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Publications of John Maclean, John McDougall and
Egerton R. Young, Nineteenth-Century Methodist Mission-
aries in Western Canada.

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MAN'S MISSION OF SUBJUGATION:
THE PUBLICATIONS OF JOHN MACLEAN, JOHN McDOUGALL
AND EGERTON R. YOUNG, NINETEENTH-CENTURY
METHODIST MISSIONARIES IN WESTERN CANADA

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

John McDougall, John Maclean and Egerton Young were Methodist missionaries among the Indians of Western Canada in the late nineteenth century and all published books based on their experiences. Contemporary readers of these stirring accounts of missionary valour would have been left with two main impressions. The first was that the Indian was clearly a member of a feeble, backward race. The second impression, however, was that the Indian could be saved from his nomadic, pagan life of ignorance, superstition and cruelty; through Christianity and education the Indian could be elevated so that, at some indefinite time in the future, he would be on an equal footing with his white brothers and could enjoy all the rights, burdens and privileges of citizenship. This interpretation of the Indians' past and future encouraged contributions to Christian mission work but it also assured the public that Canada was without doubt correct in entrusting the future of the Indians and their land to more enlightened capable hands. Writing of this kind is often found in societies where one group has imposed its will on another; a need arises among the dominant group to justify its actions. Through this writing, myths are created about subject people which sanction and sustain systems based on social inequality. The publications of McDougall, Maclean and Young contributed to

such a body of writing in Canada. Their perception of the Indians as an inferior race provided justification for removing them from their stewardship of the land. Their optimistic portraits of the glorious future in store for the Indians once they had been guided through a transition stage from "savagery to civilization" endorsed the supervision of their affairs by the more enlightened. The missionaries' caution that for an undetermined length of time the Indians would have to be "looked after" provided justification for a society based on the premise of inequality.

The introduction to this thesis is an assessment of missionary publications as a source and subject of historical inquiry; they must be approached with caution but they have a legitimate place nevertheless. The second chapter provides background on the work of the Wesleyan Methodists in Western Canada and the three missionary authors are introduced. The missionaries' arguments for the inferiority of the Indians are the subject of the third chapter. Judging the Indians by the standards of their own society, the missionaries found them backward as they left no marks of their presence on the land, did not understand the importance of private property and did not appreciate the value of time and money. The idolatry, ritualism and superstition associated with their spiritual beliefs were further proofs of a weak race. The missionaries perceived some virtues in Indian society, however, and these are presented in the

fourth chapter. They acknowledged a primitive moral order, system of education and justice in tribal society, and admired the superior sensory ability and oratorical skill of individual Indians. The missionaries made it clear, however, that these were inferior virtues, worthy of admiration only in a primitive society; the image of the Indian as backward remained. Chapter five describes the missionaries' portrayal of the glorious future available to the Indians once they had accepted Christianity. Juxtaposing their evidence of the hideousness and degradation of the Indians' former way of life, the missionaries presented startling proof of the transforming power of the Gospel. The concepts of Christianity and civilization were inextricably linked in their publications; the convert immediately acquired a new attitude toward his temporal welfare. The missionaries cautioned their readers that for the majority of Indians in Western Canada there would be a transition stage from "savagery to civilization" that could last for an undetermined length of time. This transition period is the subject of the sixth chapter. The Indian would be guided and protected by his elder and stronger brethren during the transition stage and could not expect to enjoy fully the privileges of citizenship until this gap of centuries had been bridged. The seventh is a concluding chapter.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A multitude of books on the subject of missionary heroism and martyrdom in all parts of the globe was churned out of British, American and Canadian publishing houses during the decades surrounding the turn of the century. Accounts of how the blessings of Christianity and civilization were brought to the savage¹ nations of the world displayed inspiring titles such as The Congo for Christ, Once Hindu, Now Christian and From Darkness to Light in Polynesia. Publications documenting the triumphs of missionary endeavour in Western Canada during the nineteenth century would fill a substantial bookshelf. The Methodists were the most prolific of Western missionary authors and of these the most industrious were John McDougall, John Maclean and Egerton Ryerson Young; together producing some thirty volumes, they were among the most widely published Canadians of their time.²

¹The term "savage" as it is used throughout this thesis is descriptive not of my own attitude but that of the missionaries.

²Susan Jackel, "Images of the Canadian West, 1872-1911", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, English, Fall, 1977, p. 180.

As both a source and a subject of inquiry, Methodist missionary publications have not received a great deal of attention from historians of Western Canada. As a source they are fraught with danger to the researcher. What the missionaries wrote was, in many respects, propaganda; they were compelled to be glowing about their successes and convey a sense of the importance of their work in order to solicit funds from their readers and attract young missionaries to the field. They may have tended to exaggerate, to embroider the facts or to present a selective interpretation of events, emphasizing the more dramatic features. By dwelling on the hardships, cruelties and evils of tribal life, the missionary exalted the importance of his work. Another possible reason why missionaries have not been regarded as credible historical witnesses is that today we perceive prejudices and biases on almost every page of their writing, such as their narrow sectarian beliefs and notions of racial superiority. Missionary publications present a distorted, one-sided view of contact between the Indian and the white man in nineteenth-century Western Canada. As a source for the study of the Indians they must be approached with great caution, particularly because there is a dearth of documentary records from the other side to balance the annals.

The researcher must be aware of two dangerous tendencies in the use of one-sided source material of this

kind.³ The first is that of wholeheartedly accepting the point of view of the missionaries: swallowing completely the interpretation that the backward and degraded savage was brought into the fullness and richness of a life of Christianity and civilization. Unfortunately, most studies of mission work among native people in Canada have followed this line of thinking. As one historian has written, this approach "represents a well-beaten track," and "To continue to repeat the narratives of Black Robes or White Collars bringing the blessings of civilization and Christianity to the savage barbarian of the Canadian wilderness while suffering terrible tortures or cruel derision at the hands of pagans is hagiography, not history."⁴

An opposite tendency in using missionary publications as a source is the equally uncritical assessment of the missionary as an evil barrier to the self-determination of a proud but oppressed race. R. K. Berkhofer, historian of American missionary activity, has entitled this the "Century of Dishonour" approach to American history in which material favourable to the maltreated aboriginal is selected and

³H. Alan C. Cairns, Prelude to Imperialism, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965) p. xlii.

⁴Cornelius Jaenen, "Missionary Approaches to Native Peoples," in Approaches to Native History in Canada, ed. D. A. Muise, Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, History Division, Paper No. 25, 1975, p. 5.

American policy denounced.⁵ Berkhofer writes that

...current indictments of past American conduct are on the same plane as earlier American condemnations of savage society. The Americans of the past were victims of their cultural values just as their latter-day judges are victims of today's beliefs.⁶

Missionary publications have a legitimate place nevertheless, both as a source and a subject of historical inquiry. Historians of a wide diversity of societies in which one group has succeeded in dominating another have found that missionary literature made fundamental contributions toward justifying and authorizing this domination.⁷ The colonizers or subjugators developed a private and a national need to appease conscience; this need produced a body of writing that presented arguments in support of the subordination of a people.⁸ The mid to late nineteenth century was a flowering period for writing of this kind. In a study of British reactions to Central-African society in the mid-nineteenth century, H. A. C. Cairns found that

⁵R. F. Berkhofer, Salvation and the Savage, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), p. ix.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Philip Mason, Patterns of Dominance, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 32.

⁸Ibid., p. 33.

missionary authors, in their revelations of the cruelty and degradation of tribal Africa, supplied justification for British domination.⁹ R. H. Pearce, in The Savages of America, argued that missionary publications, along with other social, historical and fictional writing of the nineteenth century, created the idea or symbol of the "savage" which in reality had little to do with the Indian but tended, rather, to sanction American progress westward.¹⁰

Philip Mason, in Patterns of Dominance, explained that in a colonial society a "compulsive oblivion" separates the dominant group from the subject people.¹¹ Those with the economic and technological advantage use their power to make life more comfortable for themselves. It becomes a psychological necessity for the colonizers to distinguish themselves from those they rule in order to justify a system based on social inequality:

The rulers must relegate the ruled to a psychological limbo, regard them as barely human, insensitive to the pain, cold, hunger, and love felt by their betters. A compulsive oblivion must shut them out from the sympathy that would be extended to a fellow clansman, a kinsman, another gentleman, a fellow slave-owner.¹²

⁹Cairns, pp. 238-240.

¹⁰Roy Harvey Pearce, The Savages in America, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1953) p. 232.

¹¹Mason, p. 3.

¹²Ibid.

Myths are created about subject people which make possible and sustain this compulsive oblivion. These myths may have a basis in reality, they may be exaggerations or they may be totally groundless; nevertheless, if people believe the differences to exist, the myths solidify.¹³

The publications of Brothers McDougall, Maclean and Young helped to create certain myths about the Indians of Western Canada that sanctioned the absorption of their land and the treatment of them as subordinates. The missionaries argued that the Indian race was backward and weak, having cleared no land, built no cities, and produced no government, law or literature. Tribal society was portrayed as a cruel, heartless regime in which women were treated like dogs and the aged left to perish. Indians were the slaves of superstition, in the despotic grip of unscrupulous medicine men. Even if the Indian could be said to possess some virtues in his tribal state, these were described as inferior virtues, not worthy of esteem in a permanent society. There was no doubt that the Indian was

¹³Ibid., p. 5.

incapable of "progress";¹⁴ this, and the loftier sanctification of the Biblical injunction "subdue it" provided clear justification for the transfer of the Indians' land to more capable hands.¹⁵ The missionaries also provided their readers with optimistic portraits of the glorious future in store for the Indians under the guidance and protection of their stronger brethren. The former sordid life of misery and sin would disappear; under the transforming power of the gospel the Indian immediately acquired the will to give up the nomadic life, till the soil, live in houses and become clean and tidy. There would be a transition stage between savagery and civilization, however, a stage of indeterminate time since the procedure involved many obstacles.

¹⁴The Victorian idea of progress is difficult to define precisely as it was a loose blending of intellectual, moral, material and scientific concepts that combined to create an unbounded confidence in the capabilities of humanity. Faith in future progress was largely based on the technological achievements of the Victorians, its railways, steamships and factories. Progress meant an end to the tyranny and superstitions of the past; man's mission was to replace superstition with reason, barbarism with civilization. Primitive man represented the crude beginnings on the march of civilization. Progress meant the process of discarding the characteristics of a nomadic, precarious, predatory life. See Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, (London: Yale University Press, 1973), Chapter 2, "Optimism," pp. 27-53.

¹⁵John McDougall often quoted these words which are likely from Genesis 1:28: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea; and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

During this period of transition, the Indian could not expect to enjoy the full privileges of citizenship. By proving the inferiority of the Indians, the missionaries provided sanction for the absorption of their land; their optimistic portraits of the Indians' future under their white protectors justified treating them as subordinates, for the native would have to be looked after for many years to come.

The purpose of this study is not to condemn or denounce the missionaries, or to evaluate the accuracy of their observations; rather, it presents the ideas and attitudes expressed in their publications. In order to "walk a mile in missionary moccasins," it is important to be aware of some of the standards and precepts on which their impressions and assumptions were based. Their kind of writing is foreign to the temper of today; it is generally felt that the missionaries' conclusions and assessments of Indian life are faulty and unacceptable. Our thinking is not based on the same hypotheses, however, as one historian has noted:

For we may work with hypotheses which do not press us to see primitive cultures as at once historically anterior and morally inferior to ours. Indeed, we feel committed to avoid such historicizing and moralizing, and rigorously to separate anthropology from philosophy, description from evaluation. But then the Indian is no

great personal issue to us.¹⁶

Ambiguous statements and contradictory ideas may be found in the books of each of the missionary authors. There is little evidence of outstanding intellect; none of them led a life of quiet contemplation and reflection and they did not consider writing to be their first call. Their ideas defy a tidy framework and it is not always easy to find logic in their opinions. An ambivalence of thought is most conspicuous in John McDougall's books. A sense of uncertainty and unease about the superiority of the civilization that he urged the Indians to adopt is clearly detectable in McDougall's writing. Yet his passages on the evils of pagan Indian life are as strident as those of the others' and his pride in the technology of the West is as arrogant and pronounced. It is perhaps in this ambivalence of thought that the root of a national need for a quiet conscience may be found; McDougall felt a need to appease his doubts and anxieties and did this through his writing.

¹⁶Pearce, p. 105.

CHAPTER II

THE WESLEYAN METHODISTS: BROTHERS McDOUGALL, MACLEAN AND YOUNG

Methodist missionary work in the Hudson's Bay Company territory began in 1844 with the arrival of four British Wesleyans. The missionaries were invited by Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Company, who was soon to regret the invitation. The Company had not previously encouraged missionary work in their territory; to wean the Indians from their nomadic life would have been disastrous to the trade. The Church Missionary Society of the Anglican Church had been at work in the Red River Settlement since 1820, but they confined their efforts to the white and mixed-blood populations, making no systematic effort toward converting the Indians. Simpson hoped that the Methodist missionaries could help consolidate the Company's influence among the Indians and assist in persuading them to curtail certain activities that were hampering the trade in furs: the migration of Indians to the Red River Settlement, and the summer fur hunt which was dangerously depleting the supply of beaver pelts.¹ Among the other reasons for

¹Frits Pannekoek, "The Rev. James Evans and the Social Antagonisms of the Fur Trade Society, 1840-1846," in Religion and Society in the Prairie West, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1974), pp. 2-3.

encouraging missionary activity was the hope that the Indians in the settlements could be induced to adopt agriculture; this would absolve the Company of some expense and bolster the Company's image in the face of queries from the Aborigines Protection Society.² The legacy of the British Wesleyans has since been overshadowed by a scandal that involved their Superintendent, the Reverend James Evans. Evans was recalled in 1845 when a number of charges involving illicit relations with three Indian girls were levelled at him by the Rossville Indians. There were also hints that Evans had a role in the peculiar death of his Indian guide.³ The confusing web of charges and counter-charges that surround the events has never been untangled. Evans died a year after returning to England and the matter was dropped.

The traditional interpretation of these events was provided by Evans' apologists, E. R. Young and John Maclean,

² Ibid., p. 3. At this time there had been "embarrassing enquiries" from the Aborigines Protection Society and the Governor of the company had been called to testify before the Society in 1836. Alexander Isbister, born in Red River but residing in London from the 1840's until his death in 1883 was instrumental in interesting groups such as the Aborigines Protection Society in the conditions of Indians in the Hudson's Bay Company territory and in the Company's sometimes hostile attitude toward missionaries.

³ W. H. Brooks, "British Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Activities in the Hudson's Bay Company Territory, 1840-1854," The Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Study Sessions 1970, p. 24.

who elevated their beloved inventor of the Cree syllabic to a saintly status, charging that the Hudson's Bay Company systematically campaigned to hound this representative of Christianity out of their territory.⁴ According to this interpretation, the villain, Sir George Simpson, ruled his domain like "...no despot in ancient Egypt or modern Russia ..."⁵ Christianity began to interfere with commerce when the Indians refused to man the fur brigades on Sundays, a refusal which so enraged the jealous, unprincipled Governor that he began a war of persecution by terrorizing some timid women into testifying against Evans.⁶ A more recent interpretation suggests that the social pretensions of Evans and his wife aggravated already-existing tensions and antagonisms inherent in the fur trade society, eventually alienating the missionary couple.⁷ Evans openly challenged the Hudson's Bay Company by allying himself with the free traders, by threatening to start a trading post at Rossville and by urging a public attack on monopoly in British newspapers.

⁴ John Maclean, James Evans, Inventor of the Cree Syllabic, (n.p., n.p., n.a.), E.R. Young, The Apostle of the North, the Reverend James Evans, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1900).

⁵ Young, p. 231.

⁶ Ibid., p. 233.

⁷ Pannekoek, pp. 1-16.

Following the Evans affair, Sir George Simpson and the Hudson's Bay Company discarded the scheme of furthering their interests through missionary work. The remaining brethren found it difficult to survive in the West without the support of the Company and returned to England.⁸ By 1854, when the newly independent Canadian Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church took over responsibility for missions in the Hudson's Bay Company territory only one of the four original British Wesleyans remained, and he defected to the Church of England.⁹ One of the first actions of the Special Committee of the Canadian Conference was to appoint the Reverend John Ryerson to undertake a tour of inspection of the West and to appraise it as a field of endeavour.¹⁰ Ryerson's account of the journey, Hudson's Bay; or, A Missionary Tour in the Territory of the Hon. Hudson's Bay Company, was highly complimentary to the officers, men and policies of the Hudson's Bay Company, an effort to create good will and mend old wounds.¹¹ Ryerson

⁸W. H. Brooks, "Methodism in the Canadian West in the Nineteenth Century," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972, p. 73.

⁹Brooks, "British Wesleyan Activity," p. 24.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 96.

¹¹John Ryerson, Hudson's Bay; or A Missionary Tour in the Territory of the Hon. Hudson's Bay Company, (Toronto: G. R. Sanderson, 1855), pp. 121-124.

cautioned his readers however, that, even though the Company had explored the country, introduced the "wandering savages" to some of the comforts of civilized society and displayed amazing fortitude and courage, there remained the great need for equally strenuous heroics on behalf of Christian benevolence:

The souls of the Indians are of infinitely more value than their furs; and to raise the multitudes of this people in the scale of moral and intellectual existence, to surround them with the comforts of civilized life, to rescue them from the gloom of superstition, to mould their hearts to Christian purity and kindness...constitute an amount of good, one would suppose, sufficient to call forth very strenuous and untiring exertions for their relief.¹²

With this bugle-call ringing in the ears of young missionaries, a fresh assault was made on the West by the Wesleyan Methodists. By the late 1880's, the Manitoba and North-West Conferences were divided into eight districts, including both domestic and Indian missions, with about fourteen ministers in each.¹³ The objectives of Wesleyan Methodist missionary work in the West are nowhere clearly stated; it is difficult to perceive in their literature a well-defined philosophy or formula behind their Indian mission work.¹⁴ There appears to have been no guiding

¹²Ibid., p. 123.

¹³Brooks, "Methodism in the Canadian West," p. 90.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 189.

principles, such as the Native Church Policy which governed the work of the Church Missionary Society during the latter half of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ The Wesleyan Methodists brought to their mission work principles basic to nineteenth century evangelical Protestantism. The first tenet of this theology was the depravity of man: the recognition of man's sinfulness and the danger of eternal damnation.¹⁶ The second principle, the doctrine of conversion, involved a dramatic, emotional experience for the individual sinner who, burdened by a sense of guilt, throws himself at the mercy of God and feels the intense sensation that his sins are forgiven; the sinner is made regenerate or is "born again." The final creed of evangelical Protestantism was sanctification, in which the conversion experience was verified as genuine as the individual strove to attain behaviour nearer to that of Christian perfection.

Nineteenth-century evangelical Protestantism was restricted to a few basic principles as it originally arose as a revolt against the "arid orthodoxy" of the High Church of England.¹⁷ It had its origins in the mid-eighteenth

¹⁵Ian Getty, "The Failure of the Native Church Policy of the C.M.S. in the North-West," in Religion and Society in the Prairie West, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1974), pp. 19-34.

¹⁶Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976) p. 21.

¹⁷Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) p. 125.

century when a number of Anglican clergymen, John Wesley among them, went through similar, spontaneous conversion experiences that made them realize something was lacking in their form of Christianity.¹⁸ The message of the Wesleyan Revival was that a true Christian should have more than a merely intellectual commitment to certain theological doctrines; religion should be "vital" - intensely emotional and all-consuming - a faith that rigorously governed all human actions. Formal assent to Christianity of the mind alone created a "nominal" Christianity that acquiesced in slack, feeble moral behaviour. "Nominal Christianity" was the main target of the original religious movement initiated by John Wesley.¹⁹ Life was a constant struggle to resist the temptations of the soul and the forces of evil in society: alcohol, unclean literature, gaudy dress and dancing parties - anything that could possibly stir up evil passions.²⁰ There was a strong measure of anti-intellectualism about the Wesleyan Revival and an emphasis on discipline and authority. It was called "vital"; it was based on human experience rather than the Christianity

¹⁸Bradley, p. 16.

¹⁹Houghton, p. 228.

²⁰George N. Emery, "Methodism on the Canadian Prairies, 1896 to 1914: The Dynamics of an Institution in a New Environment," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1970, p. 87.

of books and knowledge. The Bible was regarded as the authority on all questions. Criticism and theological discussions were discouraged.²¹

Aside from the principles of evangelical Protestantism, late nineteenth-century Methodist missionaries in the Canadian West were guided by a strong belief in the superiority of the world-wide community of the Anglo-Saxon race. The General Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Canada, based in Toronto, set the policies for the entire church and maintained rigid administrative control over its missions.²² As the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, the Methodists saw themselves as the guardians of Protestant Christian values in society; it was their mission to ensure that the Canadian West, with its enormous material potential, be given a firm, Christian foundation, perpetuating on the prairies the Protestant culture of Ontario. This duty was understood in the context of the larger, global mission given the Anglo-Saxon race, that of serving as God's instrument in the role of civilizer of underdeveloped peoples.²³ Late nineteenth-century Methodist missionaries in the Canadian West were conscious of this duty and this broader scheme of progress in their work among the Indians.

²¹Houghton, pp. 125-6.

²²Emery, p. i.

²³Ibid., p. 49.

