the students to a loyal, Christian, practical understanding of the world, thereby shaping Upper Canadian society into ever greater perfection. To abandon that mission for the sake of peace would be a sin, and utterly incompatible with Strachan’s Anglican Tory worldview:

⁶² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 185.

⁶³ French, *Parsons and Politics*, 124.

⁶⁴ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 18.

⁶⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 185.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 228.

But, religion must not be neglected, nor will I ever regard it as a matter of indifference, how the youth placed at a Seminary over which I preside, enter the world, in respect to their knowledge of Christianity. While therefore every precaution will be taken, to prevent unprofitable disputation, every effort will be made, to elevate their minds, by directing their attention to those topics, which above all others are calculated to raise the moral and intellectual faculties, and to produce those manly, sober, and pure graces, which confer such dignity and beauty in the Christian character.⁶⁷

The mood among the moderate and radical Reformers was against the idea that the church of Christ had anything to do with the arts or sciences, and that it was possible to educate in these matters of practical knowledge without any reference to God.⁶⁸ In addition to the issue of religion, however, the attack on the university and on the educational system as a whole was an opportunity to draw power away from the executive and place it into the hands of the Assembly. Gerald Craig argues that this was one of the key motivations behind the Legislative Assembly's attack on the education system in general and the university in particular.⁶⁹ Henry Melville expresses the mood of the Anglican Tories of the day, lamenting the loss of good education for a generation of young people in the province as the education system became a political tool in the ongoing battle between the Anglican Tories and the Reformers of the province.⁷⁰ The key tipping point in the battle for the future of King's was the election of the Whigs to power in the British government. Where prior to that period Strachan had found allies in the Colonial Office, and even had to fight for a more liberal university Charter, now he was faced with a Colonial Office that requested the return of the Charter and the surrender of the university to the Assembly's ideas.⁷¹ Methodists were gaining a reputation as radicals

⁶⁷ Strachan, *A Speech*, 40–41.

⁶⁸ Sissons, *Life and Letter II*, 108.

⁶⁹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 186.

⁷⁰ Melville, *Trinity College*, 44.

⁷¹ Melville, *Trinity College*, 44.

that confirmed Strachan's estimation of them as dangerous to the established order, and it was being noticed by people like Governor Colborne, who thought the Methodists had found "Mr. Mackenzie a useful partisan, [but] had involved themselves in disputes which as ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church they ought to have avoided."⁷² Their singular desire to weaken the Church of England's position in the fight over establishment had caused them to compromise, and left them open to the charge that they wanted to "pull down all establishments, undermine the loyalty of the people, and constitute us as a province of the United States . . . The heads of the Methodists have formed themselves into a club or Society under the patronage of Mr. Hume and some other worldly members of the House of Commons."⁷³ Reverend A. H. Burwell believed it was necessary to

open the eyes of some to the necessity of stemming the torrent of 'all denomination' mobocracy that is setting so rapidly among us. I cannot help regarding with fear and horror . . . Egerton would carry the day . . . even in competition with the twelve Apostles themselves. It is thus that dissent from Episcopacy is made parent of revolution and desolation.⁷⁴

The memories of the American Rebellion, the French Revolution, and the War of 1812 still carried great weight in the Upper Canadian mind, and the recent alterations in the political landscape of England with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Catholic Emancipation, and the Reform Act showed that the destruction of Anglican Tory society could be the only result of these attacks.⁷⁵

Radicals in England were attacking the Church university system in the same way that they were in Upper Canada, charging the existing universities with being too closed

⁷² French, *Parsons and Politics*, 126.

⁷³ Strachan, quoted in French, *Parsons and Politics*, 126.

⁷⁴ Burwell, quoted in French, *Parsons and Politics*, 126.

⁷⁵ Clarke, *English Society*, 350.

and limited in their service to the nation, making them undeserving of public funds. The answer that British Radicals and Dissenters came to was the founding of a secular University of London. This university was not only separate from the Church, but totally altered the curriculum offered by the other universities, creating a model for scientific study that limited any influence of Christian thought in the curriculum. Even the best efforts of the founders of the university failed to separate the Church from the university, and before it gained a Charter in 1836 it had been affiliated with the Anglican Church in a loose association.⁷⁶ Despite the continued connection with the Church, most of the plans made by Reformers in Upper Canada to alter the King's College curriculum and Charter could be drawn back to the University of London model.⁷⁷ Strachan recognised these parallels and fought against any emulation of the "godless institution of Gower Street."⁷⁸

The Destruction of King's and the Founding of Trinity

By 1837, the university had still not opened, and after multiple battles with the Assembly the council of King's College was open to amending the Charter in a limited way in order to get the whole project moving forward. Even Strachan was willing to work with the Assembly in an attempt to make the project finally move forward. He recognised along with the rest of the Legislative Council that without concessions there would never be any university at all.⁷⁹ The new Charter abandoned religious qualifications for members

⁷⁶ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 212.

⁷⁷ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 213.

⁷⁸ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 207.

⁷⁹ Burwash, "Origin and Development," 19. While Strachan seems to have compromised here, he believed himself consistent because the compromise was only surface level, and the work of the Church would not be weakened in any way by the changes. The key for Strachan was the maintenance of an all-

of the college council, made the Court of King's Bench the visitor instead of the Bishop of Quebec, did not require the president of the university to hold ecclesiastical office, and abolished the doctrinal test for degrees in divinity.⁸⁰ The concessions also did not alter the existing personnel of the university, which meant the Church was still functionally in control of the university education.⁸¹ With all these concessions Strachan hoped that the university could finally open its doors, but the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837, financial irregularities and the subsequent investigation in 1839, and the union of the two Canadas in 1841 all combined to delay the opening of the university that had been granted approval in 1827.⁸² Additionally, the grand concessions that had been made to soothe the complaints of Dissenters and Reformers had only encouraged them to press for greater erosion of the Anglican control of the university.⁸³ Above everything, the gigantic endowment attached to King's College was too tempting a target for the other denominations to cease their attempts to gain a share of the prize.⁸⁴

Finally, in 1842 Sir Charles Bagot arrived with the mission of opening the university at long last.⁸⁵ Strachan, shorn of his political offices by the union of the two Canadas, but newly appointed Bishop of Toronto, was quick to seize the opportunity, and the foundation stone of King's was laid on 23 April 1842 by the governor general in a grand ceremony. Strachan declared the day to be the happiest of his life, one to which he had looked forward for forty years.⁸⁶ A year later King's College opened in temporary

Anglican faculty. The charter could say anything it liked, so long as the Church controlled the education. Even this slight adjustment pained him, however.

⁸⁰ Fahey, *In His Name*, 76.

⁸¹ Burwash, "Origin and Development," 20.

⁸² Wilson, "Education in Upper Canada," 207.

⁸³ Wilson, "Education in Upper Canada," 207.

⁸⁴ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 213.

⁸⁵ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 20.

⁸⁶ Burwash, "Origin and Development," 24.

quarters in the old Provincial Legislature building. John Beverly Robinson prophetically spoke of the continued attacks being made upon the institution, and decried the “unreasonable spirit,” that still meant there were steady attacks upon the institution despite all the concessions and liberality of Strachan and the rest of the Council, and hoped that the government would shield King’s from further harm.⁸⁷ In his speech at the opening, Strachan attacked all those who had worked so hard “by calumnies and misrepresentation, to poison the minds of the people against the Charter.”⁸⁸ Despite all these attempts, Strachan had overcome and produced an institution that could help build his dream of an Anglican Tory future for Canada.

Already in 1843 a fresh attack had been made upon the institution, as the government put forward a bill for the secularisation of the university.⁸⁹ Strachan’s petition against the bill provides a perfect insight into his reasons for working to preserve King’s as an Anglican institution, and his view of what the alliance of Reformers and Dissenters were trying to achieve, and their motives for doing it:

The leading object of the Bill is to place all forms of error upon an equality with the truth, by patronising equally within the same Institution, an unlimited number of sects whose doctrines are absolutely irreconcilable—a principle, in its nature atheistical, and so monstrous in its consequences that if successfully carried out it would utterly destroy all that is pure and holy in morals and religion, and would lead to greater corruption than anything adopted during the madness of the French Revolution, when that unhappy country abjured the Christian Faith and set up in its stead the worship of the Goddess of Reason. . . .⁹⁰

Strachan was a child of the eighteenth century, and the passage of time had not worn away the horror of a society so unmoored from faith that it could perpetrate the terrors of the French Revolution. His resistance was not merely to the limitation of his authority or

⁸⁷ Melville, *Trinity College*, 44.

⁸⁸ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 23.

⁸⁹ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 26.

⁹⁰ Strachan, *Petition, 1843*, 1.

that of his Church, but the threat of the same kind of abandonment of sanity that had brought the French nation low. Strachan continued in his defence to say

The University was placed under the government of a Council whose members were all of the United Church of England and Ireland, that, in this, the most important point, namely Religion, there might be perfect unity. . . . The proposed Bill drops the principal object of the Charter, namely that, so far as religious instruction is concerned, the Christianity taught shall be that of the United Church of England and Ireland and no other. . . . The fourth object is insidiously and indirectly, but virtually and effectually, to proscribe in this British Colony, the Church of England, the bulwark of the Protestant Faith . . .⁹¹

Strachan recognised in the attack upon the university a deeper assault upon the Church, confirming his suspicion that the real goal of the framers of the bill was the destruction of the establishment of the Church of England in Canada. Additionally, Strachan recognised the “third prominent object of this deadly measure is to restrain the Royal Prerogative . . .”⁹² The legislature sought to do something even the United States had quailed at doing, robbing an institution of its rights and property through expropriation and the destruction of a Royal Charter. Such actions showed their true colours as destroyers of the “Glorious Constitution.”⁹³ Strachan recognised the old battles of the eighteenth century still being fought in Canada, with the established Church and the Royal Prerogative coming under attack by Dissenters and Reformers whose real mission was to institute a radical realignment of the political and religious world of the nation, as the Whig government was likewise in the process of doing in England. Strachan’s Anglican Tory theology demanded that he fight any such “irreligious and revolutionary” advances upon the country.⁹⁴ Strachan’s final verdict was that the “most prominent result of such an experiment as that of uniting all denomination of Christians, as well as persons of no

⁹¹ Strachan, *Petition, 1843*, 2.

⁹² Strachan, *Petition, 1843*, 2.

⁹³ Strachan, *Petition, 1843*, 2.

⁹⁴ Strachan, *Petition, 1843*, 2.

religion, in the management of the same institution, must of necessity be anarchy.”⁹⁵

King’s College was able to survive that attack, and for seven years it educated students and began to gain a positive institutional reputation.

In 1844, Egerton Ryerson became Assistant Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada and began the process of secularisation of the school system, with the Church being removed from all primary and secondary education.⁹⁶ In 1849, the final blow was dealt to the university as Robert Baldwin’s Reform government passed a bill secularising King’s College and creating the University of Toronto.⁹⁷ Strachan’s dreams of educating the young people of Canada as loyal, practical, Anglican Tories were destroyed by one of his own students. When the legislature promised that the university would continue to promote “the best interests, religious, moral, and intellectual of the people at large,” Strachan retorted that “to speak of the interests of religion being promoted by an institution from which every reference to it is by law excluded, is a cruel and unworthy mockery.”⁹⁸

Strachan had seen the writing on the wall in 1848 and resigned as president, and within days he had organised a campaign to create a private Church of England institution, Trinity College. He vigorously launched himself into the task of raising support for the university both in Canada and in England, and in impassioned speeches to his clergy and congregations he railed against the “antichristian ‘University of Toronto’” that had been erected through theft and the wilful destruction of all religious connection, and championed the new university as

⁹⁵ Strachan, *Petition, 1843*, 3.