In its policies toward Indians, French-speaking settlers in the West and East-European immigrants, the Methodist church of Canada maintained a consistent attitude. It fought vigorously against separate schools out of fear that the French element would spread to the West.²⁴ The Methodist Church was alarmed at the possibility of a polyglot society in the Canadian West; it urged the Government to adopt a more selective immigration policy and to enforce strictly the "Canadianizing" of immigrants.²⁵

The time during which John McDougall, John Maclean and E. R. Young were active as missionaries in the Canadian West, was still, as far as they were concerned, the age of vital, heroic Methodism. They called their faith a "muscular Christianity," a religion based on daily conduct rather than theological tenets.²⁶ "Manliness" implied a healthy, vigorous body, moral discipline and virtues such as courage, honesty and a sense of justice. The employment of these principles as an approach to life is aptly illustrated by the career of John McDougall. Arriving from Ontario as a young man McDougall soon became enchanted with the challenge and adventure of life at the frontier. He earned the

²⁴Ibid., p. 5.

²⁵Ibid., p. 29.

²⁶A reviewer for Tait's Edinburgh Magazine in 1858 criticized Charles Kingsley for creating a religion of physical force in his novels which he called "muscular Christianity". See Henry R. Harrington, "Charles Kingsley's Fallen Athlete," Victorian Studies, vol. 21 (Autumn 1977), pp. 73-86.

reputation of an expert frontiersman who "...ridiculed fellow missionaries who lacked the 'manhood' to live an equally dangerous life. Few plainsmen could out-ride, out-hunt, or out-shoot the prairie preacher who believed that life was forever a struggle."²⁷

The career of John McDougall could have provided ample material for a G. A. Henty or Rider Haggard novel for, according to his own account, he possessed pluck, courage, a spirit of adventure, a sense of duty and a consciousness of playing a part in a great scheme of progress.²⁸ McDougall described the excitement and peril of his work:

...wild and lawless Indians and even wilder and more lawless white men to be dealt with and circumvented and won to God and country; tribal war all the time, rebellion to be frustrated; terrible epidemics to be endured without either law or doctor or medicine to help; peace to be negotiated, and in doing this fearful risks to life taken; a new mission to be formed and established in the most dangerous part of the territory; work for the Government to be undertaken and accomplished, which prepared the way for the police, and the establishing of law and order in the North-West, in doing which, constant risk of life was undergone; the Gospel to be preached to different tribes, speaking different languages, and also to wild and wicked white men.²⁹

²⁷Paul F. Sharp, Whoop-Up Country, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955) p. 140.

²⁸A. P. Thornton, "Sources of Pro-Imperial Public Opinion," in British Imperialism, Gold, God, Glory, ed. Robin W. Winks. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963) pp. 56-58.

²⁹John McDougall, "Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-Fires, A Criticism," (Toronto: William Briggs, 1895), p. 26.

John McDougall arrived in the West in 1860 when his father, George McDougall, also a Methodist missionary, was appointed to the Rossville mission at the northern tip of Lake Winnipeg. John taught the Indians at Norway House for three years. In 1863 the McDougalls established a mission on the banks of the North Saskatchewan at a spot they named "Victoria" (now Pakan). George McDougall built the first Methodist Church in Edmonton in 1870 and in 1873 he and his son began a mission among the Stoney Indians at Morley, which was to be John's home for many years. George McDougall died a mysterious death on the prairie and became a hero and martyr of the Methodist cause in the Canadian West.³⁰ His son John went on to a much lengthier missionary career, retiring in 1906. John McDougall served as Chairman of the Saskatchewan District for the Methodist Church and as Superintendent of Indian Missions for Manitoba and the North-West Territories. In 1885, he rode with General Strange's column, acting as scout and chaplain. Following his superannuation, McDougall worked on several Government commissions among the Indians of British Columbia and the Doukhobors.

³⁰ In January of 1876, George and John McDougall and two other men were buffalo hunting north of present-day Calgary. On one clear evening George rode ahead to prepare supper for the others but did not make it to camp. The search lasted for several days during which there was a fierce blizzard. His frozen body was eventually found but there were no clues as to the cause of death. The mystery was that there was no explanation for how an experienced frontiersman could become lost on a clear night.

The many years McDougall spent in the West and the network of family ties and personal acquaintances that resulted from this tenure gave McDougall an outlook that differed from that of his fellow missionary authors, Maclean and Young; he too felt a strong loyalty to and identification with the culture of Eastern Canada but not to the same degree. McDougall proudly referred to himself as nine-tenths Indian.³¹ Growing up in the frontier regions of northern Ontario where his father worked as a missionary, he learned to speak Ojibway before he learned English and this helped him to grasp the Plains dialects quickly.³² His first wife, Abigail Steinhauer, was Indian and their children spoke only Cree for some years.³³ Cree was the universal medium of communication on the plains in the mid-nineteenth century and McDougall became so accustomed to it that he found he was at a loss in 1868 when asked to preach in English for the first time in some years.³⁴ It has been suggested that McDougall's prose style indicates that English was a second language for him; the pattern of the

³¹John McDougall, Pathfinding on Plain and Prairie: Stirring Scenes of Life in the Canadian North West, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898), p. 61.

³²John McDougall, Forest, Lake and Prairie: Twenty Years of Frontier Life in Western Canada, 1842-1862, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1895) pp. 12.

³³John McDougall, In the Days of the Red River Rebellion: Life and Adventure in the Far West of Canada, 1868-72, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1903), p. 36.

³⁴McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 27.

language, uses of idiom and sentence structure closely parallel Plains Cree.³⁵

McDougall participated fully in the economic and social life of the Plains Indians and thoroughly adapted himself to their language, customs and manner of living. As he explained, this was his method of earning their confidence and respect:

We companioned with them in sorrow and joy, in fasting and in feasting, in peace and in war; were in all things like them, without in any sense compromising either principle or manliness. We were nomads or permanents, as our work needed. We hunted and trapped and fished and engaged in all manner of athletics, foot races, horse races, anything for real fun and common brotherhood. Thus we found out men and these in turn saw us and read us as a book, until they knew that on every page of our life there was written the true desire to help them.³⁶

McDougall found life at the frontier "exceedingly romantic", and admitted to being drawn toward the life of the Indian. Speaking of tribal warfare, he told a representative of an Ontario newspaper in 1903 that "...there was an intense fascination about it all, and men gave themselves up to the pursuit of those of other tribes with a fierce delight that was contagious. I do not doubt that but for the grace of God in my heart I would have become as fierce a warrior as

³⁵Jackel, pp. 287-293. This author is not a linguist and this is a highly speculative suggestion.

³⁶McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 36.

any of them."³⁷

McDougall's affinity for the Indian way of life produced some contradictions in his writing and thinking. He did not always appear genuinely convinced that the Indians would benefit more than they would suffer by gaining the "civilization" that he worked to introduce. McDougall clearly grappled with this dichotomy in his thinking and appears to have rationalized it by concluding that the institutions and ideals of Protestant Ontarian culture were worthy of respect and loyalty even if its individual representatives were not. McDougall expressed contempt for almost all of the Eastern visitors to the West that peopled his books; they earned from him the derisive title "tender-foot". His description of Dr. Lauchlin Taylor, General Secretary of the Methodist Church was typical of his attitude toward people from the East, including all his ministerial brethren. According to McDougall, he had to push and prod the sluggish, complaining Dr. Taylor throughout his tour of missions on the prairie. He was "...a sample of spurious civilization. We have met a lot of this in our time; too much coddling, too much comfort, too much false sympathy, and the result a misconception of life and its responsibility, and the further result is moral and physical

³⁷"Splendid Record of Things Done", (n.p.:n.p., 1903) n. pag., McDougall Clippings File, Glenbow Alberta Institute.

degeneracy."³⁸ McDougall had nothing but disdain for people who limited their education to what they could learn from books. This was perhaps because he felt deficient in his own education, which consisted of two sessions at Victoria University, Coburg, which ordinarily was not enough to qualify for ordination. McDougall was ordained to the ministry in 1872, after twelve years of missionary work. There is some suggestion that church officials were reluctant to ordain McDougall before this time because of his Indian wife.³⁹ She died a year before his ordination. McDougall was pressured to fetch a wife from the East, which he did; Eliza Boyd and John McDougall were married the September following his summer ordination. Although McDougall may have been sorry that he was not able to complete a formal education he insisted in his books that the most valuable matriculation was from "God's university" that he defined as "The largest on earth, all out of doors, amid the varied experiences of frontier life."⁴⁰

In his six books of reminiscences, which he began to publish in 1895, McDougall portrayed himself as the ideal example of a pioneer and frontiersman. He was able to undertake all manner of physical labour, was one of the

³⁸ John McDougall, On Western Trails in the Early Seventies: Frontier Pioneer Life in the Canadian Northwest, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1911) p. 38.

³⁹ Jackel, p. 225.

⁴⁰ McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 168.

country's best buffalo hunters as a young man, and owned an amazing team of sled-dogs. McDougall's athletic abilities were astonishing according to his own accounts and he claimed to have been strongly urged to go to the United States where he could "...make a vast deal more money by running and athletics than I possibly could by preaching in this country."⁴¹ While it may well be true, as McDougall thought, that "It is just as essential to recognize our fitness as it is to acknowledge our limitations,"⁴² his tendency to boast about his physical capabilities and accomplishments is very conspicuous in his writing and was apparently also obvious to those he met. American ethnologist, Robert Lowie, spent several weeks in 1907 studying the Stony Indians at the reserve near Morley. He met McDougall and his brother, who ran a store at Morley and noted that:

...neither he nor his kin were exactly shrinking violets. The two brothers would pooh-pooh the then world's marathon record as something they had often outdone in their youth. The missionary brother was fond of enlarging on his physical toughness - how of a freezing night he would make shift with a single blanket, wade across streams with hefty waves of less puissant fellow clerics in his arms, and so on. Later I heard it said that there were just three liars in

⁴¹ McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 19.

⁴² John McDougall, Opening the Great West: Experiences of a Missionary in 1875-76, (Calgary: Glenbow Alberta Institute, 1970), p. 29.

Alberta; the trader was reckoned as one and his reverend brother as the other two.⁴³

According to John McDougall, if he was to be accused of being an egoist, his fellow missionary and author, Egerton Ryerson Young, was to blame. This sentiment was expressed in an explosive, emotional exchange between the two that erupted in several issues of The Christian Guardian in 1895, in which each tried his best to malign the reputation of the other. When the pages of the Guardian were closed to the debators, McDougall had the entire series published in pamphlet form at his own expense, including his last words on the matter.⁴⁴ The argument centred on the issue of who was best qualified to pose as the "apostle" of Canadian missions in the West.

The debate began with McDougall's "kindly criticisms" of E. R. Young's recently published Stories From Indian Wigwams and Northern Campfires.⁴⁵ These criticisms included McDougall's doubt that Young could possibly have seen or taken part in many of the incidents related, that Young's

⁴³Robert H. Lowie, Robert H. Lowie, Ethnologist, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959) pp. 96-97, as quoted in McDougall, Opening the Great West.

⁴⁴John McDougall, "Indian Wigwams and Northern Campfires: A Criticism," (Toronto: William Briggs, 1895). This was a pamphlet published at McDougall's own expense, containing the letters McDougall and E.R. Young exchanged through the Christian Guardian. McDougall published the pamphlet in order to answer a "vile and scurrilous letter" by E.R. Young when the columns of the Guardian were closed to the debate.

⁴⁵Egerton Ryerson Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams and Northern Campfires, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1893).

information was incorrect with respect to such things as the manufacturing of pemmican and the length of portages, that he had adopted stories from other works of literature and merely changed the scenes and the actors and that Young was guilty of calling Indian women "squaws." McDougall pointed out at length his superior qualifications to report on life in the West; he had thirty-four years' experience compared to Young's eight and these had been much more critical years in the history of the country. McDougall took greater risks and travelled more widely amidst tribal war, rebellion and epidemics:

No, my dear Mr. Young, yours was the ordinary and ours the very extraordinary life during those eight years we were contemporaneous, all of which can be proven not by "words" but by undeniable proof. And now, Mr. Editor and good people, I also, (like my reviewer) have become an egoist, but you remember who drove me to this.⁴⁶

Young's responses to these criticisms included the charge that McDougall's fur-trading activities had embittered the Hudson's Bay Company to missionary work, provoking the Company to end their grants to the church, thereby losing thousands of dollars to the missionary cause. Young claimed that McDougall's reasons for establishing a mission at Morley were that it was "...a place where there would be gain in bartering with the Indians, raising fat cattle,

⁴⁶ McDougall, "Indian Wigwams", p. 26.

getting a finger in a contract or two and otherwise fattening the bank account."⁴⁷ In an anonymous letter that McDougall received and published in the pamphlet, feeling certain it was from Young, McDougall was described as a "back-slidden, fur-trading, pretended minister" that should be expelled. The letter ended, "You are enraged that he [Young] was chosen instead of you to go to England."⁴⁸ This issue may in fact have been at the root of the debate.

It is possible that this reciprocal diatribe launched John McDougall on his publishing career. He had written only one book before this time, a life of his father, and may well have left it to future generations to acknowledge his accomplishments if he had not had some inducement to show that he was the veteran of affairs in the Northwest. McDougall's first volume of reminiscences, Forest, Lake and Prairie, appeared the same year as the Guardian correspondence. A second outcome of the debate was that it established E. R. Young's reputation for "drawing the long bow." In a history of Methodism in the West, Young is described as possessing an arresting personality, true preaching ability, keen imaginative power and literary skill, but this is qualified by "Those who profess to know Indian life intimately, contend that some of his stories are

⁴⁷Young, as quoted in McDougall, "Indian Wigwams," pp. 32-33.

⁴⁸Anonymous letter as quoted in McDougall, "Indian Wigwams," p. 40.

highly idealized accounts of some very ordinary incidents in the life of the noble Red Man."⁴⁹

E. R. Young's eight year-sojourn in the Canadian Northwest seems to have been the pinnacle of his life's work. In his books, little is mentioned of his work before he left for the West; his prior life appears only as preparation for this personal calling. After leaving his mission among the Indians, Young spent the rest of his life lecturing about it. He was born in Smiths Falls, Ontario in 1840 and was, like McDougall, the son of a Methodist minister. His family was United Empire loyalist stock, "one of the first that, out of devotion to the old flag, penetrated into the wilds of Canada."⁵⁰ He attended normal school in Toronto and taught for two years. Young was ordained to the ministry in 1867 and was appointed pastor of the Hamilton First Methodist Church. In that city he married Elizabeth Bingham. In 1868, Young was requested to go to the Hudson's Bay Company territory. The journey took the couple over two months to complete; they were guided for much of the distance by Reverend George McDougall. The last two weeks of the journey were spent in an open row boat on Lake Winnipeg. The Youngs had five children, several of whom were born at their remote mission site. A daughter,

⁴⁹Riddell, Methodism in the Middle West, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1946), p. 60.

⁵⁰A Cyclopadeia of Canadian Biography, (Toronto: Rose Publishing Co., 1886), p. 291.

Nellie, died in an open skiff while crossing Lake Winnipeg with her mother. Their only son, Reverend Egerton Ryerson Young II, followed in his father's footsteps as a minister, author of adventure stories and authority on the life of the people of the north land.

Young was first appointed to Norway House and later established missions at Nelson River and Berens River. He left the Northwest in 1876 and was released from pastoral work altogether in 1888, "owing to the many calls upon him as a lecturer."⁵¹ Young addressed audiences in North America, Great Britain and Australia, seeking publicity in the manner of Lawrence of Arabia.⁵² Described as "...one of the most successful writers, especially of books for boys, in the Dominion," Young published eleven books for both the adult and juvenile reading public between 1890 and 1907.⁵³ At least three of these went into second editions, attracting American and British publishers. All but one of these were based on the experiences of his eight years in the Northwest.

Of the three Methodist missionary authors, Young displayed the least ability to detach himself from the religious and social framework of nineteenth-century

⁵¹H.T. Morgan, The Canadian Men and Women of the Time, 1898, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898), p. 1109.

⁵²Brooks, "Methodism in the Canadian West", p. 162.

⁵³Morgan, p. 1110.

Protestant Ontario in his observations of Indian life. This was perhaps because, of the three, Young spent the least amount of time in the West; unlike McDougall and Maclean, Young did not make the West his home - he wasted no time in returning to Ontario after his eight-year exile. Young's books present a much more rigid, inflexible attitude toward the Indians than is found in either McDougall's or Maclean's writing; he totally denounced the religion, customs and way of life of the Indians. Perhaps because of his difficulty with the Indian language, Young's descriptions of individuals seem superficial, the characters wooden. All of Young's endeavours among the Indians were portrayed as tremendously successful; none of the despairs and frustrations was mentioned. Apparently he felt the demands of truth were not as important as the propaganda imperatives of the cause. As Young stated in the introduction to one of his books:

These wanderings on the fast disappearing trail speak of successes rather than failures; not but that there were many of the latter, as well as long waiting after the seed time for the harvest, but because it is so much more pleasant and helpful to look on the bright side of life, and talk of victory rather than defeat.⁵⁴

⁵⁴E. R. Young, On the Indian Trail, Stories of Missionary Work Among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians, (New York: Young People's Missionary Movement, 1897) p. 11.

The name of Reverend John Maclean is rarely mentioned in histories of Methodism in the Canadian West. A likely reason for this neglect is that Maclean was himself the historian for his contemporaries in the Manitoba and North-West conference, and wrote tributes to the work of many others. Maclean wrote biographies of James Evans, George McDougall, and Henry Steinhauer and a series of brief lives of missionary heroes and heroines in Vanguards of Canada.⁵⁵ His last project was a life of his friend, John McDougall, published a year before Maclean's death in 1928. Two of Maclean's books, The Indians of Canada and Canadian Savage Folk, were largely based on his work as a missionary among the Blood Indians at Fort Macleod from 1880 to 1889. The Indians of Canada went through at least four editions and had both Canadian and British publishers while Canadian Savage Folk, a greatly expanded version of the earlier volume, was hailed after its appearance in 1896 as "the largest, most important book on the native races of Canada yet published," as "a permanent authority on the subject," and as the "standard work for years to come."⁵⁶

⁵⁵John Maclean, Vanguards of Canada, (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, 1918).

⁵⁶See the book advertisements at the back of R. G. MacBeth, The Making of the Canadian West Being the Reminiscences of An Eyewitness, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898).

John Maclean was born in Scotland in 1851, and came to Canada as a young man in 1873. He was the most highly educated of the three missionary authors, receiving a B. A. and M. A. from Victoria College, Coburg and later a Ph.D. from Wesleyan University, Bloomington, Illinois.⁵⁷

Maclean was ordained in 1880 and his first appointment was to the Blood Reserve, the largest in the Dominion, where he remained until 1889. He was married in June, 1880 to Sarah Anne Barker, and his wife accompanied him West. While at Fort Macleod, Maclean published one of the first newspapers in the West, The Excelsior. With no ads and a circulation of 100, it ran for only one year. Maclean remained in the West after his work among the Bloods, stationed at Moose Jaw, Neepawa, Carman, Morden and Winnipeg. He was a member of several scientific societies including the Canadian Institute, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Folk-Lore Society. Maclean was correspondent for the British Association on North-West Indian Tribes 1882-1888. He contributed to scholarly journals, often under the pen-name "Robin Rustler" and lectured frequently on the Indian tribes of North America. Maclean's interest in science was reflected in his observations of the Indians; he strove for objectivity. As he proudly announced in the

⁵⁷Morgan, pp. 705-706, and W. Stewart Wallace, ed. The Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography, (Toronto: 1963), p. 474.

introduction to one of his books, his study would avoid the mistakes of others because he did not examine the red man from the point of view of the white. He wrote: "This work is an attempt to reach the meaning of life of our savage folk."⁵⁸ Maclean was not always successful, however, in maintaining a detached, scientific spirit of inquiry. Even his chapter titles, such as "Some Queer Folk," "The Doomed Race," or "The Bible in the Lodges," suggest that he could never completely conquer the precepts and assumptions of a nineteenth - century Methodist missionary. Maclean's scientific approach did prevent much of his own background and personality from emerging in his writing. Unlike McDougall's books, in which the author is always at the centre of the action, Maclean avoided the use of "I" as much as possible; the focus of his books was the Indians and not his role among them.

Although missionaries in the Canadian West in the nineteenth century brought different backgrounds and varying approaches to their work among the Indians, they had a great deal in common once they arrived as all faced a gruelling, rugged frontier existence for which many were ill-equipped. Often they found that more of their energies had to be devoted to the provision of food and shelter than to winning souls for Christ. Books were few, mail was

⁵⁸ John Maclean, Canadian Savage Folk: The Native Tribes of Canada, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1896), preface.

infrequent, as was conversation; it was a life of loneliness and isolation. The solitary life seemed to promote irritability when the missionary did meet with fellow representatives of various institutions; squabbles and misunderstandings were frequent between the missionary and the fur trader, the North West Mounted Police, the Indian agent and, most commonly, his missionary brethren. In his work among the Indians, the missionary had to deal in isolation with all manner of frustrations, tensions and conflicts. The rigours of life on the inhospitable frontier took a heavy toll on the health of the missionaries and their families who were far from medical aid.

Many missionaries were ill-prepared for the life they were to lead on arrival in the West; they had little knowledge of the nature of the country into which they ventured, they lacked special training for their role and they were generally without detailed instructions to guide them in their work among the Indians. Some were more accustomed to a life of study and contemplation than one which demanded they hunt and fish for food, whip-saw lumber for shelter and travel by dog-train, horse and canoe. Perhaps one reason why many missionaries later wrote of what they suffered and endured on arrival in the West was to save those that followed from similar discomfort by providing them with the necessary information. The epic, five-month journey of the Reverend William Newton from Ontario to

Edmonton in 1875 was beset with a series of misfortunes which included abandoning on the plains two horses that proved useless; Newton was swindled by a devious Winnipeg merchant. On arrival in the small settlement of Edmonton, Reverend Newton felt somewhat bewildered:

At first, on looking around me, I asked myself what I was to do. I was far from civilization, and with only one or two posts in the year to bring me letters. I had at hand a tent, a surplice, a Prayer-book and a Bible. There was no parsonage, no church, nor any means for building either. I had been sent as a missionary to settlers. But where were they?⁵⁹

The Reverend J. Hines, sent by the Church of England in 1874 to establish a mission at a point seven hundred miles north-west of Winnipeg, felt a similar sense of desolation when he was set down in the place where he was to spend his first winter:

...my position was this: my goods were lying in a heap on the ground near the lake, there was not an inhabited house nearer than Carlton, seventy-five miles away, and to add to my anxiety and responsibility, all the oxen, five in number were left with me...

It was on August 13th, 1874, that the Archdeacon left me at White Fish Lake, just three months after I had sailed from Liverpool, and now I became a responsible missionary... my salary, which was to be £100 per annum,

⁵⁹William Newton, Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan, (London: Eliot Stock, 1897), pp. 16-17.

only commenced on the day the Archdeacon left me alone on the banks of White Fish Lake...⁶⁰

Missionaries did not always receive the cordial, warm receptions they may have hoped for from heathens anxious to hear the word of God. The Reverend Hines' first encounter with the Indians among whom he was to labour was not auspicious. Hines was told that if he did not intend to trade he should waste no time in leaving the country and, if he must stay, he would be required to pay the Indians for the trees he was cutting down and supply them with food weekly as a form of rent.⁶¹ Often it was the sparse white population, particularly representatives of other denominations, that expressed the most hostility toward a "tenderfoot" missionary. Reverend Hines was bullied out of the site at which he was to establish a mission by a "Roman priest" who managed to totally disrupt all his plans. Because of the priest's influence, Hines had difficulty finding anyone willing to guide him around the lake to choose a suitable site for his mission. He described the scene that took place when he was finally able to engage a Hudson's Bay Company man to take them onto the lake:

⁶⁰J. Hines, The Red Indians of the Plains: Thirty Years' Missionary Experience on the Saskatchewan, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1915), pp. 63-64.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 66.

The half-breeds and Indians, what few there were at Green Lake, were all under the influence of the priest, and as we were being taken over the lake they kept shouting at us, "The bears will eat you, the bears will eat you." It was the season of the year when the she bears were going about with their cubs, and at such times they are constantly on the watch for intruders and always ready to give chase.⁶²

Reverend Newton met a similar reception from the Methodists, who seemed to regard Edmonton as their domain alone: "By these people our work was looked upon as an interference with their rights, and our presence was simply shocking. We were regarded as poachers who plunder the preserves of respectable families in well-regulated communities."⁶³

Providing adequate shelter was an undertaking of great difficulty and grave import to the missionary. Long passages in their literature were devoted to how the mission houses and churches slowly took shape and what means were devised to "make do" in default of lumber, shingles and plaster. Reverend Newton was fortunate to obtain a partly finished log building to use as both a home and a chapel. In summer this served very well, but in winter Newton complained that "Often on Sunday mornings we had to use shovels to throw the snow out of the window; then, when the fire had melted the snow on the open rafters, the wet

⁶²Ibid., p. 57.

⁶³Newton, p. 26.

came down on our heads and caused discomfort at the services."⁶⁴

The climate of the West was also a source of acute discomfort to the missionary. The winter brought the greatest amount of suffering, especially as they were often required to sleep "under the stars." Camping in January, 1866 between Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House, John McDougall described the scene as the campers alternately steamed and froze as they turned before the fire:

Pemmican and hot tea went a long way towards heating the internal man, and the great fire did something for our extremities. But the cold was omnipresent. In great chunks, in morsels, in atoms, it was all about us. You could shiver in your clothes and feel it. You could almost smell it and see it, and you could hear it plainly enough as with might and force it strained the very earth and made the forest monarchs crash as if these were so many ends to its lash.⁶⁵

The diet of the missionary was plain and monotonous. In the early years he was, like the Indians, dependent on the buffalo; McDougall's books are filled with descriptions of the buffalo hunt. At Norway House and Berens River, E. R. Young and his wife soon tired of their steady diet of fish. John Maclean described his menu at Fort Macleod in the 1880's as, "Breakfast: Fried potatoes, bread and tea.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁶⁵ McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 132.

Dinner: Bread, tea and fried potatoes. Supper: Tea, fried potatoes and bread."⁶⁶ Supplies were difficult to procure in the years before the railroad. For some years the McDougalls, then at Victoria, made an annual trip to Fort Garry, a round trip of over seventeen hundred miles.

The loneliness of life on the frontier and the desolate sense of such a great distance between the missionary and the life he had left behind made mail days loom large in importance. As John Maclean described, a kind of "mail fever" took hold of the residents of Fort Macleod during the days of anticipation.⁶⁷ People from the surrounding districts wandered into town, sleeping on the counters and floors of the hotel:

When the mail was delayed, a strange feeling of excitement took possession of everybody. They all seemed riveted to the place, unable to go home and without anything to do. Each morning and afternoon could be seen men standing on the roofs of the houses, scanning the prairie for any sign of an approaching wagon. ...We would resolve to think no more about it, but work became difficult, for every hour or oftener, we would be compelled to go to the door to look out on the prairie. The last thought at night and the first in the morning was "mail, mail!"⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 238.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 242-243.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 242-243.

It was a very solitary life for the missionaries isolated on reserves or Indian settlements. They did not lack human contact but for many the barriers of culture and language prevented the development of fellowship or comradeship. Most missionaries worked through interpreters but their services were not always easy to obtain. Reverend John Semmens waited nearly a year for an interpreter at Nelson House, where he had arrived in 1874; he found his attempts at communicating with the Indians through "looks and signs" to be "entirely useless" and wearily waited in "loneliness and disquietude" for a chance to work.⁶⁹ Difficulties with the language also led to some comic circumstances. E. R. Young, visiting a group of Indians for the first time at Jack Head in 1873 was greeted by,

...a grave and dignified chief, who wished to inquire politely as to my health, [and who] for the moment dropped his own language, and in good English said, "Does your mother know you're out?" I found out afterwards that a roguish fur trader had taught him the expression, as a very polite one to use to distinguished strangers.⁷⁰

A recently appointed Church of England Bishop of Athabasca engaged an Indian guide whose English vocabulary consisted

⁶⁹ John Semmens, The Field and the Work: Sketches of Missionary Work in the Far North, (Toronto: Methodist Mission Rooms, 1884), p. 113.

⁷⁰ E. R. Young, By Canoe and Dog Train Among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1890), pp. 240-242.

of the word "eat". The Bishop knew nothing of the Indian language; consequently,

...their conversation was limited during the four days they travelled together; whichever got up first in the morning would arouse the other by shouting "Eat," and when on the trail whichever thought it was time to boil the kettle, instead of calling for a halt, he would shout out the word "Eat".⁷¹

For many of the missionaries, the distance from home, familiar faces, news and the harshness of life on the frontier were ameliorated by the presence of their wives and families. Missionary publications are full of eulogies to the bravery and devotion of their plucky wives. The women were often described as the bearers of the "civilizing influences":

The wise women from the east, the magi of modern times, have travelled westward with their gifts of culture, grace and love, and laid them at the feet of the men and women who sit in loneliness, and with depressed hearts, in the lodges widely scattered on prairie and mountain, and in the cold and bleak regions of the north land.⁷²

The missionary who brought his family to the West exposed them to many dangers. The harsh climate, manifold duties and distance from medical help took a heavy toll on the

⁷¹Hines, p. 187.

⁷²Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 348.

health of the missionaries and their families. Two of John McDougall's sisters died in 1870 during the small-pox epidemic that swept the West, and all but one of the family caught the disease. McDougall's wife, Abigail Steinhauer, died at a young age after a brief illness, leaving him with three small children; his father died on the plains in 1876 and a brother of sixteen died one year later. E. R. Young's daughter Nellie died while crossing Lake Winnipeg. As he described it:

So terrible was the heat that hot July, in that open boat with no deck or awning, that the beautiful child sickened and died of brain fever. Mrs. Young found herself with her dying child on the banks of the Red River, all alone among her sorrowing Indian boatmen, "a stranger in a strange land," no home to which to go; no friends to sympathize with her."⁷³

The rewards must have been great for the missionaries to endure such a life. Something must have effectively muted the loneliness, the frustrations, the tensions, the disease and the death of loved ones. There must have been some very attractive stimulus to coax anyone to embark on such a life even if only for a few years. The literature of the missionaries indicates that the attraction to such a life had a great deal to do with the idea that the missionary had a significant part to play in a great scheme of

⁷³Young, By Canoe, p. 46.

progress. The Methodists felt themselves to be part of a world-wide movement to introduce and nurture the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon civilization among the peoples of the globe. It was a duty and a burden imposed upon their race to be guardians and trustees to the weaker races. Tyranny and superstition would be eventually banished from the world, ushering in the millennium. The missionaries found hope and strength in the idea that they were helping to shoulder the responsibilities of the stronger races toward the weaker. The missionaries were very optimistic about the future of the Canadian West as there was the possibility of establishing a society that side-stepped the ills of the old; it was promising because of its vastness, emptiness and enormous resource potential. As John McDougall wrote, "Here was the splendid room reserved throughout the ages for the giving of man a fresh opportunity of redeeming himself as one worthy of dwelling in such a world as this."⁷⁴ Missionary publications constantly reminded the brethren in the field of the immense significance of their work, linking their names with that of Livingstone, Stanley and Speke as pioneers of civilization.⁷⁵ There was an aura of romance and excitement about the missionaries' ceaseless toil in the solitary wilderness. McDougall's books are full of passages

⁷⁴ McDougall, Western Trails, p. 269.

⁷⁵ The Missionary Outlook, March 1885, p. 38.

reminding himself and his readers of the cosmic significance of his work, passages which generally follow a description of the isolation, discomfort and privation of missionary life:

...we were "path-finders" for the multitudes to follow, we were foundation builders of empire; we were forerunners of a Christian civilization destined to hallow and bless many homes, and we were exalted with the dignity and honor of our position and humbly thanked God for it.⁷⁶

Some missionaries needed little inducement to remain in the West; they found the land immensely attractive, and relished new situations and the constant exposure to hardships and danger. This tendency is most clearly illustrated in McDougall who seemed almost to seek refuge from civilization in a more primitive society. A fascination with certain aspects of frontier life is also evident in Maclean's and Young's writings. Undertaking strenuous and dangerous tasks for Christ and discarding their broadcloth for buckskin, their role was often depicted as being exceedingly romantic. According to Maclean, the "Sky Pilots" and "Gospel Grinders" that dispensed "soul-grub" to the hardened people of the frontier were held in high esteem:

⁷⁶John McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe: Pioneering on the Saskatchewan in the Sixties, (Toronto: William Briggs, 1896), p. 252.

They were strong believers in muscular Christianity, and the missionary who was able to endure greater hardships than they, sleep on a harder bed, eat as coarse food, ride a wilder horse and withal keep his life and language pure, was the man they delighted in, and gave to him the right hand of fellowship.⁷⁷

A melancholy, wistful yearning for the days when they led this life of adventure and romance is evident in the literature of the missionaries. McDougall, Maclean and Young all wrote some years after the events they set down on paper and the memories they conjured up at their desks seems to have filled them with some nostalgia. As Maclean wrote in the 1890's:

The romantic days of the west are with us no longer, railroad facilities having introduced a hard, practical life, an earnest struggle for bread, and there linger with us memories only of buffaloes, log shanties, long rides on the prairie, swimming rivers, tales of the camp fires and songs of the Indians sitting in groups on the banks of the Old Man's River.⁷⁸

It is ironic that what the missionaries lamented and mourned was contrary to everything they had laboured for among the Indians.

⁷⁷ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 240.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 256.

CHAPTER III

THE PATH OF ERROR AND SUPERSTITION

Meet emblem of a world shrouded in the chill and gloom of paganism seems Lake Winnipeg on this cold wintry morning. No sign of life is here. The ice and snow, like a great mantle, seem to have wrapped themselves round everything that once had life.¹

E. R. Young

John McDougall, John Maclean and E. R. Young promoted several arguments to support their basic conclusion that the Indian was backward and uncivilized; the frame of reference for this conclusion was the standards of their own society, against which Indian culture was scaled or rated. The missionaries shared the belief that, in a scale of ascending achievements, the Anglo-Saxon race belonged at the pinnacle in the realms of technology, politics, religion, literature and art. Primitive man, represented by the North American Indian, or the African, belonged to this same scheme of progress but was at a much lower level.² McDougall, Maclean and Young all agreed that the Indians of the Canadian West belonged to the same family

¹Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 14.

²Cairns, p. 91.

of humanity but were at an earlier, embryonic stage. Essential proofs of the Indians' childlike state were that they had left no marks of their presence on the land despite a stewardship of many centuries, that they did not understand the importance of private property and that they did not appreciate the value of time and money. They had developed no technology and were not likely to as theirs was a static culture. Further proofs of the Indians' backwardness could be found in the idolatry, ritualism and superstition of their religious beliefs and in their indifference to suffering.

Evidence of a knowledge of scientific theories of race to support the premise that the Indian race was at an earlier stage of human development is found only in John Maclean's books. Although McDougall and Young shared this conclusion there is no indication of a carefully constructed system of thought behind it. Maclean's pamphlet The Destiny of the Human Race, dealt with various contemporary theories of race in a somewhat rambling and disjointed manner, eventually concluding that the twentieth century would belong to the "Americanadian" race or nation, predicting that political boundaries in North America would vanish.³ Maclean surmised here and in his other books that the history

³John Maclean, The Destiny of the Human Race, (n.p., n.p., n.d.)

of all races or nations, terms he used synonymously, followed a pattern of growth, perfection and decline; this was the fate of the Roman Empire and would be the fate of the British Empire whose torch would be taken up by the "Americanadian" nation which was destined to follow the same pattern. The North American Indians were an example of a nation that had deteriorated and decayed before it reached the stage of manhood or perfection:

Sometimes the nation may die before it has reached the stage of manhood, or it may linger in sickness, showing signs of decay, and then of recovery, until suddenly it dies a violent death. Wherever the representatives of strong races appear, the weak native races rapidly disappear. This is fully illustrated in the case of Maoris and American Indians.⁴

As Maclean explained further in another publication:

...and it appears as if there were a predestined antagonism of the races, but the conflict ends in the subjugation of the red man adopting the modes of life of his conqueror. It is the old story of the white conquerors over the earth, and wherever they go, traces of the conflict are seen in decaying and dead races of men.⁵

According to Maclean, the Indians of North America were to the British Empire what the Germanic barbarians were to the Roman Empire; both were nomadic, warlike cultures

⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 543.

and they shared many customs, such as polygamy.⁶ Other similar traits that Maclean observed were, "Hospitality, a generous spirit toward friends, lack of gratitude for benefits received, and a natural inclination for stimulants."⁷ It is not clear what point Maclean wished to make by often comparing the Indians to the Goths and Huns of the ancient world for their race could not be said to have decayed and died. He perhaps hoped to point out the possibility of the eventual "civilization" of the Indians even though they appeared to be centuries behind in development.

The question of the origin or genesis of the Indian was of some concern to the missionaries as it raised moral and religious issues. All strenuously argued against the possibility of an autochthonous or pre-Adamite race. It was essential to the work of the missionaries that all men be considered to be in a fallen state; the Indian must also be in need of redeeming love to be saved. Indeed, it would have been shattering to the missionaries' entire conception of life to conceive of man as anything but a sinner. The idea of separate creation also had to be denied by the missionaries because of the impossibility of there being more than one standard of morality and virtue, as this was God-ordained. Separate creation could also justify the

⁶Ibid., p. 316.

⁷Ibid.

supremacy of one race over another, or imply the superiority of one moral order in relation to another. As Maclean explained:

Mankind is to become morally one, because it was originally one. If there has been a separate creation of races, then is established the plea of the inferiority of some races, and there is an excuse for the slavery of the Negro, and ill-treatment of the American Indian. If, however, the Negro and the Indian are our brother-men, belonging to the same race, then are they not only entitled to equal privileges, but they must have them, as the common rights of all men. The doctrine of the solidarity of mankind is that which gives significance to all moral questions, as well as questions of a political, social and industrial nature.⁸

What may also have concerned John Maclean and other missionary authors about the possibility of separate creation was that it could imply that the moral order, religion and customs of one race were just as good as those of another, thus disavowing any justification for missionary work.

By the time of McDougall, Maclean and Young, the discovery of the existence of primitive races in the world was several centuries old and many theories had been postulated to account for their origin, separateness, isolation and paganism. There were two theories still prevalent by the late-nineteenth century, both mentioned by the three

⁸ Maclean, Destiny, p. 2.

missionary authors. The first was that the Indians were descendants of Adam, Noah and the Asiatic Tartars or Mongols that arrived in America by way of a land bridge. In their wanderings they had lost their sense of civilization, religion, law and order.⁹ John McDougall seldom speculated on matters such as this in his books but agreed with this theory because of the affinities of features he perceived among Asiatic peoples and the Indians.¹⁰ A second theory that had gained some support in the early nineteenth century was that the Indians were Hebrew, descendants of the lost Ten Tribes of Israel.¹¹ Admitting that the theory was out of favour, E. R. Young nonetheless pointed out some remarkable analogies he found between the Jewish and Indian cultures.¹² The Indians lived in tribes as did the ancient Israelites, there were striking personal resemblances and both cultures were monotheistic. Young perceived similarities in language, ceremonies and customs; the Iroquois for example, had once practised circumcision. Also remarkable was the traditional Indian legend of a great deluge in which the whole human race perished, except for those who escaped on a canoe or raft.

⁹Pearce, pp. 24-25 and p. 81.

¹⁰John McDougall, "The Future of the Indians," unpublished essay, McDougall Papers Box 1, f.11., Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

¹¹Pearce, p. 61.

¹²Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 83.

Both theories were arguments for the essential unity of humanity; they were attempts to find a secure place for the Indian within a Christian scheme of things. It was important to the missionary that the Indian be understood as part of the "sinning race of Adam," as Young wrote:

Many years' experience with and intimate study of the red man in his own haunts and surrounded by his natural environments have only deepened the conviction formed long ago that he is one of the sinning race of Adam suffering from the fall, not much better or worse than others, and needing as well as others the benefits of the great scheme of redeeming love to genuinely lift him up and so save him that there comes real and lasting peace in his own heart and fitness is given him to take his place among the other subdivisions of the great human family.¹³

When convenient, John Maclean adopted suitable portions of Charles Darwin's theories to support his arguments; in Maclean's opinion, these gave a scientific basis to the point of view that all races were descendants of Adam. The problem of the great diversity between races no longer had to be grappled with in the light of Darwin's discoveries as they accounted for the existence of varieties that were still derived from a single ancestor.¹⁴ Maclean disagreed with Darwin's conclusions; men were descendants of Adam, not of apes:

¹³Ibid., p.3.

¹⁴Maclean, Destiny, p. 3.

There are conditions where development is an impossibility, e.g., the instinct of animals cannot be developed into the reason of man, the inorganic cannot become organic, a stone cannot become a flower. One genus cannot be developed into another genus: the wolf (Canidae), cannot become a lion (Felidae); the gorilla (Troglodytes), cannot become a man (Homo Sapiens).¹⁵

Yet, Maclean used terms such as "struggle for existence," and "supremacy in nature" whenever they suited his purpose.¹⁶ This purpose was, essentially, to show justification for the doctrine of "might makes right", for "the march of the white conquerors over the earth." Although it may appear contrary to his opinion that the plea for the inferiority of a race could not be established because of the oneness of humanity, Maclean clearly felt that some races were more fit than others, that some were born to rule and that, as a natural consequence, some races would suffer:

In the struggle for supremacy the red man has not the opportunity nor has he the advantages of the centuries of experience enjoyed by the white race, consequently he must suffer in the contest....Believing and teaching the Gospel of brotherhood, we are not at liberty to kill him, nor even to pauperize him; but we may and can civilize and Christianize him....Our aim must be to save the man, for he is worth saving, and to seek to solve the problem

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

of their continuance and civilization by striving to change their social conditions and develop their latent energies.¹⁷

The Indians were conceived of as a backward society, living at the first stage of savagery; theirs was a nomadic, combative life in which they contended, like animals, for existence and supremacy.¹⁸ In the literature of McDougall, Maclean and Young a number of proofs were set forth to establish the weakness and inferiority of the Indian, each author emphasizing different arguments. The standards with which the missionaries appraised the Indian were those of Anglo-Canadian society, standards which they assumed to be universal. The concepts and values which determined their interpretation of the weaknesses of the Indian race included the virtues of self-help, industry, thrift, and moral discipline. The beliefs and perceptions of the missionaries were framed by a society that had enormous admiration for its own technological successes and believed itself to be engaged in a vast crusade to further the progress of civilization over barbarism.¹⁹ The missionaries brought to the West an image of what life was meant to be and toward what goals humanity was to strive; this image collided at numerous

¹⁷ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 552.

¹⁸ Maclean, Destiny, p. 8.

¹⁹ Houghton, pp. 250-255.

points with the customs and values of Indian tribal life.