⁹⁶ Wilson, “Education in Upper Canada,” 207.

⁹⁷ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 29.

⁹⁸ Flint, *Strachan*, 143.

strictly and unreservedly in connexion with their Church; a University not confining itself to instruction in human science, but a University of which the religious character shall be known and acknowledged, in which the doctrines of the Church of England shall be taught in their integrity, and in which her pure and “reasonable service” shall elevate and sanctify the labours of the teacher and the scholar.⁹⁹

William Westfall points out that the destruction of King’s actually strengthened Church of England denominational education in Canada, as the broad religious openness of King’s and the compromises made by Strachan to gain the favour of the Upper Canadian community had weakened Church teaching within the university.¹⁰⁰ Despite this silver lining, David Flint argues correctly that the destruction of the Church-state connection represented by the loss of King’s was a sore point that could never be healed in Strachan’s psyche.¹⁰¹ Though he almost cried for joy at the 1852 inauguration of Trinity University, the enforced separation of the Church from the state represented by the necessity of the institution spelled the defeat of one of the key aspects of Strachan’s fight for the “Glorious Constitution” and the eighteenth-century Anglican Tory establishment in Canada.

Strachan’s educational actions, especially the idea that he was a liberal educator who was anxious to see every young person in Upper Canada properly trained for whatever profession to which they were called, have been challenged by many. Curtis Fahey claims that Strachan’s apparent liberality in the matter of allowing Church of England and Dissenting students equal access to schools and the university was merely a matter of strategic policy, rather than an altruistic desire for pure education.¹⁰² In a way Fahey is indeed correct in his estimation. Strachan was not interested merely in imparting

⁹⁹ Strachan, *An Address*, 1850, 3–4.

¹⁰⁰ Westfall, *Founding Moment*, 14.

¹⁰¹ Flint, *John Strachan*, 143.

¹⁰² Fahey, *In His Name*, 69–70.

knowledge to all comers, but he saw education as a key way to influence and impact young people and shape them into the loyal, Christian, and practically knowledgeable people that he believed would build the Upper Canadian Anglican Tory society. Those who attempt to find in this a sinister or ulterior motive, such as Ryerson and Mackenzie in Strachan's day, or in subsequent times as with J. C. Dent or William Kilbourn, miss the fact that Strachan never shielded his motivation from view. Strachan believed theologically that the only way to produce legitimate, effective education was from a truly Christian standpoint, and for him that meant the Church of England and Tory principles. His speeches in the upper house of the Legislature, his charges to his clergy, his private correspondence, and above all his determination to found Trinity College as a direct challenge to the "godless" University of Toronto defy any accusation of ulterior motives or hidden designs. Strachan was firmly convinced that only a university that taught from a confessionally Christian standpoint could achieve sound education.

Judson Purdy argues effectively that the controversy over the university was one of the great battles in the struggle between the Anglican Tory ascendancy that had founded Upper Canada, represented chiefly during the period studied by Strachan, and the Reforming movement represented by Ryerson, Baldwin, and Mackenzie that had led to the Rebellion of 1837, the granting of Responsible Government, and the destruction of the Tory system.¹⁰³ While Whig historians charge Strachan and other Tories with a perverse refusal to compromise with reforming voices in Upper Canada, they forget that the theological beliefs of this group made compromise on these matters not merely inconvenient or disadvantageous, but actually sinful.

¹⁰³ Purdy, "Strachan and Education," 217-18.

In a matter of great irony, by 1859 Egerton Ryerson challenged the lack of religious education in the University of Toronto and was attacked in turn by George Brown and the Reformers for his own methods as superintendant for education in Ontario.¹⁰⁴ The attacks that he and other Dissenters had unleashed on Church of England education were in turn used by Reformers to limit and attempt to defund all religious education, proving Strachan's fears regarding the creep of secularism into the Canadian world to be well founded.

Conclusion

Strachan battled unflinchingly for five decades to secure the educational future that he believed Upper Canada needed if it was to thrive as a nation. His Anglican Tory political theology demanded that he maintain the field against all comers. Though he could have benefited from compromising or changing his stance in order to preserve his influence and power, he chose to go down to defeat rather than abandon his unwavering belief that Church education was the only right and healthy education for the young leaders of the nation. Despite the loss of religious education in the state university, Strachan's Trinity College would continue to stand as a testimony to his vision of Christian university education as a vital component to a healthy and godly society. A small vestige of Anglican Toryism would stand after the dust of Reform had settled. Strachan's educational mission would in some way succeed, unlike his political mission of preserving the existing Anglican Tory ascendancy in politics. It is to this struggle that the present study now turns.

¹⁰⁴ Friedland, *University of Toronto*, 65–69.

CHAPTER 9

STRACHAN THE POLITICIAN: THE FAMILY COMPACT AND THE FIGHT AGAINST RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Introduction

As he never meant to be primarily an educator, so John Strachan never meant to be primarily a politician, and yet his political theology guided him firmly into political power and into the centre of controversy through almost thirty years of service in the Executive and Legislative Councils of Upper Canada. Strachan's upbringing, his theological training, and his early relationships with leading Loyalists all reinforced his mission to create an ideal Anglican Tory nation in Upper Canada. Through his influence in the so-called Family Compact, and through his tireless advocacy of traditional Tory values against the challenges of Robert Gourlay, William Lyon Mackenzie, and others, Strachan shaped Canadian political life for three decades. Strachan fought to preserve his notion of a godly political realm, free from the influences and impositions of the democratic neighbour to the south or the French culture across the Atlantic. Strachan's fight against Responsible Government is a prime example of the Family Compact's attempts, headed by Strachan, to preserve the idea of an Anglican Tory constitutional settlement and to preserve their view of the right political balance for a perfect nation. It is this long-drawn fight by the Family Compact against Responsible Government and its advocates that provides the background for the present study of Strachan the Politician.

Loyalists and the Growth of the Family Compact

The American Rebellion was a key event in the life of Upper Canada. Prior to the war the lands that made up the western portion of the Province of Quebec were practically

uninhabited by colonists, and there was no community structure.¹ With the end of the war a flood of Loyalists from the American Colonies entered the western parts of the province and began the arduous task of cutting communities from the virgin forests of the new land.² These Loyalists were anxious to preserve their new home from the republican influences to the south, and also wanted to create an ideal society in Upper Canada, reflecting the best of the home country through their political and social endeavours.³ Many of the Loyalists had fought for the king in the recent war, and were fiercely loyal to the British Empire and the British Constitution, determined to preserve this “Glorious Constitution,” with their blood and through ensuring that the institutions of their new land reflected the best of British government.⁴ This included modifying the systems that had developed in the American colonies that had allowed democratic elements to grow too strong at the expense of the Royal Prerogative and aristocratic elements that were necessary pillars of the British Constitution.⁵ To facilitate their desires the western part of the Province of Quebec was made a separate province, and under the *Constitutional Act* (1791) was given its own British civil as well as criminal law, and also a form of establishment through the Clergy Reserves.⁶ The new model of colonial government was strictly subordinated to the British government, and placed great executive and patronage powers in the hands of the lieutenant governor. He appointed the Executive Council that helped him manage affairs, as well as the Legislative Council (the equivalent to the House of Lords), and almost all provincial officials, from the least to the greatest.⁷ The

¹ Errington, *The Lion and The Eagle*, 15.

² Brode, *John Beverly Robinson*, 4.

³ Earl, *The Family Compact*, 1.

⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 3.

⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 14.

⁶ Fahey, *In His Name*, 7.

⁷ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 32.

Legislative Assembly purposely had little independent power, especially over money. This ensured that the Legislative Council and ultimately the lieutenant governor could quash any Assembly initiatives that did not meet with executive approval.⁸ This constitutional arrangement was undoubtedly Tory in its theory and purposes.⁹

Early in the province's history the number of educated and capable persons who could fill roles within the government was quite limited, and most were employed in at least one office, with many occupying more than one.¹⁰ These people were almost all Loyalist émigrés from the United States, deeply Tory in outlook, emotionally loyal to king and country, and antagonistic toward the United States, republicanism, and potential sedition.¹¹ Additionally, the Loyalist upper and middle classes of the new society were mostly members of the Anglican Church and determined to see it established as a tool to build religious strength, loyalty, and civic virtue in the new land.¹² They identified themselves as "gentry," showing that they recognised they were not aristocrats in the titled sense, but that they were the social, economic, and educational upper classes of the country; in short, gentlemen.¹³ It was into this Tory, Anglican, Loyalist gentry environment that John Strachan arrived at the end of 1799, and in which he rapidly rose

⁸ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 35.

⁹ Milani, *Gadfly*, 75. Milani subscribes to the Whig view that this constitution was unacceptable due to its Tory nature, but confirms the basic purpose and ethos behind the legislation. British Whig-Tory politics can be seen in the fact that Charles James Fox bitterly opposed the *Constitutional Act* as an expression of the Tory politics he loathed so much.

¹⁰ Patterson, *Enduring Myth*, 487.

¹¹ Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty*, 12. An example of this antagonism can be found in Strachan's 1810 poem addressed to Britain's ambassador to America: "Lo! Britain's glory future times in rapture shall declare/ when base Columbia's dastard crimes the wicked's meed shall share/ for grateful nations sprung from those who now the British views oppose/ shall at their Fathers blush for shame who sought to crush the gen'rous race/ that tied to give them full redress, and cherish'd freedoms' dying flame." SP: Strachan, "Verses to Mr. Jackson."

¹² Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty*, 13.

¹³ Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 4.

to prominence.¹⁴ As tutor to the children of Richard Cartwright, one of the chief Loyalist figures in Upper Canadian society, and later as the school teacher to whom the gentry sent their children, Strachan had his traditional Tory Anglican outlook reinforced by the worldviews of those with whom he kept society.¹⁵ It was by the friendship of Cartwright and the Reverend James Stuart that Strachan took his first steps into the social circle that would lead him to prominence in Upper Canada.¹⁶ John Strachan's Cornwall Grammar School became the central nursery of the next generation of Loyalist leaders at the heart of the "Family Compact," John Beverly Robinson foremost.¹⁷ The bonds of friendship and mentorship between Strachan and his Grammar School boys provided a key element of the development of the network that would come to be labelled the "Family Compact."¹⁸

Due to their experience in the American Rebellion, the Loyalists of Upper Canada emphasised the need to firmly suppress any political dissent, recognising that the unfettered freedom enjoyed by political agitators in the American Colonies had enabled the seeds of dissent to blossom into full disloyalty.¹⁹ Loyalty, above all, was the central bond that held the gentry society of early Upper Canada together, and formed the ideal that shaped the Anglican Tory tone of the ruling elite in the province.²⁰ The French Revolution was central to reinforcing the need for loyalty and Anglican Tory values within the ruling class of the country, especially regarding calls for change or reform in

¹⁴ Robertson, *Fighting Bishop*, 19.

¹⁵ Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty*, 15.

¹⁶ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 12.

¹⁷ Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 5.

¹⁸ Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 6.

¹⁹ Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty*, 13.

²⁰ Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty*, 15.

the colonial structures and leadership in the colony.²¹ The War of 1812 further augmented these beliefs with fierce anti-Americanism and the expectation of public, overt loyalty to the British Empire as many recent colonists joined the Americans or at best remained neutral.²²

Until the end of the War of 1812 the Anglican Tory ascendancy was almost unchallenged, and represented the original body of the colonists who had come to Upper Canada. But between the end of the American Rebellion and the War of 1812 a flood of immigrants from the United States arrived with weaker loyalty to the British Constitution and Tory ideals, while their religious allegiances were predominantly Dissenting.²³ The Anglican Tories distrusted the new settlers as at best less loyal and at worst actively attempting to spread their republican sympathies through the American schoolmasters they imported to teach their children.²⁴ The new colonist's sympathies emphasised to the Loyalist gentry the need for an Anglican Tory ascendancy to maintain strict control over attempts to encourage reform or greater democracy.²⁵ Situations like the disturbances of Robert Thorpe, who challenged the government and caused deep unrest, reminded the Anglican Tories that Dissent and political radicalism were threats to the existing order. Particularly noticeable in Thorpe's attacks upon the government was the use of language reminiscent of the calls for liberty that had first been used by the Wilkesites in England and by the colonists in America as they rebelled against the Crown.²⁶ Thorpe and others

²¹ Saunders, "Family Compact," 8.

²² Saunders, "Family Compact," 8.

²³ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 43.

²⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 48.

²⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 48.

²⁶ Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty*, 24.

confirmed to the elite that the balance of loyalty in the province was tenuous and needed to be stiffened through firm Tory loyalist practices.

The War of 1812

The War of 1812 provided a powerful impetus to the Anglican Tory gentry to reinforce the principles of loyalty to the Crown and resistance to any calls for reform or change in Upper Canadian politics. As Strachan argued in a sermon before the Legislative Council, the British nation had been at war against Revolutionary France and Napoleon's empire for almost twenty years, not only militarily but also ideologically.²⁷ In the midst of this existential struggle the American republic that espoused the same ideologies of liberty, equality, and democracy had allied itself with the "great evil empire" and launched an assault upon Britain, primarily through the Canadian colonies.²⁸ Additionally, many of the suspect colonists who had been claiming that they were loyal to the Crown seemed to have joined the American armies as they ranged across Upper Canada, while even more stood neutral, refusing to defend their adopted homeland.²⁹ Sir Isaac Brock himself believed that many of the new colonists were disloyal and unwilling to fight to keep from being assimilated into the republic they had so recently vacated for the prospect of good, cheap land.³⁰

For Strachan and Upper Canada the capture of York was a turning point. Strachan had already been engaged in writing letters to encourage an aggressive stance in the war.³¹ With the coming of the American army to York, however, he came to the fore as a

²⁷ Strachan, *Sermon, 2 August, 1812*, 3–4.

²⁸ Strachan, *Sermon, 2 August, 1812*, 5.

²⁹ Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 26.

³⁰ Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 26.

³¹ Strachan, "Letter to James McGill, November, 1812.

political player. The Americans arrived and the British regular troops retreated to safety, blowing up the garrison magazine and firing public stores in town.³² Strachan related the story in a letter to his friend Dr. James Brown, recounting how he joined the party responsible to arrange surrender terms, and how he had complained forcefully to the American General Dearborn about the treatment of the leader of the Canadian Militia, who had been arrested despite being under a flag of truce.³³ Strachan then had to repeatedly accost the American general and commodore of the fleet to keep the town from being looted and to protect the populace from being harmed by the conquering troops. Strachan even had to face down the barrels of two American muskets as he tried to prevent the soldiers from looting a private house.³⁴ Throughout the trying days of the American occupation, and in the subsequent occupation of July 1813, Strachan was at the forefront of negotiations, the protection of the town of York, the care for sick and wounded, and support of the British government in the province, earning him the respect of the populace and the government.³⁵ Strachan's actions were consistent with his theology of the role of a clergyman as most responsible for the wellbeing, physical as well as spiritual, of his flock, as well as the greater role of the Church in the lives of the people. Strachan's care for the wounded and dying, his defence of the helpless people of York after their soldiers departed, and his work throughout the war to ensure the wellbeing and security of York and Upper Canada illustrate the demands which his theology of the role of the Church in the community placed on him. Equally consistent with Strachan's theology of loyalty, passive obedience, and non-resistance to

³² See Berton, *Flames Across the Border*, 37–61, for a detailed account of the Battle of York and its aftermath.

³³ SP: Strachan, "Letter to Dr. Brown, 11 June, 1813."

³⁴ SP: Strachan, "Letter to Dr. Brown, 11 June, 1813."

³⁵ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 49.

government, was his formation of the Loyal and Patriotic society to provide funds and support for the war effort, and also a committee to track down those who had been disloyal to the Crown and to see that they received their dues.³⁶

The seditious activities of many recent immigrants to the country, who had aided and publicly sided with the enemy when they arrived in York, reinforced the idea that only a firm and forceful government would be able to maintain Upper Canada as a British colony against the expansionist Americans.³⁷ In addition, for people like Strachan and the other gentry the war also reinforced the idea that the Anglican Tory gentry were the foremost defenders of the colony, and therefore merited their leadership roles in society.³⁸ The British Constitution and connection of the colony depended on them, for they had defended it with their blood and treasure, and they would not allow it to slip away from them in the post war years.³⁹ Any sign of republicanism or American sentiment must be rooted out, as the colony could not afford dissent when the neighbour across the lakes was ready to consume them whole.⁴⁰ The defection of key pre-war opponents of the government to the American side only proved the point that those who expressed dissatisfaction with or disloyalty to the government were likely to be traitors.⁴¹ It had also been Strachan and people like him who had done the footwork to provide redress for those who had suffered during the war.⁴²

In addition to individuals, the actions of the Legislative Assembly during the war encouraged mistrust regarding their reliability and motivations. Several times throughout

³⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 74.

³⁷ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 85.

³⁸ Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 26.

³⁹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 85.

⁴⁰ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 85.

⁴¹ Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 27.

⁴² Strachan, "Strachan to Clifford, 25 April, 1816."

the war the Assembly refused to grant the necessary supplies and legal authority that the colonial government and military felt they needed to prosecute the war.⁴³ This refusal increased the suspicions of the gentry toward the Assembly, heightening the sense that it could not be trusted to maintain loyalty and order, and encouraged the upper house and Executive Council's willingness to reject measures brought to them by the lower house.⁴⁴ If the assembly was willing to hobble the work of the colonial government and military authorities during a national crisis, how much more would they do so when the danger of annexation was not as immediate?⁴⁵

In all these ways the War of 1812 shaped the post-war political trajectory of the province, and permanently impacted those who lived through the period. A traveller in Upper Canada noted that all events were "dated as either before or after the war."⁴⁶ Coupled with the twenty year worldwide struggle against France, the sense that a cataclysm could yet engulf the province led the ruling gentry to determine to maintain loyalty and the British constitutional connection against all attempts to change or reform the Upper Canadian political arrangement. As the war ended and the political leadership prepared to enter into a new era of peace and growth, these determinations would shape the political ideals and membership of the ruling class that formed the so-called "Family Compact." Strachan's position as one of the province's preeminent personalities was secured through his fearlessness in the face of the various trials that the war had brought to "little York," and only grew as the colonial government sought reliable people to guide Upper Canada into the post-war period.

⁴³ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 81.

⁴⁴ Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 27.

⁴⁵ Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 27.

⁴⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 85.

The Rise of the Compact and Strachan's Position

The name "Family Compact" was invented by their enemies as a pejorative title to describe the group of leading citizens in politics, business, church, and civil life who were responsible for guiding the affairs of Upper Canada from the end of the War of 1812 until 1841.⁴⁷ The title was first used to describe the relationship between the French and Spanish Bourbons, and was adopted by William Lyon Mackenzie as a means of casting his Tory enemies in a negative light.⁴⁸ This characterisation took place after the supposed high point of the Compact's power, and Mackenzie freighted the previously innocuous title with the sinister connotation that it has subsequently maintained.⁴⁹

The main leaders of the Compact were John Strachan, considered by many contemporary and modern commentators to be the patriarch of the group, and John Beverly Robinson, whose posts as Attorney General and then Chief Justice and Speaker of the Legislative Council placed him in a powerful position, and whose status as one of Strachan's chief protégés made him a potent force in government and society.⁵⁰ Other members of the first wave Loyalist leadership were D'Arcy Boulton and William Dummer Powell. Second generation sons of Loyalists included Henry Boulton, George H. Markland, Christopher Hagerman, John Macaulay and William Allan.⁵¹ Beyond this core others who shared the same Tory ideology were connected to the group (notably, the Baby family were Roman Catholic but still part of the ruling core, showing that purported religious bigotry of the Compact is perhaps embellished by some historians).⁵² Another person who could be described as an associate member of the Compact was Alexander

⁴⁷ Dent, *Upper Canada Rebellion*, 71.

⁴⁸ Mackenzie, *Sketches of Upper Canada*, 361.

⁴⁹ Patterson, "Enduring Canadian Myth," 491.

⁵⁰ Saunders, "Family Compact," 167.

⁵¹ Saunders, "Family Compact," 167.

⁵² Saunders, "Family Compact," 168.

McDonnell, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Upper Canada.⁵³ Though not a religious ally, his conservative Tory outlook on republican ideology and the need for strong hierarchy ensured a loose connection to the Compact world, including a businesslike friendship with John Strachan himself.⁵⁴

Three main views of the Family Compact are found in contemporary accounts and subsequent histories. The first is the view shared with the Reformers of Upper Canada and popularised by J. C. Dent that the Compact was an evil cabal, intent upon power and the strangulation of democratic progress to the detriment of the greater good.⁵⁵ The pejorative title adopted for the Compact reflects the dominance of the Whig historical view espoused by those in the tradition of Dent, who castigated them in the strongest of terms: “They wormed themselves into all the more important offices, directed the Councils of the Sovereign’s representative, and, in a word, became the power behind the Throne.”⁵⁶ The Earl of Durham’s 1839 report on the affairs of Upper Canada also shares blame for casting the Compact in a negative light outside Upper Canada, and it is recognised that he was heavily influenced by his chief secretary, whose sympathies lay with the Reformers involved in the failed Rebellion of 1837.⁵⁷ Due to the triumph of radical points of view over the Anglican Tory values of the Family Compact, and because of the broader Whig historical trend of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

⁵³ Rea, *Alexander McDonnell*, 54.

⁵⁴ Rea, *Alexander McDonnell*, 54. This friendship did not extend to any support for Roman Catholicism on Strachan’s part, and he continued to work against any expansion of “popery.” At the same time, Strachan was content to allow Roman Catholics religious freedom and access to patronage provided this strengthened the hegemony of Tory ideals in the province.

⁵⁵ Dent, *Upper Canada Rebellion*, 71–5.

⁵⁶ Dent, *Upper Canada Rebellion*, 73.

⁵⁷ Earl, *Family Compact*, 57.

the radical picture of the Compact and its leading figure, Strachan, has shaped much of the popular and scholarly historical view of the era and the people.⁵⁸

The second view of the Compact comes from those in the tradition of A. N. Bethune or William Lewis Baby, son of one of the Compact inner circle, who states

All were noted for their unswerving loyalty, honour, and integrity, and for their defence of their country, from Christler's [sic] farm to Detroit. The impartial reader in reviewing the services and private worth of these true types of Canadians, will surely and charitably remove the veil which might dim the lustre of their deeds, and forget their shortcomings.⁵⁹

Baby recognises the aristocratic pretensions of the Compact, but gives them the benefit of noble character and pure motives of public good in what they were doing.⁶⁰ This positive, almost hagiographic, view of the members of the Compact has the opposite weakness to Dent and others, blind to their faults and failings, whatever their intentions and successes. Educated in Strachan's grammar school and growing up in the Upper Canadian society upon which he commented, Baby knew the Compact members personally, so his views cannot be written off entirely, despite being overly positive. Most important to note in this view is that the legitimacy of the Compact's claims to leadership was built upon their personal loyalty, honour, integrity, and above all their active role in the War of 1812.

The third and perhaps most balanced view of the Compact comes from Gerald Craig, who states that the Compact consisted of the leading members of the colonial administration, in control of the daily operation of government, and able to ensure that like-minded men were appointed to positions of authority throughout the province.⁶¹ These men were mostly second generation Loyalists, educated by John Strachan in his

⁵⁸ See Robertson, *The Fighting Bishop*, 65 for a twentieth-century example of the Whig view of Strachan and the Compact.