A basic measuring rod for evaluating the Indian culture was what degree of control they had over their environment. The most glaring evidence of the backwardness of Indian society in North America was that it left no marks of its presence on the land. During the many centuries that the Indians possessed the land they cleared no farms and built no cities; there was no indication that, if left to themselves, they would begin to move in this direction, for theirs was a static, dormant culture. This, combined with the enormous resource potential of the West that the missionaries continually extolled in their books, constituted the primary justification for removing the Indians from their stewardship of the land. Their disregard for and neglect of the potential of the West conflicted not only with the missionaries' commitment to an ideal of progress but also defied the Biblical injunction "Arise and Subdue it." This point was emphasized in McDougall's books and apparently also in his sermons. His one surviving sermon, which he was known to have delivered on several occasions, began with this message:

The great God has work to be done, plenty of it. He wants men to do it. The work is great. Material, moral and spiritual wildernesses are to be reclaimed and resurrected and made to fill the purpose of their existence.... That God does call men this world is full of the proofs of. It is to till the soil, to hew and

place the rock, to fashion the timber, to melt and fuse and mould and shape the metal....the bridging of oceans and spanning of continents and manipulation of lightings, the multiplication and concentration of mechanical power in these days all go to show that God meant what He said to the first man when, pointing to the wonderful world He had made, He gave the command "Subdue it."²⁰

To McDougall, a society that ignored man's mission of subjection was "dead to progress" and consequently barbaric.²¹

As he wrote of the plains Indians: "The present owners of this great domain were thoughtlessly, carelessly living on the surface. Like the butterfly flitting from plant to plant, so these men roamed and camped and dreamed not of mines and means which were above and beneath them on every hand."²²

There were several corollaries to the central argument that the Indians left no marks of their presence on the land. The "buffalo and tribal communism" of the Indians prevented the introduction of the great pillar of civilization, private property, which would promote stability and self-respect.²³ The influence of the buffalo was detrimental; there was no hope of civilization until the

²⁰J. Ernest Nix, "A 19th Century Western Canadian Sermon," United Church Bulletin, No. 14, 1961, pp. 4-5.

²¹McDougall, "The Future of the Indians".

²²McDougall, Western Trails, p. 18.

²³McDougall, Forest, Lake and Prairie, p. 76.

Indian could be weaned from his dependence on the hunt. As a consequence of this dependence, the Indian had never learned the necessity of providing for the future; present contentment was their only goal. According to the missionaries, this in turn gave them faulty, misguided ideas about the value of work, time and money.

From McDougall's point of view, the immense herds of buffalo were at the root of the problem. The buffalo was not the villain in Maclean's writing to the same extent as by the time of his arrival in the West in 1880 they had almost disappeared from the plains; nor were they singled out by E. R. Young who did not work among the plains Indians. But for McDougall it was a different story. As he described the Blackfoot Indians:

These were thoroughly buffalo Indians. Without buffalo they would be helpless, and yet the whole nation did not own one. To look at them, and to hear them, one would feel as if they were the most independent of all men; yet the fact was that they were the most dependent among men....In short, they lived and had their physical being in the buffalo.²⁴

The presence of the buffalo stood as a barrier to the introduction of two closely related concepts that in McDougall's opinion were essential to civilization: the individual and private property. In teleological fashion,

²⁴McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, pp. 261-2.

McDougall saw the hand of a divine providence acting in the extinction of the buffalo in order to hasten the civilization of the Indian:

The great herds of buffalo, as abused by man were hurtful to himself, and therefore in the fulness of time the Great Father, in the interests of His children, wiped them from the face of the earth. Tribal communism has always been hurtful to individuality, and without this no race of man can progress.²⁵

After describing the scene of a rendezvous of several tribes of Indians for a hunt in the summer of 1869, McDougall commented: "...the flocks and herds are still wild and free, and as yet belong to no individual. This is communal; the individual has not yet come in. It is our work to bring in the individual."²⁶ McDougall told the Indians that private property would promote peace among the tribes: "You call this your country, but even now in the dead of winter you dare not sleep in quiet. 'No', said I, 'not until a stronger power friendly to you comes upon the scene will you really own a bit of land and live at peace with other men.'"²⁷ John Maclean explained that when the Germanic barbarians became landed proprietors the way was paved for their civilization:

²⁵ McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 70.

²⁶ McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 69.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

When they were compelled by a change in their circumstances to adopt a sedentary life, and follow the pursuits of agriculture, there arose an inequality among the people from the fact that the chiefs became landed proprietors and employed those under them as laborers. The former equality, arising from their tribal relationship, gave place to an individuality which paved the way for the evolution of the Germans, Hungarians and other civilized nations of the nineteenth century.²⁸

E. R. Young also described tribal life as a "communism" that was detrimental to the prosperity and progress of the Indians: "Owning the land in common, there was in it no wealth to any one of them."²⁹

Young, Maclean and McDougall agreed that a major problem with this lifestyle was that the Indian did not learn the value and necessity of providing for the future. The Indian lived from hand to mouth, securing food for immediate needs, feasting together during times of plenty and starving together during times of want; to the missionaries this was evidence of a listless, lethargic approach to life.³⁰ Maclean found the Indians could not understand the meaning of sowing now to reap benefits in the future; they dug up the seed potatoes they had planted after only

²⁸Maclean, Indians, p. 278.

²⁹Young, On the Indian Trail, pp. 50-51.

³⁰Ibid., p. 51.

a few days and ate them.³¹ According to Young's descriptions, the Indians were mystified by the missionary's attempt to teach frugality and thrift by example:

They could not at first understand why, when the missionary had anything in his mission house, he hesitated about giving it out to anyone who said he was hungry. This plan of once a year getting in from the outside world supplies to last a whole year, was indeed a mystery to them.... The practice of rationing out the supplies to last for twelve months, was a style of procedure that more than once exposed a missionary, who rigidly adhered to it to be thought mean, stingy and unfriendly.³²

McDougall stated that part of his mission among the Indians was "...to emphasize the stern necessity of making provision for the future."³³

Because the Indian was dependent on the buffalo, owned no private property and did not appreciate the significance of providing for the future, he had distorted attitudes toward the value of work, time and money according to the missionaries. The Indian did not understand the meaning of industry, thrift or economy.³⁴ Great stress was laid on hard work in evangelical, Victorian society; it was

³¹Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 304.

³²Young, On the Indian Trail, p. 52.

³³McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 243.

³⁴Young, James Evans, p. 214.

an absolute necessity.³⁵ As an historian of the Victorian mind stated: "Except for 'God', the most popular word in the Victorian vocabulary must have been 'work'. It was, of course, the means by which some of the central ambitions of a commercial society could be realized: money, respectability and success. But it also became an end in itself, a virtue in its own right."³⁶ This "glorification of work as a supreme virtue" made idleness a moral and social sin. The debate over whether the Indian was "lazy" or not raged through much of the nineteenth-century missionary literature of Western Canada. Generally, the missionaries argued that the life of an Indian was not an idle one. As Young penned in defence of the Indians' reputation:

There is an impression abroad that the Indian is a very indolent, lazy and shiftless creature. Where spoiled by contact with unprincipled whites or where treated only as a "ward of the nation," there is, I am sorry to say, too much truth in the charge. But out in these northern regions there are large numbers of them who in their way are just as industrious and attentive to their daily concerns as are their white brethren anywhere. It was often a great pleasure to be associated with them, and to see the skill and cleverness with which they did their work.³⁷

McDougall and Maclean agreed that if "tenderfoot" white men

³⁵Houghton, pp. 242-3.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 242-3.

³⁷Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 250.

were to follow the Indians on hunting or war expeditions they would soon be persuaded that the life of the Indian was not lazy and that the Indian would similarly condemn the "race of pale-faces" for their lack of fitness.³⁸

Yet a group of people that cleared no land, sowed no crops, built no cities, had no literature or art, and had no home even though a vast dominion was at their disposal, was guilty of a form of idleness. The Indians may not have been "lazy" in their daily activities but they lacked a spirit of industry; they did nothing to raise themselves from the rank in which they were born. The missionaries felt the Indians were without any systematic, habitual diligence or perseverance in any employment or pursuit toward the creation of something of value. While the Indian may not have been idle in his primitive lifestyle, his employment was not worthwhile.

The missionaries found that the absence of a spirit of industry and economy among the Indians, combined with their inability to understand the meaning of thrift in providing for the future, prevented them from cultivating a proper respect for the value of money. According to John Maclean, the annual payment of treaty money to the Indians was the best time to observe their careless indifference to

³⁸ McDougall, Pathfinding p. 3, and Maclean, Indians, p. 263.

money. Maclean wrote indignantly of the manner in which money was quickly squandered in the town of Fort Macleod. In possession of more than one hundred dollars, "The red man, with his several wives and large progeny" was "unable to bear the strain of wealth."³⁹ Maclean seemed quite offended at the way in which the money was soon exhausted:

The streets of the town were lined with the natives, sitting here and there eating bread, biscuits and candies. Horses and men were dressed in holiday attire. The stores were filled with eager buyers, each of the men having a roll of one-dollar bills. Useful articles for the home and family were purchased, and then the gee-gaws became a necessity. Vermillion for the face, brass wire for finger rings and bracelets, beads to make ornaments for moccasins and blankets, strings of beads for the women and children, brass tacks for decorating the gun stock, riding-whip handle, woman's saddle and belt...In one of these stores we gazed in astonishment at the western money drawer. A large clothes basket stood in one of the rooms piled to over-⁴⁰ flowing with dollar-bills tied in small bundles.

Maclean found that when the Indians had an abundance of money they would make gifts of it to their friends; he accepted some once, he explained, in order not to risk their displeasure but was not pleased when "Within three months they called to beg some help, always reminding us that they had proferred a gift."⁴¹ Maclean cautioned his readers

³⁹Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 251.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 251.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 251-2.

against lending money to an Indian, for if he should die in the meantime, the debt could not be collected as the family did not consider it to be their own, a lesson he learned from personal experience.⁴² In the books of all three missionary authors, the Indians were described as "inveterate gamblers," lacking any ability to resist the temptation to become immediately rich or poor.

Coming from a society that demanded a daily routine of work and punctuality, the missionaries were disturbed by the Indians' attitude toward time. As McDougall wrote, they "...did not value time; that appreciation is an evolution belonging to a permanent or settled life," and "...it was part of our mission to make these people feel its value."⁴³ The Indians adhered to seasonal time:

Nights and days, and months and seasons, I found, were the measurements of time out here. Minutes and hours would come by and by with railroads and telegraphs. If you questioned anyone about time or distance, the answer would be, "In so many nights, or days, or moon." The Indian had no year, with him it was summer and winter.⁴⁴

The Indians' misguided ideas about the value of work, time and money, the absence of private property in

⁴² Maclean, Indians, p. 81.

⁴³ McDougall, Pathfinding p. 58 and Red River Rebellion, p. 215.

⁴⁴ McDougall, Forest, Lake and Prairie, p. 154.

their society and their inability to gain some measure of control over their environment were all proofs to the missionaries, of a weak, inferior race. Compared to what the missionaries perceived to be the achievements of their own society, the Indians had centuries of catching up to do. An enormous admiration and pride for the technological power of the western world is conspicuous in the books of McDougall, Maclean and Young; their descriptions of engineering feats such as the locomotive and the steamship were almost worshipful. Their society was nearing the pinnacle of man's vast crusade to subdue nature. The Indians seemed asleep to the larger destinies of the human race and, if left to themselves, they would never be awakened. The missionaries described Indian society as static, dormant, in a state of inertia.⁴⁵ While white society was "ever-changing," the traditions of the Indians had remained the same for centuries. As McDougall wrote:

They never thought of nor speculated upon the magnificent array of mighty power within their sight and sound, and in the centre of which they were living all the time. They worried not because of stacks or stooks, nor yet "stocks". They lost neither appetite nor sleep because of marts or merchants. They heard not the clank and clink of multiple machinery, and much less the roar and rush of transcontinentals. None of these things moved them, for truly it had not entered into their life, nor come as yet into their thought.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ McDougall, "The Future of the Indians."

⁴⁶ McDougall, Western Trails, pp. 18-19.

The vast difference in technology, was to the missionaries, the most tangible evidence of the centuries that divided the two cultures. Before the arrival in the West of the white man, everything was done by man's "strength and stupidity."⁴⁷ As E. R. Young explained, the methods of the Indians were "puny" and "crude" in comparison to the powerful machinery of the white man:

Where up the rivers, over the portages and across the lakes, in rude native-made boats manned by human muscles, magnificent though they were, the limited traffic of the country passed, now the steam-boats and branch railroads are to be found, laughing in their giant strength with derision at the puny work and crude methods which they have supplanted. Their shrieks and shrill whistles have awakened the echoes amid the solitudes of centuries, and now every thing in that land seems to feel the throbbing pulse of a new and active life.⁴⁸

According to John Maclean, the government wisely sent Indian representatives to visit the older provinces, "In order to give the natives a real knowledge of their position, ...and having witnessed some of the works of the white man, they returned with lasting impressions of the power of their white brethren."⁴⁹ The missionaries were

⁴⁷ McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 259.

⁴⁸ Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, pp. 232-3.

⁴⁹ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 541.

pleased to report the awe with which the Indians viewed gadgetry such as the sewing machine and the clothes wringer and that they would travel long distances to gaze at trains and steamboats.⁵⁰ In Maclean's opinion, the Indian lacked the necessary patience and intellect to create such advancements:

When they begin to study the ways of the pioneers of civilization they are drawn toward the buildings erected by the force of intellect, and witness there a skill which they fail to understand. Patiently the Indian will follow an enemy, but patience is a virtue in the peaceful arts of life which he does not possess. The planning of the architect, the concentrated force of intellect necessary for a number of men to erect a building are to him strange things.⁵¹

The missionaries were convinced that, if left to themselves, the Indians were never likely to begin a course of subduing the land; their lassitude was the result of the "implantings of centuries." This disregard for the Biblical injunction and neglect of the land's potential forfeited their claims to the land. Present contentment was not a suitable goal for a race of men.⁵² Juxtaposed against thoughts like these in their publications were lengthy passages extolling the beauty and enormous resource potential

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 304.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 542.

⁵²McDougall, "The Future of the Indians."

of the West. It was a land for a hardy, thrifty race of men who would dot it with homesteads, and build cities and factories. The land was crying out for real occupation. E. R. Young wrote, "...as the Anglo-Saxon wave of civilization rolled westward, those fertile prairies were too valuable to be kept as mere buffalo preserves" and quoted an authority who claimed that "Under skilful agriculture a single acre will more than support a man."⁵³ McDougall likened the West to a glorious cathedral inviting worshippers: "The great temple was completed. The Master Architect was satisfied. The glorious creation calmly waited. By and by the thronging multitude would enter."⁵⁴ The missionaries' books were filled with passages predicting the glorious future of the great lone land:

...in fancy we caught the rumble of waggons on well-travelled roads, the shriek of the locomotive, the hum of machinery, the lowing and bleating of herds and flocks, the tinkle of the cowbell, the ringing of the church and school bells. I could hear all these in anticipation for verily the land before me was worthy and in good time would come to its inheritance.⁵⁵

The religious beliefs of the Indians provided the missionaries with further evidence of the backwardness of

⁵³E. R. Young, "The Indian Problem," Canadian Methodist Magazine and Review, June, 1885, p.468.

⁵⁴McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 28.

⁵⁵McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 99.

the race; their religion was at once a cause and a proof of their inferiority. They differed, however, in their interpretations of the Indians' faith. McDougall and Maclean agreed that theirs was indeed a religion, possessing a primitive theology, worthy of the same respect (and scorn) as other misled religions, or perversions of the truth. E. R. Young struck a more inflexible, intolerant attitude; he condemned outright all of their beliefs and customs, associating them with a form of devil-worship. With some variation in emphasis, the three missionary authors agreed on several major points within the Indian religion that they thought had hampered their "progress" in the past and were detrimental to their future civilization: the idolatry, superstition and ritualism of their pagan worship, the despotic tyranny of the medicine man and certain customs and ceremonies associated with their beliefs that the missionaries perceived to be brutal and cruel. The issue of the Indians' religious beliefs often became indistinguishable from the missionaries' view of their entire life-style for they believed that their paganism was responsible for many of the modes of behaviour and values with which they disagreed.

The idea of the bondage of the Indians' pagan beliefs was emphasized in missionary publications; the metaphors were of slavery and servitude, of being fettered or imprisoned, or covered with a shroud or crust from which

they must be released, rescued or saved. In contrast, Christianity offered liberation, the "...prospect for the complete emancipation of the body, mind and spirit;" it "...would arouse their dormant energies, and create a new era of independence."⁵⁶ The metaphors of the "light" of Christianity and the "darkness" of paganism were popular in the literature of McDougall, Maclean and Young:

In the home of the Northern Light, and under the shadow of the Rocky Mountains the light of the celestial land has dawned upon the souls that were weary of sin, and out of darkness have they been led into the light and glory of God. When the mists have rolled away we shall see the tears of thousands of American aborigines who have found their way to God.⁵⁷

McDougall and Maclean found the Indian to be earnest and sincere in his religious devotions; their elaborate ceremonies and profound beliefs made them "akin to men of other nations."⁵⁸ Maclean perceived numerous doctrinal parallels between the Indians' faith and Protestantism; he found evidence of the doctrines of sin and atonement for sin, and the ideas of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection.⁵⁹ He also pointed out that both religions practised

⁵⁶Maclean, Indians, p. 128.

⁵⁷Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 285.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 313.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 442-447.

baptism and prayer. McDougall and Maclean were careful, however, to emphasize the inferiority of the Indians' faith; not to do so would have eliminated the necessity for their role among them. The Indians may have been moving in the right direction, but theirs were primitive, childlike gropings in the face of mysterious natural forces that held them in awe. McDougall made it quite clear to his readers why the Indians' faith must be banished; it was the central cause of their "degradation:" "This intense superstition and ignorance, to my mind, is all due to the faith and religion of the people. Their faith is a dead one; no wonder they are dead in trespasses and sin."⁶⁰ As McDougall perceived the situation, their religion was inextricably linked to their moral, material and mental backwardness. It was a cause of the Indians' inability to gain some measure of control over their environment:

Here was paganism intensely conservative, the outcome of many centuries of tradition. And here were its high priests, and the novitiate following which thronged after them, seeming to me as "the blind leading the blinder," if this were possible; the whole causing a devolution which was lowering the range of thought and life and ideal, and all the while producing a profundity of ignorance as to things moral and spiritual which in turn, as a logical sequence, affected the physical and material life of this people.⁶¹

⁶⁰ McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 71.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 71.

To E. R. Young, the backwash of the Indians' religion was much more serious than mere moral and spiritual ignorance; it encouraged a regime of cruelty and terror in which numerous vile and abominable acts took place in the name of their faith. Young's books were peopled by vicious, selfish characters who could not distinguish right from wrong and were strangers to the emotions of love and sympathy. Indian men were harsh tyrants who treated women as beasts of burden and strangled the aged or left them to perish. According to Young, adultery, murder and all manner of treachery and villainy were allowed to go unpunished in this land of vice, ignorance and idolatry.

The idolatry, superstition and ritualism associated with the Indians' faith were evidence to the missionaries of a backwardness in intellect and ability. Their veneration of objects in nature or man-made idols demonstrated that the Indian could not "grasp the unseen," and that they were the servants, not the masters, of their natural world.⁶² Dramatic descriptions of the missionary's horror at stumbling across "startling evidences of a degraded paganism" abound in Young's books. Tree trunks, carved into representations of the human form were "grotesque idols."

Here on this hill were all these sad evidences of the degraded condition of

⁶²Young, By Canoe, p. 87.

the people. I wandered around and examined the idols, most of which had in front of them, and in some instances on their flat heads, offerings of tobacco, food, red cotton, and other things. My heart was sad at these evidences of such degrading idolatry.⁶³

The superstitions of the Indians' faith were evidence to the missionaries of a childlike fear and awe of the natural world. There were many descriptions of how the missionaries scoffed at the Indians' foolish superstitions, ignored their dire warnings of danger and boldly ventured into places that the Indians believed were inhabited by evil spirits to demonstrate the folly of their beliefs. As Reverend Maclean explained, the Indians mistakenly "...ascribe to inanimate things the thoughts and feelings of intelligent beings."⁶⁴ The Indians believed that strangely contorted trees, peculiar stones or odd formations of land on the prairie were the stopping places of the gods.⁶⁵ Their fear of the spirits of the dead led to superstitious acts that the missionaries found infantile and ludicrous; they tore down the lodge of the deceased, lest his spirit should return, and they left offerings of bread, pipes and tobacco for lingering spirits.⁶⁶ The

⁶³ Ibid., p. 85.

⁶⁴ Maclean, Indians, p. 38.

⁶⁵ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 67.

⁶⁶ Maclean, Indians, p. 38 and Savage Folk, p. 67.

Indian naively imparted a reality to objects or events seen in dreams, the missionaries found. "They are afraid of their dead friends," wrote John Maclean, "and when they dream that they have seen them, they assert that the spirits of their dead friends have appeared unto them."⁶⁷ Maclean also commented that the Indians had even a superstitious dread of portraits as they felt part of their personality was left behind in the image.⁶⁸ The "poor superstitious creatures'" belief in "Windagoos" was further evidence of childish fear. As E. R. Young explained:

Among the many errors and superstitions into which they have fallen is the belief in the existence of windagoos, or gigantic creatures half satanic and half human, whom they represent as being of great size and dwelling in the dark, dreary forests. They describe them as being so powerful that when they march along they can brush aside the great pine-trees as an ordinary man does the grass of the prairies as he strides along through it. We found the Saulteaux Indians especially living in dread of these imaginary monsters. At many a camp-fire they used to tell us with bated breath that these windagoos were terrible cannibals, and that whenever they caught a lonely hunter far away from his home they soon devoured him. ...They will never admit that an accident could happen to any of their great hunters, and so the one theory always before them is that those who mysteriously disappear have been caught and devoured by the windagoos.⁶⁹

As John McDougall pointed out, the superstitions

⁶⁷ Maclean, Indians, p. 37.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

⁶⁹ Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 84.

of the Indians often led to some serious consequences. The Plains Indians shared the belief that sickness and death were caused by the hatred of enemies who were casting evil spells; this generated a desire for revenge and was a major cause of tribal warfare. To McDougall, the Indians' beliefs in "spirits" or "familiars" was evidence of a deficiency: "Ecclesiasticism and sacerdotalism were to the front, as they always are among ignorant and passively religious people."⁷⁰ The ritualism associated with the Indians' superstitions also disturbed McDougall; "It has often seemed to me that superstition and ritualism are synonymous in the minds and lives of men. Here were these most superstitious of beings, and in all their life intense ritualism had full sway."⁷¹ The solemn ceremonies of the Indians deserved the same ridicule and scorn that McDougall heaped on ritualists in civilized society:

There was the "Blood" man, whom I have already spoken of, who had to whoop every little while or else lose his soul, as he thought. He would have made a first-class shouting Methodist or Salvation Army man. I should not forget old Mah-mus, who could neither eat nor smoke without first ringing a small bell he constantly carried with him. He was a A1 ritualist, and would have done credit to an extremely High Church establishment.⁷²

⁷⁰ McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 273.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 194.