⁵⁹ Baby, *Souvenirs of the Past*, 57.

⁶⁰ Baby, *Souvenirs of the Past*, 45–52, 55–57.

⁶¹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 107.

grammar school, and raised in a High Tory tradition of loyalty to the home country and the Crown. The rest were British expatriates who shared Strachan's unwavering Tory outlook and who had arrived before the beginning of the century.⁶² Craig especially argues that these men, though sometimes having the incidental family relationships to be expected in a small, closely knit frontier community, were not a cabal that disallowed any outsiders, as is commonly argued, but rather that they opened the door to any newcomers from Britain who shared their Tory ideology.⁶³ The Anglican Tory worldview was the only real requirement for membership in the elite. Further to Craig's point, Patrick Brode argues that the real source of patronage and appointment was always in the Imperial Government through the immediate person of the lieutenant governor. All appointments to the Executive and Legislative Councils, as well as all other higher tier patronage appointments, had to be confirmed by the Privy Council in England. The idea that Strachan and others were able to hijack the colonial government for private ends is inconsistent with the readily available evidence.⁶⁴

Ultimately a historian's position regarding the Family Compact's thought and practices seems to be determined by their acceptance or rejection of the Whig historical tradition. Historians who agree with the radical opinions of Reformers like Gourlay and Mackenzie share their low estimation of the Family Compact. Those who had personal positive relationships with the members, such as Baby, are firm in their support for the members of the group. Those like Craig have attempted to distance themselves from the "conventional clichés about the Family Compact" that have impacted popular views on the subject, and have rejected the Whig view for a methodology based on critical research

⁶² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 108.

⁶³ Craig, *Upper Canada*, iv.

⁶⁴ Brode, *John Beverly Robinson*, 152.

and careful scholarship weighted in primary sources.⁶⁵ Graeme Patterson even argues that the development of the story of the Family Compact and its overthrow in the name of Responsible Government constitutes a historical myth that has become deeply embedded in the fabric of Canadian historiography.⁶⁶ Patterson asserts that the Family Compact can best be described as the substantial Tory establishment that maintained authority in Upper Canada in conjunction with the Tory establishment that ruled at home in Britain. Opposition to this group was founded upon the same principles that enlivened Whig opposition to the government in Great Britain prior to the Reform Act of 1832.⁶⁷ Craig and Patterson's view commends itself to the author as the most effective method of interpreting the evidence regarding the Compact's composition and ideological allegiance, and is consistent with Strachan's political theology.⁶⁸

Strachan's appointment to the Executive Council in 1815 cemented him in the political role of advisor to the lieutenant governor, and ensured that he would be able to have significant influence upon the shaping of political decisions in Upper Canada.⁶⁹ He deployed this authority, along with that gained when he took a seat on the Legislative Council in 1820, to further the interests of church establishment and education in Upper Canada, as his political theology demanded.⁷⁰ Strachan wrote to Lieutenant Governor Gore in 1817 to warn that the lack of members of the Church of England on the Legislative Council made it difficult to further the established church and the education

⁶⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, v.

⁶⁶ Patterson, "Enduring Canadian Myth," 485.

⁶⁷ Patterson, "Enduring Canadian Myth," 497.

⁶⁸ Despite the pejorative origin of the name "Family Compact," the author uses the title as the most commonly recognized designator for the Tory gentry governing class of Upper Canada.

⁶⁹ Schrauwers, *Union Is Strength*, 25.

⁷⁰ Schrauwers, *Union is Strength*, 251.

of young men for holy orders.⁷¹ He wrote the same to the Bishop.⁷² He also warned that the political balance of the upper house ensured instability in the province, as shown by the defeat of government education legislation. Strachan's solution was to request appointment to the Council, both to encourage loyalty to the established church, and to ensure allegiance to the government program.⁷³ As always, the Church and education were foremost in his mind as he considered what he could do through holding political office.⁷⁴ He expressed his desire to build the province, and he wanted to see it prosper in every way possible.⁷⁵ Strachan made his case directly, accepted the results gladly, and truly believed that he would be serving the good of the province as a whole, rather than somehow building his private fortunes through an appointment to the Council. Indeed, the appointment entailed no financial emolument at the time.⁷⁶

Over time he was appointed as President of the University, President of the Board of Education, and Chairman of the Upper Canada Clergy Corporation, in addition to positions on the board of the first provincial bank and the Welland Canal project.⁷⁷ Bethune states that these appointments and Strachan's political influence were the direct result of his leadership during the dangerous days of the War of 1812 and his status as the foremost churchman in the province. Each appointment was also approved by the government in Britain.⁷⁸ Henry Scadding additionally argues that the appointment of a clergyman under the rank of bishop shows the lack of capable persons able to take high

⁷¹ SLB, 1812–1834: "Strachan to Gore, May 22, 1817."

⁷² SLB, 1812–1834: "Strachan to Mountain, May 12, 1817."

⁷³ SLB, 1812–1834: "Strachan to Gore, May 22, 1817."

⁷⁴ SLB, 1812–1834: "Strachan to Gore, May 22, 1817."

⁷⁵ SLB, 1812–1834: "Strachan to Gore, May 22, 1817."

⁷⁶ Spragge, "Strachan's Motives," 397.

⁷⁷ See Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 104–228 for a detailed discussion of Strachan's economic activities.

⁷⁸ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 53.

office in early Upper Canada; otherwise they would have been selected over the churchman.⁷⁹ Strachan declared his purposes for being active in government in a speech before the Legislative Council in 1828:

If therefore, I should not appear so often in my place, as my respect for the House would induce, I hope that my absence will meet with a kind interpretation: not that I wish to be absent when my presence is deemed necessary, or when the interests of religion and education are concerned.—But in other matters, I confess that I feel less interest and may be well spared, as many of my honourable friends are far more competent than I, to discuss and decide upon questions of policy, and the general business of the country.⁸⁰

George Spragge argues that Strachan's influence in Upper Canada was no accident: he was not well born or well connected in England or Scotland, but he had worked diligently as an educator, churchman, and community member, and had gained influence throughout the province through twenty years of action.⁸¹ The key ideological mission of Strachan, Robinson, and other members of the Compact flowed from Strachan's Anglican political theology, in which he had firmly trained his grammar school protégés, and which was common in Tory circles on both sides of the Atlantic.⁸² Strachan's methodology and theology of teaching had produced young pupils who were religiously consistent, practically able, and politically loyal. Indeed, Strachan's grammar school had produced numerous able members of the political, religious, and business community, as shown in Fennings Taylor's detailed list.⁸³ These young men, along with Tories who emigrated from Britain, had a set purpose for Upper Canada, and intended to achieve it. The community of Upper Canada must remain British, because the British Constitution represented the freest, greatest, and noblest of all forms of government, and

⁷⁹ Scadding, *First Bishop*, 28.

⁸⁰ Strachan, *Speech, 1828*, 42.

⁸¹ Spragge, "Strachan's Motives," 398.

⁸² Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 7.

⁸³ Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 267–70.

the province of Upper Canada was an equal part of the great British nation.⁸⁴ Democratic agitation could not be allowed to overwhelm the equal balance of the Crown, the appointed upper house, and the elected lower assembly that was the perfect expression of the Glorious Revolution and the height of the achievement of the British genius.⁸⁵ The Executive and Legislative Councils must necessarily be filled with the best educated, best trained, most loyal men who would be impervious to popular pressure or the importunities of the Assembly.⁸⁶ Loyalty demanded unquestioning adherence to the British connection to preserve the colony from the republican influence that hovered right over the border. Positive opinions of the United States and its republican system must be treated as disloyal and subversive to the unity and security of the province.⁸⁷ The great fear for Compact members was that if the colony took on an American style of government and American habits of thinking they would be drawn into the American orbit and annexed.⁸⁸ The authority of government and the law came from God, not the people as in the American system, and the established Church was a necessary component of the colonial society that would ensure the loyalty, religious fidelity, and social care of the populace.⁸⁹ As Strachan taught and firmly believed, all society must have a religious focus, and the Church must guide society toward social, political, and spiritual righteousness.⁹⁰ As with England, democratic agitation and religious dissent were closely related, and where one was allowed to prosper the other gained strength and

⁸⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 109.

⁸⁵ Strachan, *Sermon*, 2 August, 1812, 17.

⁸⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 109.

⁸⁷ Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 5.

⁸⁸ Purdy, *Strachan and Education*, 41.

⁸⁹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 110.

⁹⁰ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 110.

support.⁹¹ Both for the sake of the protection of the Christian mission of the Church, and for the sake of the Royal Prerogative and the preservation of the constitution, Responsible Government must be stopped from gaining force as an idea. These core principles shaped the governing practices of the Upper Canada ruling class, requiring an Anglican Tory governing agenda and political views. Any expression of political dissent was to be treated not merely as an opposing view, but as disloyalty to Upper Canada and the British Empire.⁹²

For Strachan all things had to be focused on eternity and the ultimate purpose of God on earth: salvation and redemption through the saving work of Christ Jesus.⁹³ Robert Fraser argues that Strachan's central Christian teaching influenced and shaped not only his ultimate views on politics, but also deeply influenced the ideology of the key members of the Family Compact such as John Beverly Robinson and John Macaulay. When considering how they were to govern they could not deal solely with practical exigencies or the drive for economic growth, but they must ensure that the society they created honoured God and bore the closest possible relationship to the Anglican ideal of a Christian nation. All political considerations had to submit to the superiority of God and the necessity of serving Him completely.⁹⁴ This led to the rejection of some of the means of speedy economic growth, such as American immigration, as being too dangerous for the political and theological well-being of the colony.

In addition to these core ideas, and despite their reticence to allow some approaches to economic growth, the members of the Compact were anxious to see

⁹¹ Clarke, *English Society*, 350.

⁹² Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 6.

⁹³ McDermott, "John Strachan," 170.

⁹⁴ Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 65.

economic development and industrial growth in the colony, taking up such projects as the Welland Canal and driving it to completion, even at the cost of high debt loads and loss of goodwill among the people of Upper Canada.⁹⁵ This advance could not be permitted to the detriment of the political stability of the country, however, nor could it be done at the expense of the British character of the people. The British government, with the full support and encouragement of the Compact, strictly limited any further immigration of Americans to the province for some time following the War of 1812.⁹⁶ Strachan and the Compact's support for these measures did not make them popular with land speculators and other businessmen who depended upon the rapid influx of American settlers to provide ready markets for their land.⁹⁷ Robert Fraser argues that the determination of the Compact to create an agrarian powerhouse that would reinforce their ideal of a Tory landed hierarchal society created a disjointed view of prosperity that opened them up to criticism by those who were left outside the realm of progress and development.⁹⁸ This worldview hearkened back to a pastoral age in England that was already passing away due to the Industrial Revolution and the political and social upheaval of the latter half of the eighteenth century.⁹⁹ Similar upheaval was on the horizon in Upper Canada.

Robert Gourlay's Challenge

The Upper Canada gentry began to forge their ideal society relatively free from dissent or opposition. All of that changed when Robert Gourlay arrived in Upper Canada in 1817. Gourlay had already made a career for himself as a pamphleteer and "gadfly," attacking

⁹⁵ Aitken, "Welland Canal," 65.

⁹⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 89.

⁹⁷ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 74.

⁹⁸ Fraser, "Eden in Her Summer Dress," 11.