⁷² Ibid., p. 206.

At the core of the missionaries' objections to the idolatry, superstition and ritualism of the Indians' faith was that it was further evidence of the essential weakness of tribal life; the Indians were at the complete mercy of natural forces. As E. R. Young explained:

Hence without Revelation, he feels that, like a leaf blown hither and thither, he is a victim between the two great contending forces. [good and evil]. Hence, he is often in great terror of coming disasters. Until the missionaries broke the power of the conjurers or medicine men, the great majority of the people lived in constant dread.⁷³

According to the missionaries, medicine men kept the chains of superstition tightly locked around the gullible Indians and their most militant language was directed toward these "high priests of the old faith;" they were the missionaries' most powerful enemy and most important target. The literature portrayed the missionary and the medicine man locked in a fierce combat for adherents from which only one could emerge victorious. Medicine men were depicted as imposters, rogues and charlatans, the worst scoundrels to be found in an Indian camp, although they were often described at the same time as the more intelligent of the Indians; they were shrewd students of human nature who used their cunning to manipulate others. There was even some

⁷³E. R. Young, My Dogs in the Northland, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1902), p. 280.

debate in the missionary literature about whether they did in fact possess supernatural power. In any case, the missionaries insisted their deeds were contemptible, corrupting and sinful.

As John Maclean explained, medicine men, after successfully undergoing certain trials and rituals, became the servants of spirits, gaining the power to commune with the wind, rain, ice and stars.⁷⁴ Among the Crees, there were four degrees of medicine men: the first had the power to extinguish fire; the second, the Miteo, could cure disease through his knowledge of roots and herbs but could also cast evil spells; the "revealer of secrets" had the power to predict where something was lost or hidden and the fourth could nullify the evil influence of the Miteo. Medicine men wielded a tremendous influence among the Indians, according to the missionaries because of "...the fear and terror they are able to inspire in the minds of their dupes."⁷⁵ As Reverend Young explained, medicine men were able to control the impressionable, gullible Indians through all manner of skullduggery and chicanery:

Here and there were the tents of the old conjurers and medicine men, who, combining some knowledge of disease and medicine with a great deal of superstitious abominations,

⁷⁴Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 81.

⁷⁵Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 220.

held despotic sway over the people. The power of these old conjurers over the deluded Indians was very great. They were generally lazy old fellows, but succeeded nevertheless in getting the best that was going, as they held other Indians in such terror of their power that gifts in the shape of fish and game were constantly flowing in upon them. They have the secret art among themselves of concocting some poisons so deadly that a little put in the food of a person who has excited their displeasure will cause death almost as soon as a dose of strychnine. They have other poisons which, while not immediately causing death to the unfortunate victims, yet so affect and disfigure them that, until death releases them, their sufferings are intense and their appearance frightful.⁷⁶

Medicine men were able to live very comfortably, according to Young, through a form of blackmail; they threatened dire calamities if they were not provided with meat; "And the poor deluded fools will believe that they have all this pretended power, and will tamely submit to be thus robbed and swindled."⁷⁷

The degree of power the medicine men had over the Indians was evidence to the missionaries of their childlike state; they were "easily led," too willing to follow the dictates of unprincipled men and were possessors of "impressionable and fickle" temperaments.⁷⁸ That they could be kept

⁷⁶Young, By Canoe, p. 85.

⁷⁷Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 224.

⁷⁸Young, James Evans, p. 149, Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 550 and Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 80.

in a state of fear and consternation through the deceptions and delusions of a few knavish rascals was sure proof of a weak race of men. As John Maclean suggested, there may have been one delusion encouraged by the medicine men that disturbed the missionaries more than others: the medicine men had visions that there would be a time "...when the Indians shall again be masters of the soil."⁷⁹ It was perhaps to counter-act this delusion more than others that the missionaries focused on the medicine men as a main target. Young's books in particular were filled with descriptions of the missionary versus the conjurer as a symbol of good wrestling with evil:

Satan would not thus easily be dispossessed or driven out. Old conjurers and medicine men, faithful followers of the enemy, quickly began their opposition. Their selfish natures were aroused. They were shrewd enough to see that if I succeeded, as I was likely to do, they like Demetrius, the shrine-maker of Diana, would soon be without an occupation.

...One savage old conjurer rushed up to me, just as I was about to baptize his wife, who, with many others, had come for this sign and seal of her acceptance of Christ. Before I had perceived his purpose, or had power to stop him, he seized and shook her roughly, and looking at me, in his impotent wrath, said in an insulting manner, "Call her Atim" ("dog"). "No," I said, looking kindly at the poor trembling woman, "I will do nothing of the kind; but I will give her the sweetest name ever borne by woman, for it was the name of the mother of Jesus." So I baptized her Mary.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Maclean, Savage Folk, pp. 451-2.

⁸⁰Young, By Canoe, p. 122.

But the missionaries and other early white inhabitants of the Canadian West appear to have picked up a great deal of superstition themselves; stories of the successes of the medicine men's supernatural powers were recorded in their literature as were other apparitions, visions, sudden deaths, providential deliverances and fulfilled prophecies. The loneliness and terrors of life in the wilderness was perhaps fertile soil in which such notions could take root. Maclean and Young both noted that many Hudson's Bay Company officials who had lived in the country for years, and had frequently come in contact with medicine men, firmly believed in the medicine men's supernatural powers.⁸¹ A medicine man, employed by the private secretary to the governor of the Company, correctly predicted the date of arrival of an important package from England, and described it accurately.⁸² A more remarkable tale of a display of supernatural power by a medicine man was related to Reverend Young, by a Mr. Flett, in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company post at Nelson River.⁸³ When an old conjurer arrived at the post and saucily demanded to be fed, Flett replied that he would not encourage his laziness and told him to shoot his own game. The conjurer replied that he could obtain geese without shooting them,

⁸¹Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 226 and Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 82.

⁸²Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, pp. 225-6.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 223-4.

and in full view of Flett and his family, willed a large, splendid goose to fall from a flock high in the sky, dead at his feet. A Jesuit priest of Young's acquaintance saw a Kootenai Indian command a mountain sheep to fall dead, which the animal did instantly.⁸⁴ A Hudson's Bay Company factor told John Maclean that he knew a mixed-blood trader whose face was contorted and his head drawn to one side through a spell of a Miteo, or second degree medicine man. This lasted for a year or more until the evil was nullified by a "Tipiskauiyineo," or fourth degree medicine man.⁸⁵ John McDougall knew five eye-witnesses who swore that they had seen an Indian transform himself into a fox.⁸⁶

An emotional argument used by the missionaries to persuade their readers of the inferiority of the Indian and convince them of the dire necessity of missionary work was that it was a cruel and brutal society that was indifferent to human suffering. Usually pinpointed as an example of this indifference was the Indians' treatment of women. This argument was stressed by E. R. Young in particular who appeared to try to outrage and disgust his readers with sordid tales. Similar points were raised by Maclean although not with the same degree of vehemence. Descriptions of the

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 223.

⁸⁵ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 82.

⁸⁶ McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 208.

Indians' cruel treatment of women do not appear in McDougall's books at all. Maclean and Young may have exaggerated the cruelty and immorality of pagan Indian life in order to illustrate the great need for missionary work and enhance the importance of their role among the Indians. Young seems to have consciously emphasized those things that were most abhorrent to his readers; Victorian society cherished and exalted the virtue and wisdom of the feminine character, family life, domestic affection and the home as a temple and school of virtue.⁸⁷ As Young wrote, "Such a thing as genuine home life, with mutual love and sympathy existing among the different members of the family, was unknown in their pagan state. The men, and even boys, considered it a sign of courage and manliness to despise and shamefully treat their mothers, wives or sisters."⁸⁸ A casual observer of a group of Indians at a council meeting, in which they were orderly, did not interrupt, and displayed skills as orators, might well wonder what need the Indians had of the Gospel, schools and civilization, Young noted, but he continued, "...but after all it is only a little polish on the surface of their sinful natures, and before that long night-meeting at that Indian council-fire broke up an incident happened which showed the native savage Indian man in his

⁸⁷Houghton, pp. 341 ff.

⁸⁸Young, By Canoe, p. 63.

true character."⁸⁹ Young then described how a woman who spoke in quiet tones at the meeting was punished with three swift blows. As he lectured his readers:

This incident gives us the true picture of paganism. The fine speeches and etiquette and decorum of the council-fires are all very well in their place, but the man brutally striking the woman - and I found out the next day it was a son who struck his own mother - gives us the correct idea of savage Indian life and the great need there is for the Gospel of the Son of God, which is the Gospel of gentleness and love.⁹⁰

Young's books were filled with descriptions of the cruel treatment of women; they were tolerated as necessary evils until they were old and feeble and then put out of existence. A chief on the shore of Lake Winnipeg, Young claimed, strangled his mother and burnt her remains yet,

When questioned about the horrid deed, he coolly and heartlessly said that as she had become too old to snare rabbits or catch fish, he was not going to be bothered with keeping her, and so he deliberately put her to death. Such instances could be multiplied many times. Truly "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."⁹¹

The most common criticism of the missionaries with respect to the treatment of women was that they were burdened with all the hard labour. Young wrote with disdain:

⁸⁹Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 146.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 148.

⁹¹Young, By Canoe, p. 65.

My heart was often pained at what I saw among some of the wild savage bands around us. When, by canoe in summer, or dog-train in winter, I have visited these wild men, I have seen the proud, lazy hunter come stalking into the camp with his gun on his shoulder, and in loud, imperative tones shout out to his poor wife, who was busily engaged in cutting wood, "Get up there you dog, my squaw, and go back on my tracks in the woods, and bring in the deer I have shot; and hurry, for I want my food!" To quicken her steps, although she was hurrying as rapidly as possible, a stick was thrown at her, which fortunately she was able to dodge.⁹²

As John Maclean explained, there was originally a fair division of the labour in tribal society in which the men had provided shelter and food and built the canoes while the women were left with the domestic duties of preparing food, and hauling wood and water.⁹³ In the 1880's, when the "lords and masters" no longer pursued the chase, they lounged at their ease, while the women continued on in their former routine. As a consequence, Maclean contended, among the Crees, Blackfoot, Sarcees and Sioux, the women were "degraded" in comparison to the men: "The hard lot of the Indian mothers soon brings on premature old age, and the ruddy glow that lights up the countenance of the young wife or maiden is soon replaced by the saddened look and disproportional form."⁹⁴ Two issues related to the treatment

⁹² Ibid., p. 64.

⁹³ Maclean, Indians, pp. 24-5.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

of women and shocking to Young and Maclean were the customs of polygamy and the purchase of brides; these would also have offended the sensibilities of the Victorian reader.

John McDougall deliberately tried to stem this tide of criticism in one of his books and at no time did he suggest that Indian women were mistreated; this was perhaps because of a personal interest in the matter as his first wife was Indian and they had three daughters. McDougall contended that, although Indian women were kept extremely busy, it was work that they were content to do, that they remained attractive despite their labour and that it was not surprising that men were willing to pay a great deal for them:

...notwithstanding all this, they seemed, generally speaking, to be contented and happy, and with true feminine resource still found time to give to attire and adornment, and the practising of all those mysterious arts which have charmed and magnetized the other sex, doubtless through all the past of our race. No wonder these women were at a premium, and cost all the way from a blanket up to a band of stolen horses! The more of them a man had, then the greater man he was.⁹⁵

Among other examples of the Indians' indifference to human suffering cited by the missionaries was that they

⁹⁵McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 13.

callously left the aged to perish in the days of tribal warfare, lest the lives of the whole tribe be lost, and that they practised self-mutilation in the Sun Dance and rituals of mourning.⁹⁶ Maclean wrote of his abhorrence at the sight of the Plains women who would cut off their hair, and one of their fingers, and make bloody gashes in their legs following the death of a loved one.⁹⁷

In conclusion it was clear to the reader of Methodist missionary literature from the West that heathenism taught the Indian to make war, to seek revenge, to treat women as chattels, to mutilate the body, to leave the aged to perish and to indulge in sensual pleasures such as polygamy. There was no genuine home life in the wigwam of the pagan Indian. The literature further revealed that the Indian was in the despotic grip of unscrupulous medicine men, that he was the slave of custom, had ridiculous superstitions and worshipped false idols, perhaps even the devil. The land they inhabited had enormous potential; it was a land in which a hardy, industrious race would thrive. The Indian could not begin to grasp an understanding of the modern technology which would develop this region. The Indians' was a static culture, not likely ever to move in this direction on its own; evidence of this was the fact

⁹⁶Maclean, Indians. p. 328.

⁹⁷Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 66.

that they had roamed the land for centuries and had left no visible marks of their presence. If the reader of McDougall, Maclean or Young was not compelled to donate to Methodist missionary activity, he would at least have been inclined to conclude that there was every justification, and, indeed, a great need to transfer the future of the Indians and their land into more capable hands.

CHAPTER IV

NATURE'S NOBLEMEN

We are all savage in the estimation of somebody. When we are able to note the points of similarity, and not dwell on the differences we are drawn closer together, and we are able to understand and appreciate one another.¹

John Maclean

The missionaries did not totally condemn Indian tribal life in their publications; certain features were awarded their approval and praise. McDougall and Maclean at times approached a sympathetic understanding of tribal society and conceded that it possessed a moral order, a form of religion, a sense of justice and system of education. They made some attempt to explain to their readers how certain of the Indians' customs and traditions that seemed odd or bizarre could be comprehended in the light of the conventions of their society. The missionaries occasionally acknowledged that there were similarities between the cultures of the red man and the white man or at least that the white man's ancestors had shared customs and beliefs with the Indians. The Indians possessed a number of

¹Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 308.

qualities that the missionaries found worthy of merit; among these were their physical characteristics, their superior sensory abilities, and their oratorical skills. The missionaries admired and praised individual Indians, such as their faithful guides and interpreters, and the Indian chiefs were generally held in high esteem. It is difficult to reconcile the image of the utterly depraved Indian of the previous chapter with that of the "noble savage," yet the two appeared side-by-side in the literature. Even the missionaries' attempts at a sympathetic understanding, however, tended to reinforce the image of the inferiority of the Indian. Their greatest praise was reserved for those Indians that aspired to something other or higher than Indian life. They carefully made it clear that even though Indian society possessed its own institutions of government, law, religion and education, these were not satisfactory; they were based on misguided, faulty notions. While the missionaries may have perceived certain virtues in the Indian way of life they made it clear to their readers that these were primitive, inferior virtues that could hardly be considered worthy of merit by the standards of western society. The missionaries assessed individual Indians by the degree to which they were not like Indians at all. Although they praised some highly, they did not approve of the system of which the Indian was a member. McDougall, Maclean and Young could not, after all,

afford to be too sympathetic to Indian tribal life as this would cast doubt on the superiority of the civilization they urged the Indian to adopt.

The missionary authors believed that they viewed Indian society objectively. Each professed grave concern over the popular misconceptions of the Indians of the West that they believed were prevalent in the older provinces, and each proudly announced that with their publications the public would finally receive a reliable report from a first-hand witness. As E. R. Young explained, there were two extremes of interpretation in the literature on the North American Indian:

By some they have been painted in the darkest colours, as possessing every characteristic of fiends without a redeeming feature; and if these chroniclers could have their own way the stronger nations would long ago have civilized them off the face of the earth. Others have written in strains exactly the reverse of these. To judge from their descriptions of the Indians one would imagine that at length the land of Arcadian simplicity and innocence had been found, where the inhabitants without a vice or defect, and in possession of all these excellencies which make up the perfect ideal character, had been discovered. The result from the reading of these two descriptions so diametrically opposite, is that some people have become very much mixed and unsettled as to what really to believe about the true Indian.²

²E. R. Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 18.

Young hoped to provide his readers with the true picture of the Indian, which he believed to be somewhere between the two extremes of interpretation.³ John Maclean agreed that the prevailing misconceptions of Indian life were due to untrustworthy literature not written from first-hand observation; they emphasized and exaggerated the more dramatic features: "I soon found that many of the books written were of a sensational character, and at once determined to try to write something that would be reliable and, at the same time, interesting to all."⁴ Prejudice against the Indian, and misconceptions of their society were also due, Maclean believed, to the narrow-mindedness of the white observer who was unable to discard preconceived notions and judge impartially.⁵ Visitors to the West often arrived with a "halo of romance" surrounding their notions of the noble red man according to Maclean, and when the real Indian did not live up to this glowing description:

...there came a revulsion of feeling, and hatred dwelt where the romantic ideal had formerly reigned. The pilgrims from the east gazed in astonishment at the scantily clad wanderers from the camp, and in their ignorance concluded that these were ideal red men, and genuine specimens of the savage folk. They studied them from the standpoint of the white man, ignorant of the beautiful

³Ibid.

⁴Maclean, Indians, p. vii.

⁵Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 308.

languages and traditions, the significant religious ideas, social and political customs, and the native independence and heroism of the dwellers in the wilderness. With childish sentimentality they treated the red men as savages, and unable to pierce the shadow of their customs, they laughed at the queer ways of the people of the lodges, concluding that wisdom was the heritage of the white race. Simple tenderfeet! Could they have reserved their verdict until they had studied the ways of the savage folk from the Indians' standpoint, they would have learned that native culture and independence were to be found in the lodges, and nations and peoples are savage to one another.⁶

McDougall and Maclean believed that the Indians possessed a form of civilization that consisted of institutions such as religion, government, laws and education. To a much greater degree, E. R. Young stressed the ignorance, superstition and cruelty of tribal life; if he perceived the existence of these institutions, he did not dwell on them in his literature. As Maclean wrote, "There is a civilization of the red race as well as of the white, and the culture of the one should be studied and admired as honestly as the other."⁷ Their traditions were "...full of beauty and morality, evincing native culture and a religious spirit."⁸

⁶Ibid., pp. 307-8.

⁷Maclean, Indians, p. 276.

⁸Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 51.

Their legends showed "strength of intellect and imagination."⁹ As mentioned in the previous chapter, McDougall and Maclean agreed that the Indians' beliefs constituted a genuine religion. The Indians also had a form of government, Maclean explained, and they enjoyed politics as much as their white brethren:

The red man is a politician, as well as his white brother, skillful in all the arts of electioneering and the methods of statesmanship at his councils. In the election of chiefs, discussion of the civil affairs of the camp, formulation of unwritten laws and administration of justice, the natives possess wisdom and courage, and the white man might learn some good measures from their simplicity and sternness in dispensing justice and treating criminals. He can advocate the claims of his favorite candidate for political honours, and in the hidden craft of gaining support visit the lodges, and by means of criers keep his man before the minds of the people as successfully as the editors of the great newspapers of the land.¹⁰

The behaviour of the Indians was governed by their own legal code; as John McDougall wrote, if this code demanded that a scout be put to death for sleeping at his post, the dispenser of this justice "is not savage any more than other men are savage."¹¹ John Maclean explained that Indian society also had a form of education:

⁹ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 549.

¹¹ John McDougall, Wa-pee-moos-tooch, or White Buffalo, the Hero of a Hundred Battles, (Calgary: Calgary Herald Printing, 1912), p. 70.

There is a native education, unsystematized, it is true, yet it exists. There are lessons in the lodges from fathers, mothers and guardians for the boys and girls. The father delights to see his boy an adept at shooting the bow and arrow, and he is taught to ride and hunt. The youth learns the secrets of nature, the mysteries of plant life, the history of his tribe, the unwritten biographies of the great men of his race; the stars become his book of night, the old men train him in the science of politics; indeed everything necessary to become good, great, wise and happy is taught him, and this constitutes the system of education.¹²

The missionaries made some attempt to explain how the Indians' traditions of tribal warfare, scalping, horse-stealing, polygamy and their manner of attire had to be perceived in the light of the Indians' standards and that these should not be compared with the "permanent institutions" of their own society.¹³ As McDougall explained, tribal warfare had to be understood in its proper context:

Blood had cried out for blood, even as in all human history this had been the case, and the people had said: "Go forth and avenge for us in the blood of our enemies, their shedding of our blood.

Today we deprecate such actions, in theory, we say it is wrong... Nevertheless you and I, my gentle reader, being thus tested, might even now go and do likewise.¹⁴

¹²Maclean, Savage Folk, pp. 542-3.

¹³Ibid., p. 314.

¹⁴McDougall, White Buffalo, p. 75.