⁹⁹ Clarke, *English Society*, 350.

perceived injustices throughout his native Scotland and the rest of Britain, and thoroughly stirring up the anger of the home country establishment, causing him to relocate to the New World to avoid the consequences of his loose tongue and pen.¹⁰⁰ His 1809 publication, *A Specific Plan for Organising the People . . .*, castigated the government as a great conspiracy that burdened the poor through ceremony and complex machinery with the support of the “whitewashers of iniquity,” the established Church, and championed universal suffrage and the calling of conventions to bypass Parliament and force a revolution in government.¹⁰¹ Aileen Dunham describes him as a passionate, though unreasoning, philanthropist,” who used a “plague of petitions” to attempt to influence the British parliament and the people in general.¹⁰² A Whig radical and a Reformer, but also a “congenital dissident,” Gourlay arrived to take up ownership of 1,300 acres in a land he hoped would provide him with freedom, untrammelled by establishments or ideas that were not congenial to his nature.¹⁰³ Upon his arrival he saw mismanagement everywhere, and began trying to correct all the ills he thought were present within the province.¹⁰⁴ Gourlay’s biographer records that he found problems everywhere, and also came up with definite ideas to solve them according to his own standards. He was not interested in other people’s opinions of his ideas, and anyone who attempted to halt his programs gained his hatred.¹⁰⁵ Gourlay published a letter to the landowners and townships of the country in the *Upper Canada Gazette*, recommending the development of a statistical account of Upper Canada and attaching a questionnaire for every township to answer.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ See Milani, *Gadfly*, 1–73 for an account of his activities in Britain.

¹⁰¹ Wise, “Robert Fleming Gourlay,” 1.

¹⁰² Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 51.

¹⁰³ Milani, *Gadfly*, 73.

¹⁰⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 94.

¹⁰⁵ Milani, *Gadfly*, 83–85.

¹⁰⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 94.

Though initially popular with the Compact, Gourlay's thirty-first question on the questionnaire caused Strachan to distrust him as a potential troublemaker whose ideas smacked of republicanism.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, Gourlay's family and personal reputation of friendliness to the French Revolution and republican ideals ensured a poor reception from Strachan. There were probably at least some grounds for these concerns, as Gourlay credited his experience of the American side of the Great Lakes with his enthusiasm to begin reforming.¹⁰⁸ Gourlay held township meetings and other attempts to determine the views of the local people regarding the government and society, and recommended vast changes to government, complete with petitions to the Crown to eliminate the supposed rot in the province.¹⁰⁹

By 1818 Gourlay's reputation and actions in Upper Canada had ruined his attempts to secure a large tract of land, and he had shifted from statistical surveys to abusive broadsides against the gentry. He railed against Strachan (claiming that he was enriching himself while the Church languished), the provincial administration (they had withheld land from him and blocked his sweeping proposals for changes), and even against the men who had first recommended him to York society (claiming that they had been bribed and distracted by powerful people into abandoning a righteous cause).¹¹⁰

He broadcast through the province, various documents designed to throw light upon our political state, and retrieve us from the political wretchedness into which he assured us we had fallen. He was a fluent and taking writer, though a heavy and ungainly speaker, and the printed sheets he encirculated far and wide very much astonished many of the quiet-going population.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 94.

¹⁰⁸ Milani, *Gadfly*, 97.

¹⁰⁹ Milani, *Gadfly*, 116.

¹¹⁰ Milani, *Gadfly*, 132.

¹¹¹ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 65.

Gourlay's key assertion was that the problems of Upper Canada could be solved by overturning the existing executive power structure and the opening of the borders once again to immigrants from the United States.¹¹²

Gourlay particularly targeted Strachan as a charlatan who had no place in politics, refusing any meeting with him and publishing scurrilous personal attacks against him.

Strachan had already taken the measure of the man, and in a letter to Dr. Brown he wrote this estimation:

There has been here for about a year past, a Mr. Gourlay, from Fifeshire, trying to get us by the ears. He has done a good deal of mischief in the province by his seditious publications, inciting discontent amongst the people. I saw through him at once, and opposed him with my usual vigour; upon which, the press groaned with his abuse of me.¹¹³

Gourlay followed the tactics that had been perfected during the Wilkes controversy and other political agitations in Britain, employing popular published invective against his enemies, along with many petitions to the legislature and the British government.¹¹⁴

Petitioning had been a key tool of the Wilkesite forces, and Gourlay had learned much from those battles.¹¹⁵ Petitions had also been one of the tools of the American Patriots prior to the Rebellion, as well as providing one of the key methods of spreading revolutionary ideas of grievance in France prior to and during the Revolution.¹¹⁶ Gourlay was also drawing from his close association with the Scottish political radicals, who had followed the same methods as they agitated for parliamentary reform in Britain.¹¹⁷ Not surprisingly, these tactics caused Strachan and the Compact to be suspicious of Gourlay's motives.

¹¹² Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 55.

¹¹³ SLB, 1812–1834: "Strachan to Dr. Brown, 1 December, 1818."

¹¹⁴ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Rude, *Wilkes and Liberty*, 106.

¹¹⁶ Schama, *Citizens*, 308–311.

¹¹⁷ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 28.

Methodist preachers became significant figures in the spread of petitions against the government, as their itinerant routes already took them throughout the country, and they tended to share political allegiance with the petitioners.¹¹⁸ The willingness of the Methodists to aid Reformers in the province confirmed Strachan's view that they were not merely preachers of the Gospel, but disseminators of radical political doctrines.

Gourlay's cause was the beginning of the call for "Responsible Government," the attempt to reform government upon popular grounds.¹¹⁹ As Bethune notes, from Gourlay's day political allegiances divided into the supporters of the governing Tories, and the Reform party, whose goal was to bring about Responsible Government. This cause worked directly against the Tory emphases of maintaining the existing constitution and staunch anti-republicanism, and ensured that Gourlay would be firmly resisted by the Tories. The battle lines over a key political issue of the next two decades were drawn.¹²⁰

Gourlay continued his program of agitation, and began holding "conventions," meetings that had ominous overtones due to their use by the revolutionaries of the American Rebellion and the French Revolution. The conventions produced more petitions, and their charges against the government grew in stridency and boldness.¹²¹ Using the power of the press in Wilkesite fashion, Gourlay kept up a stream of abuse culminating in an attack on 2 April 1818 that got him arrested for libel and acquitted twice by friendly juries, echoing the triumph of popular campaigning over government control of the Wilkes controversy.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 7.

¹¹⁹ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 28.

¹²⁰ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 67.

¹²¹ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 57.

¹²² Errington, *Lion and Eagle*, 110.

Methodist preachers became significant figures in the spread of petitions against the government, as their itinerant routes already took them throughout the country, and they tended to share political allegiance with the petitioners.¹¹⁸ The willingness of the Methodists to aid Reformers in the province confirmed Strachan's view that they were not merely preachers of the Gospel, but disseminators of radical political doctrines.

Gourlay's cause was the beginning of the call for "Responsible Government," the attempt to reform government upon popular grounds.¹¹⁹ As Bethune notes, from Gourlay's day political allegiances divided into the supporters of the governing Tories, and the Reform party, whose goal was to bring about Responsible Government. This cause worked directly against the Tory emphases of maintaining the existing constitution and staunch anti-republicanism, and ensured that Gourlay would be firmly resisted by the Tories. The battle lines over a key political issue of the next two decades were drawn.¹²⁰

Gourlay continued his program of agitation, and began holding "conventions," meetings that had ominous overtones due to their use by the revolutionaries of the American Rebellion and the French Revolution. The conventions produced more petitions, and their charges against the government grew in stridency and boldness.¹²¹ Using the power of the press in Wilkesite fashion, Gourlay kept up a stream of abuse culminating in an attack on 2 April 1818 that got him arrested for libel and acquitted twice by friendly juries, echoing the triumph of popular campaigning over government control of the Wilkes controversy.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 7.

¹¹⁹ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 28.

¹²⁰ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 67.

¹²¹ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 57.

¹²² Errington, *Lion and Eagle*, 110.

In his *A Visit to Upper Canada*, Strachan argued that Gourlay's success in some areas was proof of the danger of popular agitation among people who were not well informed of the facts.¹²³ Strachan further recorded the government's strategy to put down this "seditious mission" whose real purpose seemed to have been nothing but the fomenting of disorder and dissent in the province.¹²⁴ Again echoing the methods employed during the Wilkes crisis, Gourlay was charged and banished under the 1804 Sedition Act, silencing his voice but also turning him from a spent force into a cause célèbre for radicals overnight.¹²⁵ Strachan thought that the charges and banishment gave Gourlay more power than he would otherwise have had, but was nevertheless glad to see him go.

Though followed only by a desperate portion of the people, yet in possession of the press, continually writing, and full of activity, a minority appeared in his hand the majority; and a civil war would have been the consequence, and for no reason but to gratify a man of desperate fortunes . . . He can now do no harm in Canada; the people are sensible that the interests of the government and the governed is the same; and that the lieutenant-governor cannot recommend himself in any way so well to the king, as by proving, that, under his administration, Upper Canada has prospered, and become more attached to the parent state.¹²⁶

Strachan's motives and actions in the Gourlay affair have been interpreted in vastly different ways both by his contemporaries (including Gourlay), and by historians and commentators in subsequent generations. David Flint accuses Strachan of selfish motivations in working against Gourlay's program, arguing that Strachan's real problem with Gourlay was his exposure of Strachan's actions as selfish desire for advancement and personal gain.¹²⁷ Lois Milani goes even further, repeating Gourlay's charges of

¹²³ Strachan, *Visit to Upper Canada*, 190.

¹²⁴ Strachan, *Visit to Upper Canada*, 191.

¹²⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 98.

¹²⁶ Strachan, *Visit to Upper Canada*, 196.

¹²⁷ Flint, *Strachan*, 80.

autocratic arrogance and wilful subversion of justice for selfish ends.¹²⁸ She claims that Strachan was an anti-democratic autocrat whose deepest desire was to overthrow the will of the people and raise himself up in a grand palace at the expense of the Church and public.¹²⁹ To supporters like Bethune, on the other hand, Strachan and his fellow counsellors were protecting the colony from the seditious effusions of a Scottish radical whose “specious advances” upon the public encouraged “political charlatans” whose purpose was to gain political influence within the public sphere.¹³⁰

Gerald Craig argues that the Family Compact were concerned by the effect that Gourlay was having upon the province, and determined to remove his divisive voice from public discourse.¹³¹ Given Gourlay’s use of the language and tactics of British radicalism, the American rebels, and French revolutionaries, it is little wonder that the Anglican Tory leaders would seek to limit the influence of someone who used the same arguments and appeared to share similar attitudes and aims. Nonetheless, Craig is correct in his assertion that the methods used to remove Gourlay were heavy handed, and ultimately did the government harm by giving later Reformers a martyr to prove the ruthlessness of an arrogant oligarchy.¹³² Though Strachan had disapproved of the prosecution and banishment, he reaped some of the negative reaction that fell upon those who made Gourlay into a martyr.

The questions raised by the Gourlay affair touched off more than a decade of debate regarding the shape of the Upper Canadian constitution, while the same arguments were raging in England. Strachan and the Compact were determined to maintain the

¹²⁸ Milan, *Gadfly*, 135–37.

¹²⁹ Dent, *Upper Canada Rebellion*, 77.

¹³⁰ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 65.

¹³¹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 99.

¹³² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 99.

principles of the British Constitution, preserving a government and society predicated on hierarchy, the rejection of party politics on behalf of public order and calm, and the unity of the three constitutional pillars of Crown, Legislative Council, and Legislative Assembly for the sake of consensus and good government.¹³³ Ranged against this vision of calm and stability, the agitations of those who desired local power and popular representation were beginning to be felt. The banishment of Gourlay was seen by Upper Canadian radicals as abuse of power and a perversion of British Justice, and led to the rise of the Reform movement as a political force in the province.¹³⁴

The Reform Movement and the Rebellion of 1837

The Reform movement continued to grow after Gourlay was banished, and the central issue dividing the Compact from the opposition became Responsible Government, the means by which the Reformers in the Assembly planned to wrest patronage and the levers of advancement and profit away from the Compact.¹³⁵ The lieutenant governor of the province from 1818 to 1828, Sir Peregrine Maitland, was an Anglican Tory, and in addition to appointing Strachan to a seat in the Legislative Council in 1820, he also relied heavily upon his advice regarding the political situation in Upper Canada.¹³⁶ With the support of the Tory colonial administration, the Compact, guided by Strachan's Anglican Tory political theology, ensured that all positions of leadership within the province were populated by loyal Tories. They were liberal in their rejections of Dissenters, anyone who criticised the government, and anyone who had been connected with Gourlay and his

¹³³ Errington, *Lion and the Eagle*, 112.

¹³⁴ Patterson, "Enduring Canadian Myth," 495.

¹³⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 191.

¹³⁶ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 103.

conventions.¹³⁷ The Compact's methods were normal for political parties in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain, and even J. C. Dent acknowledges that the Compact did not step beyond the standard methods of the Tories in Britain, though he still castigates them for their actions.¹³⁸ Despite this fact the combination of their exclusionary practices and their high-handed methods of achieving their ends caused discontent among the excluded in the province, and blocked some very able men from office.

The battle between the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly was a key field of contention between the Compact and the Reformers. In 1824 Edward Talbot, an English Tory, wrote *Five Years' Residence in the Canadas*, contrasting the members of the Legislative Council with those of the Legislative Assembly. The members of the Council were "the most respectable persons in the Province, the members of the Executive Council excepted, who are men of exactly the same rank in life. All these are dignified with the title of 'Honourable,' and are perhaps the only body of men in the country who would not disgrace the appellation."¹³⁹ By contrast, the members of the Assembly were a

motley crew of all nations, trades, and professions, from the dusky blacksmith to the plodding lawyer . . . a Canadian 'House of Assembly' exhibits a most ludicrous appearance and awakens in the mind none of those dignified and patriotic feelings which the consciousness of living under an enlightened legislature cannot fail to inspire.¹⁴⁰

Talbot concluded with the tongue-in-cheek assertion that all hope for them was not lost, as

those who rejoice in the progressive improvement of our colonies (will be gratified) to learn, that, notwithstanding the almost total absence of literary

¹³⁷ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 191.

¹³⁸ Dent, *Upper Canada Rebellion*, 95.

¹³⁹ Talbot, *Five Years' Residence*, 400.

¹⁴⁰ Talbot, *Five Years' Residence*, 401.

information, the great majority of the House of Assembly are now able to read the bills which come before them, with tolerable ease,—particularly when they are printed in large type. Many also, who cannot yet write their own names, are advancing in their knowledge of penmanship, and have acquired considerable skill in making their significant X marks.¹⁴¹

This contemporary account of the state of the legislature reinforces the picture of the Assembly as incapable of producing sound legislation, leading to regular conflict with the upper house when even bills with sound principles had to be rejected due to poor drafting.¹⁴² Even Mackenzie, one of the most radical of the Reform party, admitted that the Assembly was lacking in educated men who could write their own names, let alone draft legislation.¹⁴³ Talbot's view, however, neglects the fact that there were indeed some well-spoken and able members of the Assembly who were to coalesce into a loose structure and challenge the authority of the executive as time went on.¹⁴⁴ The refusal of the Compact, led by Strachan, to recognise these men's obvious talents, in spite of their political differences, continued to fuel controversy in the province. Tories like Maitland and the Compact were determined not to allow the Assembly to gain ascendancy over the executive through Responsible Government, especially once the battles over the Clergy Reserves and education began to be fought in the 1820s.¹⁴⁵

From the mid 1810s onward, the Legislative Assembly continually sought to gain more authority, especially financial, and to limit the ability of the Legislative and Executive Councils to block their initiatives.¹⁴⁶ These methods were reminiscent of the tactics employed in the American colonies prior to the Rebellion, and the upper house and executive, including Strachan, refused to allow the same methods that had produced

¹⁴¹ Talbot, *Five Years' Residence*, 405.

¹⁴² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 191.

¹⁴³ Flint, *Mackenzie*, 17.

¹⁴⁴ Errington, *Lion and the Eagle*, 93.

¹⁴⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 194.

¹⁴⁶ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 27.

such negative effects in the American legislatures during the eighteenth century. Indeed, as with the Clergy Reserves, the Crown Reserves came under repeated attack from the “Democratic party” as a means of increasing the executive’s dependency upon the Assembly’s votes of supply that the sale and rent of Crown lands in the executive’s control had made unnecessary.¹⁴⁷ Maitland lobbied the Colonial Office to ensure that the Crown would not abandon the revenue to the Assembly, believing that there would only be further claims that would lead the province down the path of the American Colonies in the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁸ Strachan counselled and supported these measures to protect government autonomy and the Royal Prerogative. The financial control of the province would continue to be an issue between the executive and the Assembly until the union of the Canadas in 1841.

Because of the Reformers’ minority position in the Assembly prior to 1828, and because they lacked access to the inner circles of society and government, they used the newspapers to attack the government. It was in newspaper attacks upon the establishment, and indeed upon everyone else who raised his wrath, that Mackenzie began the career of castigation and bluster that would end in armed rebellion.¹⁴⁹ Throughout the 1820s Mackenzie attacked the government especially in the person of Strachan, who Mackenzie claimed was the source of all the evils in the province.¹⁵⁰ Mackenzie followed the path of diligent professions of loyalty to the king for a time, while attacking “the King’s butcher or baker (Robinson and Strachan).”¹⁵¹ But as Mackenzie became ever more angered by the Reformers’ inability to make way against

¹⁴⁷ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 134.

¹⁴⁸ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 104.

¹⁴⁹ Flint, *Mackenzie*, 17.

¹⁵⁰ Flint, *Mackenzie*, 27.

¹⁵¹ Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, 32.

the Tory ascendancy, he first attacked the lieutenant governor, and by 1830 was writing against the king, stating that the “American Revolution was a noble era in the annals of British freedom. It was a memorable struggle of Christian freemen . . .”¹⁵² Strachan responded placidly to the political attacks, stating that

The position I occupy in the Colony, and my uncompromising spirit, naturally pointed me out as the chief object of attack. For many years I have excited the jealousy of the opponents of the Government, and not a little of their hatred . . . the floodgates of a most licentious press were opened upon me; newspapers in both Provinces, day after day and week after week, poured out the most rancorous calumnies and abuse against me. Having very good nerves, I permitted them to rail on; and, conscious of my integrity, I maintained an invariable silence. I am indeed so situated that I cannot enter into a newspaper controversy; nor can I descend to the language made use of in such publications. I was likewise disposed to give my enemies time that I might see how far their passions would carry them; and I looked for a reaction in my favour from the efforts of my numerous friends in different parts of the Province.¹⁵³

Attacks upon the Clergy Reserves and the university took up much of the 1820s, but they were not able to unseat Strachan and the Church from their close association with government power, so new tactics were employed. Just as Strachan and his pupils had formed a close group of Anglican Tory leaders, another group of young men coalesced into an opposition that began to espouse loosely Whig values. This group gained significant political and press support as they created the first coherent opposition to the government and the Family Compact.¹⁵⁴ The Family Compact and especially Strachan were attacked by the reforming group through petitions against the establishment of the Anglican Church in Canada and particularly against Strachan’s influence over the government. Following the example of the campaign to repeal the Test and Corporation Act in Britain, the Reformers joined with Dissenters to champion the

¹⁵² Mackenzie, *Colonial Advocate* March 11, 1830.

¹⁵³ SP: “Strachan to Dr. Brown, 20 October, 1829.”

¹⁵⁴ Errington, *Lion and the Eagle*, 93.

removal of establishment in the province and to champion the “voluntary principle.”¹⁵⁵ Strachan strongly opposed these measures not only as a churchman, but also as a politician, as the attack on Church establishment was sure to “undermine the loyalty of the people and constitute us a province of the United States.”¹⁵⁶ The Reformers petitioned for a “provincial ministry, responsible to the Provincial Parliament and removable from office by His Majesty’s representative at his pleasure and especially when they lose the confidence of the people as expressed by the voice of their representatives in the Assembly.”¹⁵⁷ These petitions in 1827–1828 led the Reform cause to coalesce around the issue of Responsible Government, and they gained a victory when their petition led to the British House of Commons reporting negatively against the Compact.¹⁵⁸ Commons members castigated the Legislative Council as “the root of all the evils which had taken place in the administration there during the last ten or fifteen years.”¹⁵⁹ Strachan saw these attempts to alter the political situation of Upper Canada as working to “prostrate everything British—to nourish discontent—to depress the Friends of Good Govt and to strengthen Levellers and Democrats.”¹⁶⁰ Strachan believed the opposition was working to undermine the established order of the province and to impose American-style democratic values. The opposition were fast gaining the reputation as the “country party,” and “patriots,” a telling designation that evoked images of disloyalty, revolution, and a

¹⁵⁵ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 45. The voluntary principle championed voluntary involvement in and support of Christian denominational ministry, with total separation of Church and state.

¹⁵⁶ SLB, 1812–1834: “Strachan to Hargreave, 7 March, 1831.”

¹⁵⁷ William Baldwin to the Duke of Wellington, quoted in Craig, *Upper Canada*, 194.

¹⁵⁸ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 195.

¹⁵⁹ Hansard, 2 May 1828, cited in Burroughs, *British Attitudes*, 48.

¹⁶⁰ SLB, 1827–1839: “Strachan to W. H. Hale, 29 December, 1828.”

society governed by unrestrained democracy.¹⁶¹ These values struck at the fundamental political theology that Strachan was determined to defend.

John Rolph, Colonel Robert Nichol, Barnabas and Marshall Bidwell, and above all William Warren Baldwin and his son Robert formed an increasingly powerful opposition movement that won the majority in the Assembly in 1828, formally challenging the executive and the Compact's core vision of Upper Canadian society.¹⁶² Their main lines of attack were against the Church in the person of John Strachan, whose efforts to secure a Church university and to preserve the Clergy Reserves as the sole property of the Church of England were presented as evidence of the executive's willingness to subvert civil and religious liberties.¹⁶³ Unlike the Compact, however, the Reformers were loosely connected, lacked cohesion, and were prone to public disagreement and contrariness. It was not until the executive and the members of the Compact began to take notice of them as the "opposition faction" that they gained enough cohesion to provide a unified alternative vision for Upper Canadian society.¹⁶⁴

The period of 1828–1832 was momentous in Britain, and events there had the biggest influence upon the battle for Responsible Government in Upper Canada and other colonies. The election of a Whig ministry in Britain meant that the Tory governing structure in Upper Canada could not be sure of support in Parliament or the Colonial Office.¹⁶⁵ Mackenzie's newspaper lauded the "Majority for People's Rights," that saw "Wellington and Peel, or the old Tory High Church party" brought low in defeat as the

¹⁶¹ Errington, *Lion and the Eagle*, 94.

¹⁶² Errington, *Lion and the Eagle*, 93.

¹⁶³ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 129.

¹⁶⁴ Errington, *Lion and the Eagle*, 94. As with several points in Upper Canadian history, commentators point out that the Family Compact harmed itself more through their attempted repression of dissent than if they had just allowed these men to continue in ineffective opposition.

¹⁶⁵ Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 94.