The scalping and horse-stealing activities of the Indians could also be comprehended when the traditions of their society were considered. As John Maclean explained, the custom of scalping arose, not as generally perceived from a desire to inflict cruelty, but as a tangible form of evidence of a warrior's valour and prowess; as the brave could not carry the bodies of the slain with him back to camp, he brought the scalps, which were easily carried and could be displayed outside his tent.¹⁵ The reasons for the Indians' fondness for horse-stealing became clear once it was understood, as McDougall tutored his readers, that owning horses was a passion with the red man; they were dependent on them in war and for the hunt. To them it was not theft to seek eagerly horses and covet them:

If taking the scalp of your enemy was meritorious, how much greater the glory to take his horses! This wonderful animal that could carry the hunter or warrior on his back, and from which vantage place even the white bison might be killed... As late as in the sixties and early seventies it was common to say:

"Bringing them in," and not "Stealing" horses.

The gossip between the lodges never spoke of "stealing" horses - he "brought them in," "they ran them in." "Did you see that bunch of horses? He just now brought them home."

No imputation of theft was thought of. It was a meritorious [sic] act. Such feats of cunning, and skill and acts of daring as were

¹⁵Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 60.

accomplished in running off another man's horses, were lauded and placed the actor away above par among his fellows. To have brought many scalps home made the warrior wonderfully conspicuous, and repeatedly to return from the land of the enemy with bands of horses gave the hero prominence and respect among his fellows.¹⁶

In the context of a tribal, war-like society, there was even some justification for the custom of polygamy. As John Maclean explained, a larger number of females than of males was always to be found in the Indian camps as the men were killed in battle and the women of the enemies often made captive. Polygamy solved the problem of finding a home for each; as Maclean wrote: "I have never seen an old maid in the camps, and only once have I seen a bachelor, and he was a dwarf. An old Piegan Indian called upon me one day, and I asked him the number of his wives. 'Eight,' said he. How many children have you? Without a smile he said, 'Forty-three!'¹⁷

The Indians' fondness for donning costumes and trinkets and smearing their faces with vermillion, when perceived "according to their own ideas of what was artistic and scenic and beautiful," seemed very fitting to John McDougall.¹⁸ His party of Indian scouts, when approaching

¹⁶ McDougall, White Buffalo, p. 75.

¹⁷ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 62.

¹⁸ McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 217.

the lodges of a Blackfoot hunting party stopped to don their

...visiting paint and dress material, and in a few minutes, with the small circular mirrors and ochre bags, our company was transfigured in appearance and colors. Bright colors in garments and on face made a wonderful change, and to my eye this was exceedingly fitting. The scene was in accord with itself; it was natural....

Then the curling heavenward of the smoke of our temporary fire, the athletic and well-proportioned physique of the men, their costumes and paint - I say all this was to my mind and eye, as I stood there and watched and waited that winter's day, as something just as it should be, belonging to the place and time.¹⁹

The missionaries pointed out that there were some similarities between the cultures of the red man and the white. What the Indians believed to be fashionable in appearance was no more ludicrous than some of the customs in western society, Maclean wrote: "Our brothers in white may rail at the deformities of fashion as seen in the small feet of the Chinese women and the flat heads of some of the tribes in British Columbia, and forget the deformity of the toes among themselves arising from wearing narrow-pointed boots."²⁰ The Indians who wore charms as a protection against witchcraft were "...only doing what many persons of culture have done, although surrounded by all the blessings

¹⁹McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, pp. 257-8.

²⁰Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 313.

of a higher civilization and sustained by a nobler faith."²¹ Certainly, many parallels could be found between the culture of the Indians and that of the white man's ancestors. By pointing out these similarities, John Maclean suggested that Indian society was not without its virtues; it provided evidence that the Indian did possess some of the "deeper instincts of human nature."²² This comparison also held out the hope for their eventual "civilization."

Germans and Indians scalped their enemies, painted their bodies in times of war, sang their war songs, gambled until they had lost everything, even liberty itself; followed their chiefs to death, and buried their warriors who fell in battle with such secrecy that their enemies were unable to discover the homes of the dead. Whiteskins and redskins are removed by centuries of civilization, but in the deeper instincts of human nature, and in all that relates to the best interests of the people, they are not so widely apart.²³

The missionaries admired the physical characteristics and capabilities of the Indians. This was most conspicuous in John McDougall's books. The Indians closely matched McDougall's ideal of "manliness;" they were fit, vigorous and energetic. Their way of life was a daily trial of endurance for limb and lung. The Indian was "truly normal"

²¹ Maclean, Indians, p. 73.

²² Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 317.

²³ Ibid., pp. 316-7.

and "absolutely natural;" "lung and limb and stomach and liver and brain and heart were sound."²⁴ Writing with a tone of regret at the complexities of civilized life, McDougall noted that the Indians' digestion was not disturbed by the complicated food of the white man, and they did not live in stuffy, draughty houses: "No, in clean, pure air, in all out of doors he had dwelt, and was sound and strong. Ten miles an hour for several hours at a stretch would be a common run for such as he."²⁵ McDougall firmly believed that environment had a great deal to do with the formation of physique and character and he felt that, aside from buffalo and tribal communism, the environment of the Canadian West was stimulating and invigorating.²⁶ As he described the Mountain Stoneys near Morley:

Here were men familiar with the strong, energetic and constantly exciting and stimulating side of life. The mountains, with snow-slides and mud-slides, and rock-slides, and sudden avalanches, were their birth-place and hunting grounds. Impetuous, tumbling rushing, raging mountain streams were their swimming schools. Grizzlies and mountain lions and wildcats were their constant game. Blackfoot, Bloods, Piegans, Sarcees and often Crees, were their perennial enemies. To run down moose and elk and lynx on foot was their common sport. To climb and carry and starve and feast were their frequent experiences. Among nomads these men excelled; from the head waters of the Missouri to those of the Athabasca,

²⁴ McDougall, White Buffalo, p. 139.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 139.

²⁶ McDougall, Pathfinding, pp. 70-71.

from the Columbia to the heart of the Great Plains, these people roamed and hunted and fought and conquered. They were a terror to the plain tribes.²⁷

The natural instincts of the Indians, their sharpened senses and powers of perception were held in high esteem by the missionaries. As E. R. Young wrote: "Many think of the Indians as savages and uncivilized, yet in some respects they are highly educated, and are gifted with a quickness of perception not excelled by any other people in the world."²⁸ McDougall described the Indians as "observant and intensely perceptive."²⁹ There were no better "trailers" in the world than the North American Indians; his faithful guide, Old Joseph, could pick up a trail he had known twenty years earlier as a boy. "It must have taken centuries to develop a brain capable of thus having photographed upon it the topography of a country," wrote McDougall.³⁰ He deplored the loss of these arts in civilized society:

These were the days when as yet the telegraph and telephone and the monthly and weekly and daily mails had not been thought of among these people and therefore the spiritual sense had not become so dense as when these inventions came to abound. To see afar, to

²⁷McDougall, Western Trails, p. 99.

²⁸Young, By Canoe, p. 158.

²⁹McDougall, White Buffalo, p. 58.

³⁰McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 35.

hear from the distance, to feel the approach of either friend or foe, and to distinguish between these were the frequent experiences of these nomadic tribes.³¹

John Maclean agreed that the Indians could claim supremacy over the white man in "the peaceful arts of life."³² They knew the names of the flowers and plants and "many of the plain Indians are no mean ornithologists."³³ The Indians knew the habits of the animals and learned to predict the weather from them. It was rare to hear of an Indian child drowning, Maclean wrote, as the Indians were so familiar with the rivers and lakes. They felt at home on the vast expanse of prairie and could track lost horses better than any white man. "Nature is their teacher, and unconsciously they have learned. They have kept their eyes open and have seen wonders where the white men saw nothing."³⁴

The eloquence of the native orators was applauded at great length by the missionary authors. The "red orators" enraptured their audiences with language that was clear, concise, dignified and beautiful in expression.³⁵

John Maclean described the orator at work:

³¹McDougall, White Buffalo, p. 163.

³²Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 541.

³³Ibid., p. 541.

³⁴Ibid., p. 541.

³⁵Maclean, Indians, p. 44.

Native eloquence in the camps and lodges is not a fiction, but sterling reality. Good voices, keen intellects, independence of spirit, and love of liberty, characterize many of the speakers among the Indian tribes.... The orator stands erect with his blanket over his left shoulder, his right hand being free to use in suitable gestures. Dignified in his bearing, his eye lights up as he speaks; slow in utterances at the beginning, he argues, persuades and declaims in a rapid manner as he waxes warm with his subject, and then, with bursts of eloquence which move the audience, he finishes in a strain of polished diction, that only those who understand the Indian language can appreciate.³⁶

The missionaries agreed that it was surprising that a group of untutored people could be capable of such lofty ideas and impressive style of delivery. As Young wrote "That a people untaught in the schools and so depressed and harassed by dissension within and wars without should in such a marked degree be so gifted is indeed both surprising and interesting."³⁷ They were careful to point out, however, that the native orator excelled from the point of view of native themes and native language: "They are not accustomed to our modes of thought," wrote John Maclean, "different questions occupy their attention than those discussed in the councils of the white men, and they are not trained by the same methods as we employ."³⁸ The beauty and elegance of

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 41-3.

³⁷ Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 38.

³⁸ Maclean, Indians, pp. 41-2.

the expressions were lost when the native orator spoke on a topic that was "specifically and purely English," but with native themes he showed himself to be a master.³⁹ The missionaries described the language of the native orator as that of "nature" from which phrases of poetic beauty could be drawn even if the native languages were poor in themselves.⁴⁰ As E. R. Young explained, the Indian orators lack of instruction was to their favour, as they were not regimented by formulae and regulations:

Untrammelled by any of the artificial rules of the schools of oratory, but with Nature as his only mistress in this fascinating art, he becomes an apt student. To his susceptible, sensitive soul she is ever an open book. From her he derives his beautiful pictures and choicest illustrations.... Gifted with intelligence and good judgment, possessing memories that in many instances are perfectly marvelous, and cultivating all his gifts, in the most natural and effective school, he becomes possessed with an energy and fluency of expression, as well as a power of imagery, sometimes so exquisitely delicate and then of such soaring sublimity that he is able to rival the finest efforts of an ancient or modern orator.⁴¹

Young and Maclean quoted at length from the addresses of famous American Indian chiefs such as Tecumseh and Chief Logan as their examples of native oratory, but Maclean noted that there were still skilled orators in Western

³⁹Ibid., p. 44.

⁴⁰Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 210.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 211.

Canada: "amongst us today Crowfoot and several others are noted for their strength of intellect, shrewdness and eloquence of speech."⁴²

John McDougall and John Maclean had a great deal of respect for individual Indians that they were acquainted with - their guides, companions and the chiefs. Bonds of friendship were forged in some cases, despite the cultural differences. In Young's books, no Indians emerge as individuals with human qualities such as emotion and humour. The Indians that McDougall and Maclean admired, however, were portrayed as exceptional examples. John Maclean met Crowfoot on several occasions and was deeply impressed:

When Crowfoot reached manhood he developed striking physical characteristics, which marked him as no common man. He was above medium height, with a high forehead, thin lips firmly compressed, an aquiline nose, high cheek bones, piercing grey eyes and a face that suggested commanding qualities. As he softly strode over the prairie, he had the dignified mien of the leader of men, a modern Roman among savages. At the sun dance he aroused the war-like emotions of young and old by the recital of his brave deeds. Foremost in the fight and the last to retreat, he led his warriors through many a successful fray, and they always returned with increased admiration for his courage and skill.⁴³

Maclean described Poundmaker as

⁴² Maclean, Indians, p. 44.

⁴³ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 373.

...a fine specimen of the Cree Indian - tall and slender, a high forehead, a Grecian nose, intelligent countenance, free from any signs of coarseness or sensuality, and a body well formed; marked him as no common man. His dignified bearing and quiet demeanour struck the visitor to his Reserve, and these stamped him as a man wise in council, intensely devoted to his people, and strong to command the warriors who were deeply attached to him.⁴⁴

Mikasto, or Red Crow, head chief of the Blood Indians and next in rank to Crowfoot in the Blackfoot Confederacy, became a good friend of John Maclean, who poignantly described his thoughts at his final parting with Mikasto who was still chief of the Bloods at the time he wrote, some years later:

When he learned that I was going to cease my labors among the Indians he came to see me, and for a long time we sat together, talking about the old days and the changes which had taken place. We had been close friends for nine years, and had not only learned to respect, but to love each other. My heart was sad at parting with him, and I could hardly believe it possible to become so strongly attached to a savage of the plains. I had cared for him when he was sick, and frequently visited him in his home. He assured me during the Rebellion that I had nothing to fear, that if any trouble came my family would be safe.... We parted in sorrow, and with words of peace and good wishes for each other's welfare. I watched him quietly ride away from my home, and I grieved that the man I loved should, in all likelihood, be seen no more by me. Mikasto is a noble specimen of the red man of the west - a faithful friend and ally ... It is well that we should have some native heroes who, in the possession of those qualities

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 382.

which constitute true manhood, can show us that they are not inferior as men to many members of the white race, blest with the advantages of education and civilization. The head chief of the Blood Indians still dwells in peace among his people, and long may his life be, that he may teach a lesson to those who believe that no good thing can come out of an Indian camp. A native statesman he had always been in the days of manhood, and in these trying years for his people, when they are in a transition state, it will test his powers to save them from destruction, and lead them toward a noble life. May he reign in peace, and spend many years on earth - a wise lawgiver, teacher and friend of his race.⁴⁵

Mikasto's statesmanlike dignity and noble character made him exceptional among the Indians; in Maclean's opinion, these were qualities possessed only by the very few. He was "...a man of intellect, keen and critical, without any of the cunning of the low savages."⁴⁶ Similarly, Poundmaker was portrayed as being far from a typical Indian of the plains: "He had the skin of a Cree Indian, the visage of a commander, and the cool and strong judgement of a white man. He was a native Demosthenes in savage attire."⁴⁷ Crowfoot was a "modern Roman among savages."⁴⁸ While respect for the chiefs of the Plains Indians was genuine, it was a respect earned according to the degree to which they were not like Indians at all. Although the chiefs may have possessed

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 418-9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 414.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 388.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 373.

exceptional ability, they were still unable to bring to an end the brutal, sinful regimes over which they presided.

The missionaries' attempt to shed their own standards in viewing Indian tribal society was not a total success; they found it impossible to escape comparing it with western civilization and they made it clear to their readers that the Indians fared unfavourably in such a comparison. The Indians possessed some virtues but these were primitive virtues that would not be deemed worthy of esteem in their own society. The Indians had a form of government but it was a "simple" institution that could not be compared with "our permanent institutions."⁴⁹ Their legal code was unwritten and arbitrary. Indian education was "unsystematized," and the lessons of the lodges in understanding nature were charming but hardly constituted true enlightenment. While the traditions of warfare, scalping, horse-stealing, polygamy, and savage adornment could be understood in some measure with an appreciation of their milieu, it remained unacceptable, irrational, beast-like behaviour. The native orators excelled among Indians only when they dealt in native themes; the missionaries found these quaint and picturesque. The message remained that, despite the virtues of Indian society, the Indian was clearly a race inferior to the white man. As. E. R. Young believed, one could admire the skill

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 314.

of a native orator but this was only a "little polish on the surface of their sinful natures;" a stately orator was capable of knocking his mother to the ground if she dared to interrupt.⁵⁰ The missionaries reserved their highest praise for those Indians who became dissatisfied with their pagan life, embraced Christianity and western civilization and learned to despise their former life. Influential chiefs and those converts that went on to become Methodist preachers were awarded the highest approval; they were cited time and again in the missionary literature as evidence of the marvelous transforming power of the Gospel, which was an essential foundation for the glorious transition.

⁵⁰Young, By Canoe, p. 28.

CHAPTER V

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL

They have cut down their idols, filled up the dog-ovens, torn away the conjurers' tents, cleared the forest, and banished every vestige of the old life. And there, at what is called "The Meeting of the Three Rivers," on that very spot where idols were worshipped amidst horrid orgies, and where the yells, rattles and drums of the old conjurers and medicine men were heard continuously for days and nights, there is now a little church, where these same Indians, transformed by the glorious Gospel of the Son of God, are "clothed and in their right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus."¹

E. R. Young

The missionaries' graphic description of the degradation of Indian life, the idolatry and superstition of their pagan beliefs and the despotic power of the medicine men mobilized their readers toward a deeper appreciation of the attendant passages that rhapsodized on the glorious transforming power of Christianity.² The more sordid the

¹E. R. Young, By Canoe, p. 88.

²The transforming power of the "Gospel" or "Christianity" were terms used interchangeably by the missionaries in their literature with little precise definition given. There is no theological discussion in these books; the Methodists perceived the differences between themselves and representatives of other denominations by the degree to which moral example and daily conduct were stressed. Presumably these terms meant the tenets basic to evangelical Protestantism outlined in Chapter 2, pp. 15-17.

former life of the Indians appeared, the more wondrous the transformation seemed, and the more significant the role of the missionary. Having established the inferiority and weakness of the Indian in his tribal state, the missionaries were quick to reassure their readers that something was being done for them. The most startling evidence of the marvellous transforming power of the gospel was that the convert immediately acquired a new attitude toward his temporal welfare; the benefits he gained on adopting Christianity had little to do with religion - they included a willingness to diligently till the soil, live in houses and become clean and tidy. The concepts of Christianity and civilization were inextricably linked in the minds of the missionaries even though each claimed to distinguish between them as they joined sides in the great debate over which, Christianity or civilization, should precede the other in the instruction of the Indian. The missionaries illustrated the profound changes that Christianity brought to the Indians in their eulogies to several legendary converts to Methodism whose names appears in the books of all three authors; among them were Peter Jones, Johnny Sunday, Henry Steinhauer and Maskepetoon. Their wicked lives as pagan Indians and the testimonies of their conversion experiences were reported in vivid detail. Following their conversions, each despised their former life and devoted their time to preaching to other Indians in an effort to convince them to

adopt white religion and customs and accept the settlement of the West. Discrepancies between paganism and Christianity were most clearly evident in the village and home life of the Indians; the improved appearance of the homes of the Christian Indians immediately identified them. Domestic life underwent a marvellous transformation as the converted Indians began to treat their wives, daughters and mothers-in-law with respect. The missionaries portrayed themselves as assuming positions of great dignity and authority among the Indians and they wrote at length on the means by which they earned the respect necessary to influence numbers of Indians to convert. The missionaries all found that pagan Indians, in the depths of their hearts, were unhappy, dissatisfied, and yearned for something nobler and brighter. Readers were assured then, that the Indians could be saved from the centuries of sin and darkness, that a better world was being created for them for which they themselves yearned and the Indians therefore benefited enormously from contact with their white brethren.

The debate over the order in which Christianity and civilization should be introduced to the Indian served only to prove that the two concepts were closely allied in the minds of the missionaries. E. R. Young and John McDougall insisted adamantly that Christianity was the necessary prerequisite to the civilization of the Indian. John Maclean argued that the spiritual welfare of the Indians could not

be distinguished from their temporal welfare and that true civilization included the work of both of these agents. All three missionaries believed that the acceptance of Christianity meant immediate blessings or rewards in a realm quite other than spiritual. Christianity endowed the native with just those things they had found lacking in tribal life: a willingness to own and remain on one spot of land, which meant prosperity, a spirit of industry, and qualities such as thrift, self-help and cleanliness. Christianity was more than a faith to the missionaries - it was a way of life. They informed the Indians that it was the Christianity of the white race that was responsible for their power and supremacy among the races of man.

John McDougall showed no hesitation about where he stood in the debate; he believed "Christianity was the main factor in real civilization."³ As he described his duty to the Indians of the West:

We want to do them good in three direct ways - Christianizing, educating, civilizing. Some say civilize first, but our experience is that this is not, nor yet can it be so great an agency for permanent civilization as Christianity, therefore we hope to begin on sure foundations.⁴

E. R. Young agreed that "Christianity must ever precede a

³McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 144.

⁴McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 71.

real and genuine civilization."⁵ As an example of the humiliating failure that could result if this order were reversed, Young described the efforts of Sir Francis Bond Head. By showering a tribe of Indians with gifts of tea, tobacco and flour, Sir Bond Head persuaded them to agree to settle in villages and cultivate the soil. They were willing to promise him anything he desired while they were "feasting on his bounties," but when the ploughs, axes and oxen arrived they ignored their promises, using the axes as decorations and killing the oxen for a feast.⁶ "Thus ended, just as many other efforts of the kind have ended, this effort to civilize the Indians before Christianizing them," Young concluded.⁷

John Maclean believed that Christianity and civilization were so closely intertwined that it was damaging to attempt to divide the two: "...true civilization includes the work of both these agencies...the one is the complement of the other."⁸ Maclean thought the idea that the temporal welfare of the Indian belonged to the State, that responsibility for their moral and spiritual training belonged to the

⁵Young, By Canoe, p. 184.

⁶ Ibid., p. 185. This was likely the "Cold-water Experience," designed to change the way of life of a group of Ojibways at the southeast corner of Georgian Bay. It began in 1830 and was to be a systematic effort of both missionaries and government. By 1842 it was decided to be a failure.

⁷Young, By Canoe, p. 185.

⁸Maclean, Indians, p. 264.

Church, and that Indian education was a partnership between the two institutions was "injurious to all concerned and detrimental to the interests of the work."⁹ The plough and the Bible should not be separated Maclean believed; "Hand, head and heart training must go together in elevating the Indian race."¹⁰

Young and McDougall would likely have agreed with these sentiments despite their insistence on "Christianize first and then civilize". It is clear that, to all three, Christianity meant a cluster of ideas, institutions, attitudes and activities which included agriculture, private property, a spirit of industry, thrift and tidiness. At least, these blessings immediately followed on the heels of the acceptance of Christianity. According to Young's description, with conversion came the desire for a "better mode of life;" in proportion to the genuineness of the acceptance grew the desire to improve temporal conditions.¹¹ The missionaries told the Indians that it was the religion of the white man that allowed him his place of leadership in the world, providing him with the gifts of intellect and ingenuity necessary to devise his superior technology. John McDougall "instilled into the minds of the Indians with

⁹Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 271.