Whig party overturned the established political order with the Reform Act of 1832.¹⁶⁶ Strachan saw the same alliance of “infidel and democratic principles” that had been at work since the eighteenth century gathering power in Britain and “in all probability leading to sad convulsions and many years of darkness to come—in some of which we must participate.”¹⁶⁷ The same forces fighting against the Anglican Tory order through the repeal of the Test Act, Catholic Emancipation, and attacks on the Royal Prerogative and the authority of the House of Lords were also working against the Executive and Legislative Councils to replace them with levelling democratic interests. This was not just politically bad for the Tories, but to Strachan and others it portended the triumph of the sinful ideas that were destroying France and the United States.¹⁶⁸

Despite the rumblings from Britain, a continued Tory majority controlled government in Upper Canada, and even after Mackenzie was elected to the Assembly he was promptly expelled for libelling the member’s character in his first speech.¹⁶⁹ The expulsion proved a key battle ground between the Reformers and the Tory party. After Mackenzie was expelled for the first time he was praised as the “John Wilkes of Upper Canada,” a voice for the disenfranchised and a champion of the people against corrupt executive administration.¹⁷⁰ The cry for popular government and democratic reform reached a crescendo and as Mackenzie was repeatedly re-elected and expelled from the chamber the argument that the government was not responsible to the people gained power.¹⁷¹ The call for Responsible Government was touted as the key to unlocking all of

¹⁶⁶ Mackenzie, *Colonial Advocate*, 18 August 1831.

¹⁶⁷ Strachan to John Macaulay, quoted in Fahey, *In His Name*, 133.

¹⁶⁸ Fahey, *In His Name*, 133.

¹⁶⁹ Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, 64.

¹⁷⁰ Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 97.

¹⁷¹ Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, 74.

the Reformers' goals of overthrowing the existing political and religious order. For the Anglican Tory elite such ideas were at best dissident and at worst treasonous, proof of the republican nature of the opposition. Egerton Ryerson, a Reformer who was adamantly opposed to Anglican establishment and control of the education system happened to be in Britain when the Reform Bill was passed, and his experience watching the radicals there convinced him that they were out to destroy parliamentary government and bring in republicanism.¹⁷² Returning to Canada he decried the alliance of the Reformers of Upper Canada with the British radicals, seeing the same forces at work in their demands. Though he earned himself Mackenzie's anger, he felt it was necessary to stand against the republican values that seemed to be espoused by the Reformers and defend the executive and their methods.¹⁷³

The attacks against Strachan and the Family Compact continued to grow, and in 1835 the Colonial Secretary asked for Strachan's resignation from the Executive Council as a means to satisfy the report on provincial grievances authored by Mackenzie (though it had not even been accepted by the Assembly).¹⁷⁴ Strachan was also asked to give up his position in the Legislative Council, but this he refused. Strachan defended himself in an impassioned letter to Lord Glenelg, who had asked him also to resign from the Legislative Council:

The Situations of Executive and Legislative Councillor were conferred on me without solicitation, as marks of royal approbation for services openly rendered during a period of difficulty and danger, and which were thought at the time important. I have held the first for more than twenty years, and the second sixteen; and am not aware that, in discharging the duties which they imposed on me, I have done anything deserving of censure . . . It is due to the independence of the body of which I am a member, and to my own individual character, that I should

¹⁷² Flint, *Mackenzie*, 101.

¹⁷³ Flint, *Mackenzie*, 104.

¹⁷⁴ Flint, *Mackenzie*, 120.

not suffer myself to be driven by violence and menace from the seat to which my Sovereign has appointed me, and in which it cannot be shewn that I have acted in any manner injuriously to his service, or to the best interests of the country.¹⁷⁵

Strachan was confident he had done all he could to be faithful in his political offices, and he firmly believed that the Tory establishment in the province remained the only bulwark against the encroaching forces of religious and political anarchy. He could not step aside in the face of these dangers to his homeland.¹⁷⁶ Strachan had already begun to emphasize the spiritual role of the Church to a greater extent, and even as opposition to his political role grew he continued pursuing his projects to strengthen and grow the Church.¹⁷⁷ Even so, he continued to use his political influence to speak and work tenaciously to maintain the godly society that he believed he was building in the face of the sinful attacks of the Reformers.¹⁷⁸

The Reformers became ever more focused upon the language and values of the republic to their south, and the example of the progress and economic vigour of the Americans increased their desire to replicate American success in Upper Canada.¹⁷⁹ The supposed deafness to public opinion of the executive, coupled with the lack of accountability to the people, were presented by the Reformers as the cause of slow economic progress, and the simple solution was Responsible Government.¹⁸⁰ A “Loyal Reformer” wrote to the *Liberal* newspaper saying

They (Reformers) want our Parliament to be a fair representation of public sentiment—the dissolution of the unholy union of Church and State. They want their Representatives to have the control of the public revenues; the full benefit of the munificent bequest of George the Third for the education of the people; they want a cheap Government. The present ruinous mode of disposing of the public

¹⁷⁵ Strachan to Lord Glenelg, quoted in Earl, *Family Compact*, 53.

¹⁷⁶ Bethune, *John Strachan*, 165.

¹⁷⁷ McDermot, “John Strachan,” 115.

¹⁷⁸ Fahey, *In His Name*, 133.

¹⁷⁹ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 200.

¹⁸⁰ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 201.

lands superseded by a system which will turn the tide of emigration from a foreign land to our own forest home. They want a commercial intercourse betwixt this country and the United States, on a system of perfect reciprocity.¹⁸¹

As in Britain with the Whig Reform Act, however, there was much more of party feeling than fact in the accusations laid at the government's feet.¹⁸² In their assaults on the provincial government, especially the Compact, the Reforming group followed the practices of the Wilkes controversy and subsequent periods.¹⁸³ In Upper Canada the same tactics of claiming loyalty to the Crown but attacking the government, in this case the Compact and their local representatives, were employed. Accusations of sinister motives and the perversion of the pure British Constitution for personal gain were flung at the Compact, and the ultimate charge of ignoring the will of the people was clothed in a loyal veil to avoid the charge of republicanism.¹⁸⁴

Sir Francis Bond Head, the lieutenant governor of the province starting in 1836, had followed the Anglican Tory line, and refused any concession to the democratic urge, leading to a standoff with the Assembly and an election in 1836.¹⁸⁵ The Whig and Tory arguments that had so recently brought Britain to frenzy were deployed, and the Reformers were unable to free themselves of the charge of republicanism and anarchy.¹⁸⁶ The Tory party gained a resounding victory, even defeating Mackenzie, and he decided on drastic action. He had been steadily growing in his rejection of the British system of government, moving from one who desired "a constitution the very image and transcript of Britain," to declaring that "after wearing the dress of a Whig for some years, I

3. ¹⁸¹ *St. Thomas Liberal*, 18 February, 1836. Quoted in Read and Stagg, *Upper Canada Rebellion*,

¹⁸² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 202.

¹⁸³ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 206.

¹⁸⁴ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 206.

¹⁸⁵ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 173.

¹⁸⁶ Jones, *Responsible Government*, 51.

conscientiously adopted that of a radical reformer.”¹⁸⁷ With the collapse of his political aspirations he decided it was time to rebel. He began printing Paine’s *Common Sense*, and produced a revolutionary constitution for the new independent states of Canada.¹⁸⁸ In December 1837 Mackenzie raised an armed rebellion, and Strachan and the lieutenant governor marched with the militia to destroy it in a brief skirmish (as a clergyman Strachan was unarmed and did not participate in the fighting).¹⁸⁹ Upper Canada was defended and radicalism and republicanism seemed vanquished. Moderate Reformers disowned Mackenzie and the radicals, and the cause of Responsible Government was tainted by association.¹⁹⁰

In his first sermon following the rebellion Strachan linked the republican aspirations of the rebels with the infidel spirit that rejected the true Church and Christian order, not only in Upper Canada but in Britain as a whole:

Long has God been gracious to the British nation nor can anyone doubt but that she has been raised up by divine providence for mighty purposes . . . she owes all her power and prosperity under God to her sincere profession of the principles of the Reformation . . . misfortune has assailed her the moment that she relaxed in cherishing and defending the principles of the Gospel . . . when she returned to her sacred duty . . . misfortune vanished . . . If at the present moment symptoms of darkness appear . . . it is because the Protestant Principle has been in less vigorous operation and superstition and infidelity have raised their heads in high places. Hence distress and wrath threaten us as they did the Israelites when they forsook the worship of the Lord.¹⁹¹

Strachan further saw the lust for wealth and the allure of the materialism of the United States as a prime motive for the rebellion, and a reminder of the horrors that awaited the

¹⁸⁷ Jones, *Responsible Government*, 52.

¹⁸⁸ Dunham, *Political Unrest*, 161. See Mackenzie, *The Constitution*, 15 November, 1837 in Rasporich, *William Lyon Mackenzie*, 66–9 for the text of the document. It was heavily modelled on the American Constitution, and the first clause was notably freedom of religion and separation of Church and state.

¹⁸⁹ Flint, *Strachan*, 121.

¹⁹⁰ Mills, *Idea of Loyalty*, 106.

¹⁹¹ Strachan, “Sermon, 14 December, 1837.”

country if they cast off faith (including Church establishment) and British constitutional government for the evils of an infidel constitution and a selfish way of life.¹⁹² By contrast Strachan saw the work of the Compact, especially his own, as the surest bulwark against these same wicked forces: "I may safely say that my influence, perhaps greater than any man's can be in this province, has ever been exerted for its good—in preserving peace and tranquillity and a firm attachment to the Parent State."¹⁹³ Strachan's political theology was still driving his actions.

With the destruction of the 1837 rebellion, Anglican Tory hegemony was secure and the cause of Reform seemed permanently tainted with republicanism and disloyalty. All opposition was effectively silenced for fear of being lumped with the traitors who had risen in arms against the king's government.¹⁹⁴ Despite the enforced calm in Upper Canada, however, the Imperial Government was now headed by those who were antagonistic to the Anglican Tory hierarchy.

Lord Durham and Responsible Government

At the height of Strachan and the Tory's success, the Whig government in Britain struck a blow which destroyed their ascendancy. The Tories hoped that the Imperial Government had learned that the only way to deal with sedition and republican sentiment was to support them as they provided good government to the colony, but the government saw things differently.¹⁹⁵ Lord Durham, a radical peer, was sent to report on the causes of the Canadian Rebellion.¹⁹⁶ To historian Chester New, Lord Durham's *Report* was "the

¹⁹² MacRae, "John Strachan," 101.

¹⁹³ Strachan, quoted in Flint, *John Strachan*, 126.

¹⁹⁴ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 192.

¹⁹⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 252.

¹⁹⁶ Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 193. Durham's report dealt with both Upper and Lower Canada.

Charter of Canadian democracy and self-government, the corner-stone of the first British nation beyond the seas. It is the great watershed of British imperial history.”¹⁹⁷ Even New, however, recognises that the report’s view of Upper Canada was poor and incomplete, and that the historical facts, entirely presented from the Reformers’ point of view, were so inaccurate as to be completely useless for a present-day historian.¹⁹⁸ Durham’s report placed all the blame for economic and political problems and unrest in Upper Canada at the feet of the Family Compact, echoing the complaints of the Reformers. “A monopoly of power so extensive and so lasting could not fail, in process of time, to excite envy, create dissatisfaction, and ultimately provoke attack . . .”¹⁹⁹ The Clergy Reserves and Church establishment, as well as education, were all designated by Durham as battle grounds, and his solution was the reunion of the Canadas into a single province, and the institution of Responsible Government.²⁰⁰ Anglican Tory hegemony was being destroyed, not by the internal work of the Reformers, but by a servant of the Whig British government:

It is not by weakening, but strengthening the influences of the people on its government; by confining within much narrower bounds than those hitherto allotted to it, and not by extending the interference of the imperial authorities in the details of colonial affairs, that I believe that harmony is to be restored, where dissension has so long prevailed; and a regularity and vigour hitherto unknown, introduced into the administration of these Provinces. It needs no change in the principles of government, no invention of a new constitutional theory. . . . It needs but to follow out consistently the principles of the British constitution . . . by administering the Government on those principles which have been found perfectly efficacious in Great Britain.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ New, *Lord Durham’s Mission*, 168.

¹⁹⁸ New, *Lord Durham’s Mission*, 169.

¹⁹⁹ Durham, *Report*, in Earl, *The Family Compact*, 104.

²⁰⁰ New, *Lord Durham’s Mission*, 173.

²⁰¹ Durham, *Durham’s Report*, 139–40.

In other words, the Reformers' cause of Responsible Government, defeated by the combination of Toryism and the Rebellion of 1837, was being advocated as the solution to the province's problems by the Whig government of Britain.²⁰² Both houses of the Upper Canadian Legislature dealt scathingly with the report in their responses to the British Government. John Beverly Robinson, Strachan's protégé and fellow pillar of the Anglican Tory order, provided the Compact's response in a letter to the Colonial Secretary: "There is no counteracting influence of an ancient Aristocracy, of great landed interest or even of a wealthy agricultural class; there is little in short but the presumed good sense, and good feeling of an uneducated multitude." With such an electorate "the new species of responsibility . . . would be nothing more or less than a servile and corrupting dependence upon Party." In comparison "the Republican Government of the United States would be strongly conservative."²⁰³ Craig points out that Robinson had indeed addressed the potential problems accurately, recognising, as had been argued by Strachan and other members of the Compact from the beginning, that party rule without the checks and balances of the aristocratic portion of the British system would become the new normal in the system.²⁰⁴ The same forces were taking hold in Britain, however, and it was almost inevitable that Canada should follow.

Despite the Tory's best attempts, the recommendations of the Durham Report were accepted, and the two Canadas were united into one province and given Responsible Government.²⁰⁵ The political power of the Anglican Tory elite, maintained through forty years of attacks from many sides, was broken by the union of the two provinces.

²⁰² Craig, *Upper Canada*, 262.

²⁰³ Robinson, quoted in Craig, *Upper Canada*, 265.

²⁰⁴ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 265.

²⁰⁵ Craig, *Upper Canada*, 265.

Strachan, newly made Bishop of Toronto, sat in the last session of the Legislative Council of Upper Canada and signed his new title of “John Toronto” to protests against the Union Act and yet another bill designed to strip the Clergy Reserves from the Church of England.²⁰⁶ Strachan the politician officially ceased to exist with the dissolution of the Parliament of Upper Canada, and Strachan the Bishop was left to continue teaching and living an Anglican Tory political theology through other means. Despite losing his seats in government, his political influence would not die, but his political theology was decisively defeated in Upper Canada with the advent of Responsible Government.

Conclusion

The Tory party in Britain shaped the constitution of Upper Canada in 1791, attempting to create an ideal Anglican Tory analogue to the British Constitution, complete with limited democracy and Royal Prerogative firmly in place through the executive. Strachan and the Anglican Tory gentry sought to build and maintain this ideal through the creation of an agrarian powerhouse, supporting a hierarchal society. Strachan’s political theology would not permit any surrender or modification of the “Glorious Constitution” that had been reproduced in the colony. This was not a merely political fight, or one designed to preserve earthly power for the Compact, but a necessary duty of any loyal Anglican Tory, especially the bishop. To surrender to Responsible Government was to surrender the principle that law flows from God through the Church. This could not be done by a High Church Tory like Strachan.

Strachan and the Anglican Tory party maintained that “Responsible Government meant party government,” no more accountable or responsible than any other form, and

²⁰⁶ Fennings Taylor, *Three Bishops*, 241.

infinitely more liable to cooption by party interests. Further, Responsible Government also meant a form of government that denied the central role of the Church in the state, moving the nation toward secularism and away from a firm recognition that God was the source of law, and that His earthly mediator was the legally established Anglican Church. To Strachan his theologically driven fight against Reformers, republicans, and dissidents was nothing less than his duty as a churchman and a loyal subject to the Crown. Anyone who worked to destroy the “Glorious Constitution” must be resisted with all the force that Strachan’s passionate nature could muster. Though the fight was hopeless, he could not surrender. Even compromise must be resisted as a sinful surrender. A higher judge than the Provincial Assembly demanded Strachan’s total allegiance.

CONCLUSION

STRACHAN'S ANGLICAN TORY VISION

John Strachan was a child of his generation. The political and religious battles that spanned the eighteenth century created not just two camps, but also provided the methodology and language that two competing visions of the world would use as the nineteenth century dawned. The Anglican Tory ascendancy of the late eighteenth century built its strength on defence of the Royal Prerogative and the constitution, buttressed by the political theology of the established Church. The established Church provided the backbone of the political ascendancy, and it was the established Church particularly and the Christian religion generally that became one of the key battlegrounds in the war for the future of the nation. The American Rebellion and above all the French Revolution shocked the British nation, leaving permanent scars upon their psyches as the existing political and religious orders of the Colonies and France were shattered, and new republican and levelling movements began to experiment with drastically different ways of ordering society. The beliefs and goals of dissenting religious groups in Britain led them to work for the destruction of the establishment, and caused them to join forces with the Whig and radical movements, the extremes of which were seen in the Wilkes controversy. Strachan, born at the height of the American Rebellion, lived and studied in a country that was literally and philosophically in a twenty-year-long world war with these ideas. From his childhood he began to take on an Anglican Tory mindset due to his rearing and education, as well as the environment in which he lived.

In British North America members of the Anglican Tory party like John Simcoe, Charles Inglis, and Jacob Mountain worked diligently to replicate the “Glorious

Constitution” of Britain, and with the influx of Loyalists from the United States this desire to build a vital, Anglican Tory, British colony only got stronger. A concerted effort was made to provide for an established Anglican Church, and the Clergy Reserves were created to fund this establishment. Strachan arrived in a colony that had already seen key steps taken to build the Tory Anglican ascendancy. As he spent time with Loyalists, especially John Stuart, his political theology became firmly set into the form that he would maintain throughout the rest of his life.

Strachan’s theology of the Church, education, and government defined how he lived and acted in the world. It was not a reactionary or simplistically formed theology, but represented the ascendant theological and political viewpoint in Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century. For Strachan, the Christian faith as expressed by the Anglican Church was at the centre of all of life, and every choice must be made from the core stance of faithfulness to God. The Church gained its legitimacy from the sound propagation of the Christian Gospel, and for Strachan the Anglican Church was the best expression of this primitive and authentic Gospel. As such it was his duty to maintain and expand the position of the Church, not because it was his Church, but for the good of the whole world. The Church must be supported in its mission to care for the mind, soul, and body of every person on earth. Additionally, the Church must fight against the threat to faith and to the constitution of the country represented by Roman Catholicism and Dissent. These were not merely competitors, but imperfect and even harmful expressions of the Christian faith. Not to stand against their expansion would have been a sin to Strachan. It was this firm stance that led him to fight so diligently to gain the proceeds of the Clergy Reserves fund, and it is why Strachan refused to compromise when the

opportunities were there to do so and maintain some control or power over the outcome. To have changed his stance and allowed for the rightful inheritance of the Church of England to be parcelled out to churches he believed to be at best lesser expressions of Christian truth, and at worst sinful, was not an act of greed, but a theologically driven mission to preserve the health of the nation. Only the established Anglican Church could effectively shepherd the people of Upper Canada as they sought to build an Upper Canadian, Anglican Tory, British colony, the very extension of the home country.

In the same way that Strachan believed the Anglican Church was the only legitimate Church, he also believed that only Anglican university education could be trusted to provide a practical, Christian, and loyal education that would shape the future of Upper Canada in the ideal Anglican Tory direction. Because of his strong belief in education as one of the key influences in shaping an Anglican Tory nation, Strachan worked to found King's College. When the college was taken away from the Church, Strachan chose not to endorse the new entity, but rather started Trinity College as a place where the Anglican faith would particularly inform every aspect of education. Again, this was the only option that was available to Strachan. It was not merely stubbornness that caused him to fight and ultimately to found a different institution, but rather it was a firm conviction that to do anything else would be wrong and sinful. Had he been willing to compromise he would have most likely been able to maintain his influence in public education in Upper Canada, but to do so was impossible for someone of his firm theological stance. He fought his corner and ultimately lost much through his determination to stand for his beliefs, no matter the cost.

Strachan's theological understanding of politics and government was consistent with the prevailing Anglican Tory theology of the end of the eighteenth century. As the study shows, Strachan was not a theological innovator, but rather one who gathered together sound arguments, weighed them out, and came to a conclusion, for right or wrong. He was not a theorist or one who was drawn to new and untested ideas, but rather a Tory who believed that the "Glorious Constitution" was God's providential means of blessing the British people so that they could in turn bless the world. Once Strachan had come to his theological beliefs regarding government, he tenaciously worked to replicate this "Glorious Constitution," complete with its support of the Royal Prerogative, hierarchy, and all resistance to democratic and levelling ideology. His tenacious defence of what he believed to be true led him into conflict with those who sought to shape the future of Upper Canada in different paths than the Anglican Tory ideal. The desire for Responsible Government gave Strachan much reason to be wary of radical politics. A well read man, Strachan would have recognised the same language used by the Radicals that could be found in the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Thomas Paine, and thus rightfully would have been sensitive to the ideas that stood behind the seemingly innocuous surface of these questionable ideas. When the same language and ideologies that had been employed to raze France, to encourage rebellion in the American colonies, and to spark unrest in Britain during the Wilkes controversy were redeployed in Upper Canada, Strachan was the first to resist and refused to surrender, even as he personally lost prestige, reputation, and ultimately his political influence. When the time came to stand up to Robert Gourlay and William Lyon Mackenzie, Strachan showed the same tenacity as he had shown in the face of two grown militiamen during his youth, unafraid

of the odds and determined in resistance. To abandon the tried and true British constitution for the sake of a theoretical or untested political ideology was anathema to one of Strachan's temperament. Though he was ultimately defeated in every battle, he never once showed any sign of regret that he had fought them, and that he had taken the side he did. Defeated in politics, Strachan finally focused more on the Church, working to build an Anglican Tory voluntary powerhouse in the pluralistic world that had just come out into the light.

With the advent of toleration and the Reform Bill of 1832, Strachan moved out of step with the political currents of the day. This was not an accidental or unknowing movement, but rather a deliberate choice to maintain his beliefs and fight, even against overwhelming odds, for what he believed to be right. Strachan's unwillingness to change doctrinally led him to take firm, unshakeable stands on the issues of the Clergy Reserves, King's College, and Responsible Government. Where others might have been able to compromise, Strachan's theological beliefs, as well as his determination to preserve his country from the evils he believed he saw in the American and French nations, demanded that he be unmoving. These stances did not come from mere anachronism or personal ambition, as some have claimed, but rather they were the only legitimate option open to someone who believed in an established Church, Christian university education, and the need to preserve the "Glorious Constitution" unsullied. To do otherwise was not just wrong in Strachan's eyes, but sin. As a minister of the Gospel and a priest of the Church of England Strachan believed that there was nothing else that he could do but fight tenaciously no matter the odds, and whether he would win or lose. His great strength of character could also be his greatest weakness, making him unable to see the pragmatic

benefit to be gained from compromise. While some rightly point out that Strachan would have been able to gain more if he had compromised and worked with the forces of change instead of against them, this theological understanding of his actions helps to explain why Strachan never gave up his determination to follow the path he believed to be right, even when a more politically attuned person could have gained advantage. John Strachan's involvement in politics and education stemmed from his belief that a generally Christian and particularly Anglican Tory British culture would provide the healthiest form of society in Upper Canada. Though he lost every battle, and though he died without seeing this end, his life of firm resolve and profound belief had a deep effect upon the history of Canada. Present day Canadians' lives are still touched, knowingly or unknowingly, by the Fighting Bishop.

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