¹¹Young, James Evans, p. 146 and By Canoe, p. 185.

whom he came in contact that Christianity had brought about the civilization, which gave the whites great power, as well as other advantages."¹² The Bible, on which this faith was based, fostered and inspired not only the technology of the white man, but his system of government, law and freedoms of speech, religion and private property. As McDougall wrote in the Calgary Albertan:

All that is good in our civilization comes from its teaching. Our governments, our laws and general utilities are the natural developments of its inspiration. All our great transport systems, oceanic and trans-continental were foreseen and in prophetic vision planned and foretold in its records. The magnificent franchises which we enjoy in speech and press in civil and religious freedom, the glorious fact that today anywhere in Christian civilization "every man's home is his castle." [sic]¹³

That the concepts of Christianity and civilization were closely linked in the minds of the missionaries was demonstrated by their illustrations of the marvellous transforming power of the gospel - the native converts that became models of virtue and the righteous, dutiful home and village life of the Christian Indians. The Indians that were glorified and venerated in the missionary literature were those that had felt an inner longing for something better,

¹²The Orillia Packet, September 3, 1886, in John McDougall Clippings File, Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

¹³"Bible Society Meeting", The Calgary Albertan, Dec. 16, 1912.

embraced Christianity and the civilization of the white man and despised their former way of life. The native converts that achieved saintly status were those that devoted their lives to urging their countrymen to adopt the religion and customs of the white man and to welcoming the white settlement of the land. Some converts became so obedient and dutiful that they had no time for concern over temporal matters such as treaties as their energies were concentrated solely on the next world. McDougall and Young used individuals extensively as examples of the regenerating power of the gospel. John Maclean was reluctant to be glowing about the transformation wrought by conversion. His experience with converted Indians was limited as mission work among the Blackfoot and Blood tribes was not a success.¹⁴

Among the honoured names of Indian converts was Peter Jones, a man whose fame spread as far as England where he was once presented to the sovereign.¹⁵ As E. R. Young wrote, Jones was a sterling example of a man who was "...once himself a wild, superstitious pagan, [but] now a useful missionary."¹⁶ Young devoted many pages to a description of Jones' conversion experience - a marathon event of weeping and fasting, lasting several days. Following his conversion, Jones

¹⁴Maclean, Indians, p. 315.

¹⁵Young, James Evans, p. 70.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 50.

was overwhelmed with a desire to preach the gospel to "his poor degraded fellow-countrymen."¹⁷ The conversion also instantly gave him the will to improve himself. As Young explained:

This was the great turning event in the life of this young Indian. Previous to this, he was full of the superstitions and darkness incident to his wild pagan life: now, however, his spirit was emancipated from the superstitions of the past. At once began a genuine thirst for knowledge. He had had some opportunities for study and for religious worship, but up to the time of his conversion, ... his mind was all dark as regards spiritual things. A wonderful change had come to him, and all with whom he associated were quick to mark the transformation.¹⁸

Johnny Sunday, once "a poor, drunken Missusagas Indian" who "wandered about with his wild pagan relatives, making a precarious livelihood by fishing and hunting," was another example of the transforming power of the gospel.¹⁹ Johnny converted to Methodism and devoted his life to speaking in halls and churches on the power of the gospel to uplift and save. Henry Steinhauer, a co-worker of James Evans and later a missionary among the Mountain Stoneys, was also a venerated name in Methodist literature. John McDougall,

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 69-70.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

who married Steinhauer's daughter, described his work as a "miracle of redeeming grace," and

...a most glorious sample of the regenerating power of the gospel. Right out of the brush camp and birch bark lodge, right out of confirmed old-time faiths, as old as the generations of men, and at one leap and by one big bound he is across the wide chasm of the centuries, and stands out before all the world, a new man - a scholar, a practical civilizer, a Christian gentleman, a man consecrated to God and humanity.²⁰

The story of the Christian chief Maskepetoon was often repeated, with many variations, in the Methodist literature. He was a "wondrous trophy of the Cross" whose conversion illustrated the "power of the Gospel to change the hardest heart, and to enable the warlike savage to conquer so thoroughly the besetting sin of the Indian character."²¹ As E. R. Young's version of the story began, prior to his conversion Maskepetoon was warlike, with a fierce temper, capable of all manner of brutal behaviour. One day his wife happened to arouse his ire:

Suddenly rushing at her, he drew his knife and scalped her alive. Strange to say, she survived the dreadful operation, and lived for years after, although the top of her head was as dry as the old skull in the surgery of a physician, or on the shelf of a medical college.²²

²⁰ McDougall, Western Trails, p. 36.

²¹ E. R. Young, Indian Life in the Great North West, (London: S.W. Partridge and Co., 1900), p. 126.

²² Young, James Evans, p. 139.

According to John McDougall, Maskepetoon was not a cruel man prior to his conversion although he was, in the manner of the period, a polygamist and an "inveterate hater of his tribal enemies:"

This he had drunk in with his mother's milk, and yet as he grew into strong manhood I can readily believe this unique man had his moments of longing for better things. The Divine would stir within him so strongly at times that the crusting of centuries of sin and darkness would crack, and the man would aspire and look and long for something that he instinctively knew would be infinitely better than his present.²³

The most wondrous evidence of Maskepetoon's ability to break through the "crusting of centuries of sin and darkness" following his conversion was that he ended a blood-feud of generations by refusing to avenge the deaths of his father and son. Maskepetoon was elevated to Methodist martyrdom when, fearlessly and unarmed save for his Bible, he ventured into an enemy camp and was shot down.²⁴

Maskepetoon aided John and George McDougall in their missionary work and was even given a room in their house at Victoria mission.²⁵ He was an eloquent, persuasive orator according to John McDougall, and the Indians respected his

²³McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 197.

²⁴McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 51 or Young, Indian Life, pp. 125-6.

²⁵McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 193.

advice.²⁶ In 1869 he counselled excited warriors against driving the white people out of the Saskatchewan country, telling them it was impossible that their huge domain could continue to be almost empty of men.²⁷ He told his people that it was selfish of them to continue to think that they alone could occupy the land; the rich soil of the broad plains was made by the great Father for the use of all his children. Maskepetoon prophesied that change was inevitable and should be welcomed:

"Can you" - (and here the old man's eye flashed and his almost palsied arm took on fresh life, pointing to the mighty river flowing near) - "can you dam that river? Can you send those strong waters back up on the mountains from whence they came? No, you cannot do this; likewise you cannot keep the white men out of this land."²⁸

The Indians most venerated by the missionary authors were those that embraced Christianity, urged their fellow Indians to do the same and welcomed the white settlement of their land. Loyalty to Queen and country was a virtue that the missionaries extolled and rewarded. In 1886, John McDougall took three chiefs who remained loyal during the 1885 rebellion, Pakan, Samson and Jonas, on a grand tour of Ontario where they addressed packed halls and

²⁶ McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 203.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 204.

²⁸ McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 204.

churches in the evenings and visited button, shoe, furniture and other factories during the day.²⁹

On more than one occasion in his books, E. R. Young cited examples of influential native converts who found that their spiritual life became so all-encompassing that they could no longer devote time to Indian councils where matters such as treaties were being discussed. The conversion of William Memotas, according to Young, was so clear and positive that

When some of the Indians were getting excited about their lands, and the treaties which were soon to be made with the Government, William, in writing to a friend, said: "I care for none of these things; they will come right. My only desire is to love Jesus more and more, so as to see Him by and by." ...The prospect of getting to heaven seemed so fully to absorb his thoughts that he appeared dead to everything earthly.³⁰

When the Government notified the Indians at the Rossville Mission that they wanted them to elect a chief to be present at treaty negotiations they chose Big Tom who gravely gave his reasons why he could not assume the responsibility. Big Tom had certain things on his mind that he had to attend to. These were, he said,

1. My own soul's salvation; 2. The salvation of my family; and 3. To do all I can to help and encourage the members of my

²⁹The Orillia Packet, September 3, 1886.

³⁰Young, By Canoe, pp. 180-181.

class to be true and faithful to Him who died for us, that we may see Him by-and-by, - are the uppermost things in my heart."³¹

Young admired Big Tom's unassuming nature; "How few white men in like circumstances would have had the grace and self-denial enough to have acted in a similar manner."³²

To the converted Indian, any memories or reminders of their former pagan life was like a nightmare. Some could not even bring themselves to speak of it. E. R. Young once asked an "old converted conjurer" to tell him about his former faith. The man was silent for some time. Then

Suddenly he sprang up in a way that startled us all, and, stretching out his hand like an orator, he began:-

"Missionary! the old wicked life is like a nightmare, like a bad dream, like a terrible sickness that made us cry out with pain. I am trying to banish it, to forget it, to wipe it out of my memory. ...It only made me miserable. The more I followed it, the more unhappy I was. So I have cast it out of my life, and from my heart. Would that I could wash it out of my memory!"³³

Marvellous evidence of the transforming power of Christianity could be seen in the contrasts between the village and home life of pagan and Christian Indians. E. R. Young was particularly fond of enlarging on the blissful,

³¹Ibid., p. 250.

³²Ibid., p. 250.

³³Ibid., pp. 131-2.

elysian charms of the domestic life of the converted Indian. "The Christian Indians could easily be picked out," Young wrote, "by the improved appearance of their homes, as well as by the marvellous change in their lives and actions."³⁴ Young described a Christian village in a wilderness of paganism:

Our Christians, as fast as they were able to build, were living in comfortable houses, and earnestly endeavouring to lift themselves up in the social circle. Their personal appearance was accepted as next to godliness. On the Sabbaths they were well dressed, and presented such a respectable and devout appearance in the sanctuary as to win the admiration of all who visited us. The great majority of those who made a profession of faith lived honest, sober, and consistent lives, and thus showed the genuineness of the change wrought in them by the glorious Gospel of the Son of God.³⁵

While walking through such a village in the evening, Young claimed one could hear the steady murmur of the heads of each of the families, reading the Bible in their little homes.

More proof of the regenerating power of the gospel, also designed to warm the heart of the reader, was the transformation in the home life of the Indian. Following a passage that described in ghastly detail the degraded position of women in pagan society, Young lauded their

³⁴ Ibid., p. 58.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 63.

exalted position in homes where Christianity was embraced:

Marvellous were the changes wrought among these Indians when they became Christians. And in no way was the change greater or more visible than in the improved condition of women. In paganism she has not the life of a dog. She is kicked and cuffed and maltreated continually... Very quickly after they become Christians does all this change. Then happy homes begin. Mother and wife and sister and daughter are loved and kindly cared for. ...I have seen what must have made angels rejoice. Anyway, my own eyes were dimmed with tears of joy. I have seen the big Indian sexton suddenly throw open the double doors of the church, and, while I was wondering who so large was coming in as to require two doors I saw that it was two stalwart Indian men carrying their invalid mother. ...Christianity made them do this. In their old state they would rather have died than thus carry an old woman. Now it is a labor of love. Surely missions are not failures when such transformations are taking place.³⁶

Under the influence of Christianity, men began to share the drudgery of domestic labour. In their pagan state, the men refused to chop wood or carry water. Young wrote "It was a new sight to see these Indian men so industriously at work," even though their pagan friends "scoffed and laughed at the men for thus degrading themselves by such menial work."³⁷

Evidence of the triumphs of Christianity over paganism were seen in the decay of Indian customs such as

³⁶Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, pp. 148-9.

³⁷Young, James Evans, pp. 147-8.

polygamy, the sun dance and burial rites. Young was at his most eloquent when describing the spot where once hideous idols were worshipped, the devil-dance performed, and other sinful, impure acts indulged in as now being occupied by a neat little church where sweet hymns could be heard rather than the dreadful rattling and drumming of the medicine men.³⁸ John Maclean agreed; the decay of these customs was a sure indication that missionary work was in some measure succeeding:

The medicine man's incantations, the death-song, the scalp-dance, the drunken orgies, the native burial customs, and many of the revolting ceremonies consequent upon a degrading and retrograding civilization having taken root among them, have, to a great degree, come to an end. Christianity had destroyed the hideous immorality of the camps, and introduced a noble standard in the life and person of Christ. It has suppressed many of the tribal laws which were injurious to the best interests of the people. Native customs have become subject to the Christ, the social life of the camps have become more uniform and refined, and the domestic relations of the people have been changed to accord with the views of the great teachers of life.³⁹

To persuade the Indians to convert to Christianity, the missionaries had to establish themselves as figures of authority. McDougall and Young portrayed themselves as the most important figures in the Indian communities in which

³⁸Young, By Canoe, p. 55 and On the Indian Trail, p 76.

³⁹Maclean, Indians, pp. 289-90.

they laboured. Their visits to the tribes they saw only occasionally were described as brief, happy breaks in the tribes' monotonous, lonely lives.⁴⁰ John Maclean did not boast to the same degree about the successes of his mission work, nor did he attempt to enhance the glamour of his role.

McDougall and Young according to their own accounts, became figures of great prestige and respect among the Indians; they were consulted for advice, arbitration and recommendations on all affairs pertaining to Indian life. McDougall's role as a pastor to the Indians was far from the first on his list:

Our duties to and amongst these people were manifold. We had to supply the object lesson in all new industries. In fishing, net making, and mending, chopping and sawing, planting and weeding, and even in economical hunting, we found that we must not only take a part but lead. I was doctor, lawyer, judge and arbitrator, peace commissioner, pastor, teacher and brother man. ...many a solemn time we spent in disabusing ignorant minds of groundless suspicions, and also many an hour we laboured to explain the benefit of Christian civilization in the ordering of the lives of a community. ... John, "the young preacher," was becoming quite an authority among the wandering tribes.⁴¹

E. R. Young described his role as similarly omniscient:

⁴⁰Young, On the Indian Trail, p.65.

⁴¹McDougall, Pathfinding, pp. 237-8.

"Ultimately we were considered not only their missionary but their doctor, lawyer and many other things besides."⁴² The missionary was not solely a figure of authority, however; he was adored and loved by his Indians as well. According to McDougall, the name "John" was honoured by all the tribes from the Rockies to the Great Lakes. McDougall could say of his accomplishments after fifteen years in the West, in his characteristically unassuming manner

I had now secured the friendship of some of each of the tribes frequenting the country between the Athabasca and Missouri rivers... In one way or another I had been among these tribes during the last fifteen years of my frontier life and now from Hudson's Bay to the Rocky Mountains "John" was known as the "Indians' friend." It was like music to me to hear the Blackfoot say "Chan Wapea" (John, my friend), or to hear in the many dialects of the Cree "John net otam" (John, my friend). I often thanked God for thus giving me favour in the eyes of these nomads who were the best mind readers in the world. For fifteen years I had wandered among these wild people more than any other living man, and still my scalp was on my head, and those of many others were on their heads also in consequence.⁴³

"Various were the arguments which the Good Spirit gave us to use in persuading men and women to be reconciled to God," wrote E. R. Young and he made no attempt to hide the fact that some of the tools of persuasion that he

⁴²Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 32.

⁴³McDougall, Opening the Great West, p. 16.

employed to obtain the cooperation of the Indians preyed on their inexperience.⁴⁴ The superior medicine of the missionary enhanced his status among the Indians according to Young and McDougall, rendering the Indians more susceptible to their teaching. Young described many incidents of a missionary indignantly marching into a wigwam after the medicine man's session of drumming and dancing over a sick person came to no avail; Young would immediately diagnose the problem and, with the aid of his wife, would restore the invalid to health. Young's role in the recovery of a small child prompted the father to be baptized, declaring:

Once I was a very hard-hearted, willful, stubborn pagan. ...But the white man came and saved my boy, and spoke such kind words in my wigwam to me in my sorrow, that I had to come and see if it was the same voice that spoke out the teachings of the Book which the Great Spirit had given him....⁴⁵

Young generally carried a small assortment of medicines with him on his journeys for "many a hard heart could be reached" by healing an afflicted member of a family.⁴⁶ Young noted that the Indians were fond of all medicines and believed in large, strong doses: "The hotter the dose is with cayenne pepper, or the more bitter with any powerful drug, the more it is relished, and the greater faith they have in its power

⁴⁴Young, By Canoe, p. 157.

⁴⁵Young, Indian Life, p. 113.

⁴⁶Young, On the Indian Trail, p. 36.

to effect a cure."⁴⁷ Young often assuaged Indians desiring medicine by doling out strong cups of tea with large doses of red pepper.⁴⁸ This was all for a noble cause: "Practical sympathy never failed to reach some hearts, and so influenced them, that they were ultimately brought to Christ."⁴⁹

John McDougall also used medicine in his ministry. He and Young found that outbreaks of epidemics such as measles helped Christian mission work. The pagan Indians suffered much more in these instances; they were "wild with fear, and in many cases acted in a manner to aggravate the disease."⁵⁰ The result was that there were many deaths among the pagan Indians while the Christian Indians had a high rate of recovery. McDougall wrote:

...Providence smiled upon us, and all of our patients, young and old, recovered, which helped us in our first acquaintance and gave us the beginning of an influence which grew with the years.⁵¹

The small-pox epidemic that swept the plains did not hasten conversion among the Indians as the Indians blamed the whites for the scourge and some were determined to begin a war of

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

⁵¹ McDougall, Pathfinding, p. 55.

revenge. According to E. R. Young, the white occupants of the West were saved from decimation when the Indians saw that the McDougalls, like the Indians, suffered from the disease.⁵²

A "beautiful illustration" of one of the arguments to attract converts that the Good Spirit inspired in E. R. Young was entitled "Where Are Your Children?" Young happened on a group of Indians who had recently lost many children through scarlet fever. Their "sullen apathy" made his work of preaching and teaching difficult until he was suddenly struck with an idea of how to break through their indifference:

Springing up, I shouted out, "I know where all your children are, who are not among the living! I know, yes, I do know most certainly where all the children are, whom Death has taken in his cold grasp from among us, the children of the good and of the bad, of the whites and of the Indians, I know where all the children are. ...They have gone from your camp-fires and wigwams. The hammocks are empty, and the little bows and arrows lie idle. ...I am so glad that the Great Spirit gives me authority to tell you that you may meet your children again, and be happy with them for ever."⁵³

This approach immediately succeeded in attracting the attention of the Indians; there was no more "scoffing or indifference." They became anxious for religious instruction.

⁵²Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 121.

⁵³Young, By Canoe, p. 161.

John McDougall's game-plan to win the confidence and respect of the Indians was to excel in "manliness," easily the most popular word in his vocabulary:

The preacher may preach ever so good, but he himself is to these people the exponent of what he preaches, and they judge the Gospel he presents by himself. If he fails to measure up in manliness and liberality and general manhood, then they think there is no use in listening to his teaching. Very early in my experience it was borne in upon me that the missionary to obtain influence on the people, must be fitted to lead in all matters. If short of this, their estimate of him would be low, and their respect proportionately small, and thus his work would be sadly handicapped all through.⁵⁴

Very few of McDougall's missionary colleagues, in his estimation, were able to live up to his ideal of "general manhood." Such was the case with the Reverend Lewis Warner who for two years lived in "misery and utmost loneliness" at Victoria mission.⁵⁵ McDougall deplored sending such weakly specimens to the mission field: "It took the East a long time to learn that only the strong, the most consecrated, and the most capable of adaptation to new circumstances could be of any real use in our mission work out here."⁵⁶

McDougall's peculiar formula for success among the Indians of the West was that he was able to astound them

⁵⁴McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, pp. 51-2.

⁵⁵McDougall, Opening the Great West, p. 25.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 25.

with his physical capabilities. He first received reknown for winning a foot race even though a crack runner sprang up from a place of hiding mid-way through the contest and sped ahead. McDougall soon easily passed him and won by many yards:

...that race opened my way to many a lodge, and to the heart of many a friend in subsequent years. It was the best introduction I could have had to those hundreds of aborigines, among whom I was to live and work for years.⁵⁷

McDougall also earned the respect and admiration of the Indians because he was an excellent shot in the buffalo hunt and was proficient at selecting the fat ones from an immense herd.⁵⁸ Because of his reputation, the Indians would bring McDougall their best horses to ride in the hunt.

And as I was often in camp merely visiting many an exciting time I had with the strange horses, and many a man and his whole family came to hear me sing and preach because I had won their admiration by my handling of their pet horse.⁵⁹

Precisely what the burden of the message was that the Methodist missionaries brought to the Indians of the West remains vague even after a thorough reading of their

⁵⁷McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 53.

⁵⁸McDougall, Pathfinding, pp. 227-8.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 228.

literature. They did not appear concerned that the Indians learn a great deal about the doctrines of Christianity; Sabbath observance seems to have been the main topic in the pulpit - it was the only issue directly related to Christianity dwelt on in the missionary publications. Other principles that the missionaries laboured to instil in the Indians had little to do with religion; they gave lessons in the settled life of agriculture and attempted to foster habits such as a daily routine of work and tidiness. The missionaries proudly proclaimed that loyalty to Queen and country was also part of the message that they brought to the Indians; the British crown was a guarantee of good fortune to the Indian, as was the Christian faith.

McDougall and Young agreed that the Indians did not have to be well-versed in the "non-essentials" of the Methodist religion.⁶⁰ First principles would suffice and the most important of these was Sabbath observance, which meant total abstinence from work and play. No matter where he was travelling or at what time of year, McDougall rested on the Sabbath, "notwithstanding the charge of 'Legalism,' 'Pharisaism,' and 'Fanaticism,' we religiously kept the Sabbath, counting this from 12 p.m. Saturday night until 12 p.m. Sunday night."⁶¹ The most oft-repeated tale in

⁶⁰Young, By Canoe, p. 183.

⁶¹McDougall, Western Trails, p. 110.

Methodist literature from the Canadian West was that of the contest between the Sabbath - observance brigade of Indian voyageurs versus the brigade that travelled on all seven days. The tale was usually told in a manner sufficiently vague to make it unclear as to when, how often and under whose direction this competition took place. Generally the idea was attributed to be the Reverend James Evans' who, according to the Methodist interpretation of events, fell into disfavour with the Hudson's Bay Company because he encouraged Sabbath observance among the Indians.⁶² The brigades left Norway House loaded with trade goods as soon as the lakes and rivers were free of ice in the spring, returning in the fall, weighted down with furs. As the summer months were brief, the men were driven to the limit of their endurance; it was "drive, drive, drive, from the time the ice disappeared in the waters in early June, until well on into September."⁶³ When several of the finest brigades made it known that they would not travel on Sunday, company officials were "dismayed as well as indignant."⁶⁴ For eight consecutive summers the sabbath brigades raced against seven-day trippers and "signally triumphed."⁶⁵

⁶²Young, James Evans, p. 226.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 229-30.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 230.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 237.

The Methodist missionaries impressed the importance of Sabbath observance on the minds of the Indians by warning them of the punishments that came to those who defied this injunction. Young told the story of an Indian chief who insisted on hunting on the Sabbath, and who nearly shot his hand off. On returning to camp the chief declared:

It would have been a good thing for me if I had listened to the words of the missionary and stayed here instead of rushing away to hunt on this day. ...see how I am punished for my sin! Now I believe there is a God who is angry with and can punish those who do not keep His day.⁶⁶

The tale of the Lord's-day smashing of the first steamboat ever built on the Saskatchewan was often repeated in the missionary literature. The pilot who was originally to steer the boat, an experienced guide and a Christian Indian, refused to travel on Sunday. Because of the pilot's stubbornness, an Indian standing among a crowd on the shore, who professed to have some knowledge of the stream, was chosen instead. With "sarcastic flings at the brave Christian man," the new guide manoeuvred the boat into a wrong channel; it swung round broadside and was carried back down the rapids, collapsing like an eggshell.⁶⁷

Apart from Sabbath observance and attendance at

⁶⁶Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 41.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 43-4.

services, the behaviour the missionaries expected from the converted Indians had little to do with religion. They required new habits of cleanliness and tidiness from the Christian Indians, diligent industry at a worthwhile task and a benevolent attitude toward women. McDougall and Young believed that part of the missionary's role was to give "object lessons of industry and settled life to this nomadic and restless people," by planting fields and building houses.⁶⁸ Brother Young and his wife devised a novel method of introducing the Christian Indians, who had "moved from a wigwam into a cozy little house, into the mysteries of civilized housekeeping."⁶⁹ Some were inclined to keep up their "very shiftless" habits rather than adopt methodical, tidy housekeeping. Young would announce from the pulpit on Sunday that he intended to visit and dine at the homes of several Christian Indian families over the coming week. He would tell each of them:

...we want to see when we visit you, how very clean and sweet your new house will be; then, we are also anxious to see, how neat and tidy the members of the family will be; we also wish to see, how bright and polished all your kettles, pots and plates, will be. We are both coming to your homes as I announced, so be on the lookout and ready for us.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 52.

⁶⁹ Young, On the Indian Trail, p. 52.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

Mrs. Young would arrive on the morning of the appointed day and instruct the women on scrubbing and cooking in preparation to welcome Reverend Young in the evening. Thus the Indian women learned "...that no longer did they wish to live in the careless way of the old pagan life, but, as now they had become Christians in their profession, so in their homes, they would have the neatness, and cleanliness, that should belong to those who are thus called."⁷¹

According to the literature of the Wesleyan Methodists in the West, missionary motivation was strongly linked to patriotic sentiments. In his mission work, John McDougall stressed loyalty to Queen and country equally as much as Christianity, urging the Indian to put his faith in two great forces - almighty God as revealed in Christ and British justice as revealed by the Canadian government. McDougall wrote lengthy descriptions of the lectures that he delivered in the Indian lodges "which you may be sure were at the time packed full of English history and Canadian experience and fair play, justice and liberty."⁷² The Methodist missionaries saw themselves as purveyors of much more than the Christian religion:

...from lodge to lodge we preached and lectured, sowing the seeds of faith in God and man and country. Many an hour around the

⁷¹ Ibid.; p. 59.

⁷² McDougall, Red River Rebellion, p. 116.

camp-fire the eye glistened and the ear was tense, and the hearts of strong men were moved, as in answer to some pertinent question we talked of law and government and civilization and Christianity.⁷³

As John Maclean described, the main accomplishments of the missionaries were not in the spiritual realm: "Loyalty to Queen and country was the burden of the message given by the Protestant teachers of religion, and the Indians of the west listened and obeyed, thus securing peace in troublous times."⁷⁴

The missionaries assumed that, in their pagan state, the Indians of Western Canada were dissatisfied and yearned to change their ways; they longed and grasped for something grander and nobler which they could not yet identify. Many sensed that they were living sinful lives and lost interest in their pagan religion long before being introduced to Christianity. Describing his first contact with the Indians of the plains, McDougall wrote that he found them "eager for something better and stronger and more certain than they had in the faith of their fathers."⁷⁵ The pagan Indians that E. R. Young came in contact with were "sick of sin" and longed for "something which is only really satisfied by the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ."⁷⁶

⁷³Ibid., p. 175.

⁷⁴Maclean, Indians, p. 329.

⁷⁵McDougall, Forest, Lake and Prairie, p. 194.

⁷⁶Young, On the Indian Trail, p. 86.

He continued:

It is true that these inner feelings may be long hidden from outer vision, or there may be an endeavour to satisfy their cravings by the vigorous exercise of all the religious ceremonies that have been revealed to them in their idolatrous or pagan surroundings; but when they can be induced to speak out and unburden their very souls, their bitter wailing cry is one of dissatisfaction and unrest.⁷⁷

According to Young, there were examples of pagan Indians who spontaneously, without prompting, lost faith in their old religion before contact with Christianity. Young was acquainted with a chief at Nelson River who made up his mind without the aid of a missionary that the Great Spirit "...did not care for the beating of the conjurer's drum, or the shaking of the rattle of the medicine man. So I for years have had no religion."⁷⁸ At some point the Sauteaux Indians became aware that they had "lost the trail" and were "in the darkness of the valley."⁷⁹ They proclaimed to Young after his first meeting with them that "Now we have some hopes that the daylight is coming and that we shall get out of this dark place where we and our fathers have so long groped, and over the great hill of our ignorance into the light that is beyond."⁸⁰ Young's explanation for

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 86.

⁷⁸ Young, By Canoe, p. 119.

⁷⁹ Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 117.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 117.

the drift of Indians southward in the mid-nineteenth century was that rumours of Christianity had reached them and they desired to become acquainted with the religion of the Bible: "...their curiosity had been excited and their religious instincts so aroused, that family after family embarked in their birch canoes and started for the land of the South Wind, in order to find the teacher and the Book."⁸¹ This reason for the drift of the population southward eventually dawned on the Hudson's Bay Company according to Young, which led to the invitation to the original four Wesleyan Methodist missionaries.

The reader of Methodist missionary literature was led to believe that despite the centuries of sin, degradation and superstition, a glorious future was in store for the Indians. Christianity was the main factor in the transformation of the Indian from savagery to civilization; once it was introduced there immediately followed a desire to change and improve temporal conditions. The transforming power of Christianity was illustrated by the lives of legendary native converts who accepted and promoted white settlement. It was also evident in the village and home life of the Indians and in the decay of pagan customs. The Indians were depicted as easily impressionable; the missionaries were quickly able to establish themselves in positions of great

⁸¹Young, James Evans, pp. 87-8.

authority among them. This position of dignity helped the missionaries in promoting their message but precisely what this message was is difficult to define as it was only vaguely alluded to by McDougall, Maclean and Young. Sabbath observance, attendance at services and new habits of cleanliness and tidiness appear to have been the behaviour expected of a Christian Indian. The missionary authors shared the assumption that, deep in their hearts, pagan Indians were unhappy and longed for a better way of life. Readers were assured that the Indians gained enormous benefits from contact with their white brethren; the missionaries' presence in the West was fulfilling the duty of the stronger races toward their weaker brothers. The transformation could not happen overnight, however, for the entire Indian population of Western Canada; a period of transition was required that could last for an undetermined period of time. This transition period is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE GLORIOUS TRANSITION

Despite the missionaries' glowing descriptions of the marvellous transformation that immediately befell the native convert to Christianity, they cautioned that, for many Indians in the West, the metamorphosis from savagery to civilization was not as magical as a touch of the wand of Methodism. The process involved many frictions, frustrations and obstructions. Readers were assured, in the passages discussed in the last chapter, that there was evidence for a great deal of optimism for the Indians' future, but they were warned at the same time that it was a slow process. In John Maclean's opinion, "absorption" was the final solution to the problem of a separate race within the Dominion; the Indians would eventually intermingle with white society, finally becoming indistinguishable. The missionaries believed the Indians had to be guided through a stage of transition from savagery to civilization. This was a period of intense tuition involving not just the substitution of the English language and customs for those of the Indian, but a complete transformation of their "physical, mental, moral and spiritual development."¹ The

¹Maclean, Indians, p. 263.

transition to civilization would be successful if it was implemented not by coercion but by gradually undermining Indian customs. Some Indian traditions however, clearly retarded their progress and should be rigorously suppressed. There were obstacles to a smooth transition from savagery to civilization; most often singled out by the missionaries was the degenerating effect of contact between the Indians and unsavoury elements of the white population; they presented a strange paradox to the confused Indians as they professed Christianity yet lived sinful lives. They also supplied the Indians with alcohol, the great bugbear of the missionaries. The Indians were described as possessing an insatiable thirst for the demon drink which was a serious obstacle to their civilization. Another impediment to a successful transition was the Indians' notion that their civilization was superior to the white man's; many Indians saw no reason to accept another way of life. Aspects of the reserve system and some of the policies and employees of the Indian Department also concerned the missionaries as these frustrated the progress of the Indians. The missionaries envisaged the time, however, when the transition stage would be over, and the Indians would be on equal footing with their white brethren. In the meantime, the Indians were wards of the Dominion and could not expect to enjoy all the privileges of citizenship. The Methodist brothers congratulated themselves and all Canadians for their record of

fair treatment toward the Indians; certainly Canada fared well on the issue of Indian policy in a comparison with their neighbours to the south. The missionaries claimed much of the credit for Canada's just and peaceful record in the West, which paved the way for the settlement of the country.

"Destruction through absorption," as Maclean entitled it, was ultimately the solution to the Indian problem.² As he outlined the scenario, once the transition stage from savagery to civilization had safely been bridged:

The position of the red men will be such that there will be an intermingling with their white neighbors, and as the result of intermarriage, according to the Indian custom or that of the white people, there will spring up a race of half-breeds. The slow settlement of the country will keep this half-breed race in possession of their language, customs and Reservation system; but so soon as there is rapid advancement, there will follow a voluntary absorption, and this will prove to be a benison to both races, uniting them in language, customs, privileges and toil. Compulsory absorption is not agreeable to our political sentiments, but as the races are drawn closer together, they will gradually unite, and this will ultimately solve the problem of the perpetuation of a separate race within the bounds of the Dominion.³

Canadians could look with some optimism to the situation in the older provinces, Maclean wrote; there remained few pure-blood red men in Ontario and Quebec and many with Indian

² Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 298.

³ Ibid., p. 298.

blood occupied good positions among their white brethren.⁴ This process could only increase through education and intermarriage. This mixing of the races was not degenerating - the Englishman, after all, was himself the product of the intermingling of blood:

Is the absorption a cause for regret? We do not think so. The modern Englishman is the descendant of the Anglo-Saxon, Dane and Norman, and the American is a cosmopolitan indeed. Here are cases of extinction of separate races in a defined locality through absorption. The higher races have duties toward the lower, and both will be benefited by the absorption.⁵

E. R. Young and John McDougall did not articulate their theories on the eventual absorption of the Indian race as fully as Reverend Maclean. They appear to have agreed with Maclean, however, that absorption of the Indian would ultimately solve the problem of a separate race in the Dominion. Young described the Scottish mixed-bloods at Red River as "an industrious, hardy lot of people...among the best people in that interesting and rapidly increasing country."⁶ They were industrious and thrifty, and owned large farms and comfortable homes; in short they had

⁴ Ibid., p. 288.

⁵ Ibid., p. 298.

⁶ Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, p. 52.

inherited "Scottish thrift rather than Indian shiftlessness."⁷ Their worthy Presbyterian minister, John Black, was married to a woman with Indian blood but Young magnanimously declared, "The Indian blood in the veins of his excellent wife did not make her the less a lady of kindly heart and noble life."⁸ Describing the young city of Winnipeg, Young wrote,

To pick out of that energetic mass of humanity those with Indian blood in their veins is an utter impossibility. The intermixture of the races, however, is there, and doubtless in sufficient amount to aid in the development of characteristics which, it is to be hoped, will not be defects, but blessings in the coming generations.⁹

E. R. Young retained some reservations about the development of a "semi-civilized half-breed colony in the heart of the American continent," a reference to the Metis.¹⁰ They were not as successful an ethnological experiment as the Scots mixed-bloods in Young's opinion as they "retained in their looks and also in their habits much more of the peculiar characteristics of their Indian ancestry than the Scotch half-breeds."¹¹ Young conceded that, physically,

⁷Ibid., p. 52.

⁸Ibid., p. 52.

⁹Ibid., pp. 59-60.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 51.

¹¹Ibid., p. 51.

the Metis were superior to their French and Indian ancestors, and that, "Although having in their veins so much Indian blood, they can hardly be regarded as approximating to the wild nomadic Indian tribes."¹² It was their French and Catholic ancestry that disturbed Young much more than their Indian blood. The Metis had kept alive ancient rivalries, hostilities and jealousies directed against the English. These bitter feelings were always simmering just beneath the surface; this long-harboured resentment erupted in 1885 in Young's opinion:

Some of their forefathers, with the humiliations following the English victory on the Plains of Abraham and the subsequent surrender of Quebec and then of the whole of Canada, had hurried away into the vast wilderness, and there amidst the excitement of almost savage life had kept alive in the hearts and memories of their children and grand-children, as the years rolled by, the story of their fears and hatred of that race which had made the fleur-de-lis of France go down before the red cross of England. . . . They kept themselves aloof, except for purposes of trade, from the Scotch half-breeds and others speaking the English language, and were much more French than English in their prejudices and feelings.

With jealous eyes, and bitter feelings, they watched the incoming waves of Anglo-Saxon civilization.¹³

John McDougall was not certain of the virtues of a

¹² Ibid., p. 61.

¹³ Young, "The Indian Problem", p. 466.

mixed-blood race. He described a group of English mixed-bloods that settled at Victoria mission: "They were a distinct type of humanity - a speculative, adventurous, roving white race of men for fathers, and nomadic, homeless, natural people for mothers. Here was a new experiment in the race problem - a strong, weak people - a paradox in humanity."¹⁴

McDougall's opinion of the Metis was similar to E. R.

Young's: their Indian ancestry was not as damaging as the influence of their priests. Although they were "full of fine traits of character. Kind, hospitable, chivalrous, brave..." and could talk about "horses and buffalo, and battle with the Sioux and Blackfeet, and count their beads and mutter prayers," they were "sublimely ignorant of all things else."¹⁵ McDougall continued "Surely scores of years of preaching should have done something better for them."

McDougall could not have objected to the idea of inter-marriage as his first wife was Indian and he contributed progeny to the mixed-blood race. While sharing a canoe with John McDougall, a "tenderfoot" missionary expressed his disapproval of such alliances:

We happened on the question of inter-marriage of white men and Indian women, I injudiciously expressed my disapproval saying that I could not understand how such an

¹⁴McDougall, Red River Rebellion, pp. 31-2.

¹⁵McDougall, Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe, p. 42.

alliance could be mutually enjoyable because of the different levels of culture and education. Dr. McDougall was putting into Cree for the benefit of the two Indians all that I was saying, and there were several bursts of laughter which I could not understand 'till some time after the trip was over, when I learned that Dr. McDougall's first wife was an Indian woman.¹⁶

If absorption into the white race was the destination of the Indian, there remained a period of transition during which the Indian would be trained, educated or "civilized." As John Maclean explained this process:

The civilizing of the Indian does not mean the compulsory acception [sic] of the white man's customs but it is the transformation of the whole man. It means the physical, mental, moral and spiritual development of the individual and the race.¹⁷

...therein is implied the full transformation and development of the nature of the individual, the complete overthrow of religious, political and social customs, and very many changes in the domestic relations of the people.¹⁸

Drawing on his theories of the birth, growth and decline of the races of man, Maclean interpreted the transition stage as a delicate time; the race was in a fragile state

¹⁶Diary of Reverend J. A. Lousely, unpublished manuscript, Rare Book Room, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Manitoba.

¹⁷Maclean, Indians, p. 263.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 261-2.

and was defenceless against many dangers: "The sudden appearance of a contagious disease could sweep them off the face of the earth, while care may preserve them as a remnant of a powerful tribe, transformed through stages of civilization from a bold, independent and war-like race, into a thriftless number of serfs, without ambition or manhood."¹⁹ The Indians were in danger of rapidly decreasing in numbers during the period of transition. These influences could be counter-acted if the two races developed friendly relations:

...as to encourage the stronger to seek the elevation of the weaker, the feeling of an exterminating influence at work entertained by the weaker will be removed, and a recognition of equality being established, ensuring the confidence, will work so strongly upon the natives, that the transition state being bridged over safely, a period of increase will follow.²⁰

The missionaries described the transition stage as a period of intense tuition, of "constant oversight in all matters, even to the maintenance of domestic and commercial habits and instructions in life, as well as a multiplication of law in moral and spiritual experience."²¹ The goal of the transition period was to guide the Indians toward self-support and respectability, to "emancipate"

¹⁹ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 19.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 302-3.

²¹ McDougall, Red River Rebellion, pp. 31-2.

them so they could take their place as equals of their white neighbors. Eventually, as their circumstances changed, they would "gladly accept, and, indeed, desire to become possessed of the culture which will fit them for their new conditions."²² The missionaries cautioned against the use of prohibitory measures during the transition stage; their customs should be "gradually undermined," "brought into harmony with our own," or "silently overthrown" rather than clumsily abrogated.²³ During their period of tutelage the Indians remained wards of the Dominion and could not enjoy the privileges of citizens who contributed fully to the mainstream of life. The missionaries warned that the transition would take time. As John Maclean described the process:

They cannot be saved in one generation. Justice and humanity compel us to treat them well, always aiming at self-support. With the watchful care of the Government and churches during his progress from savagery to civilization, the transfer and guidance of his energies toward cattle raising and agriculture, the enlightening and strengthening of his intellect by means of schools and missionaries, and confidence in our motives and measures, we may not in our day see the native fully civilized, but we shall enjoy the consciousness of having done our duty, and some progress toward his ultimate salvation will have been gained.²⁴

Maclean urged that careful study of the Indians'

²²Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 543.

²³Maclean, Indians, p. 299.

²⁴Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 552.

customs and traditions precede the planning of policies and programs for the civilization of the Indian so that "wise measures may be adopted for the silent overthrow of all those that are injurious to the advancement of the red man."²⁵ Maclean believed that persuasive measures would arouse opposition; the customs of the Indians must gradually be brought into harmony with white society. They would be won over by "love and not argument".²⁶

It is not by determined opposition that we must win our way, but by continued labor, undermining the customs of the Indians by giving them a superior religion, grander and purer customs and a nobler civilization than then enjoy.²⁷

Although the acceptance of Christianity immediately eliminated certain undesirable customs, there remained those that had to be

...gradually undermined by the introduction of influences and counter-customs, before the end is reached which we desire. Direct opposition to native customs will stir up strife, and the object sought will be lost; but if the religious, social, political and domestic customs are thoroughly understood, and discretion used in imparting others, there will result abundant success.²⁸

²⁵Maclean, Indians, p. 272

²⁶Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 547.

²⁷Maclean, Indians, pp. 302-3

²⁸Ibid., p. 272.

Use of the native language should not be outlawed but its use could be discouraged through

...a wise policy of teaching English in the schools, and allowing the Indian tongue to die out. Prohibitory measures, compelling English alone to be used in the schools, will arouse the latent antagonism and retard progress. English must be taught. It is the desire of the Government and the missionaries that the English language should become the only medium of communication; but this will be gained gradually, and not by the complete prohibition of the native tongue.²⁹

Maclean believed it was wise, however, that certain customs be banned by the Government such as the Potlach of the British Columbia tribes which he saw as a "cause of retarding the progress of the Indian."³⁰

John McDougall openly encouraged the maintenance of Indian customs for parades and pageants and came under a great deal of criticism for it. In 1908, McDougall was secretary of the Committee of the Dominion Exhibition in Calgary; he felt that the Indians should take a leading part in the celebration and wrote to the Indian agents that he would like Indians to take part in a parade. Indians on horseback, with dog travois, in hunting and war costume were

²⁹Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 547.

³⁰Maclean, Indians, p. 19.

to represent the original West.³¹ His reply from the agent at the Blood Indian Agency was that

...owing to the Indian pageant business having been so much overdone in late years in neighboring towns as to become a distinct detriment to the progress of the Blood Indians, I regret that I am unable to encourage the Blood Indians to participate in entertainment in Calgary.³²

A. E. Forget, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, stated in his report for 1896 that encouragement and patronage of these displays of Indian traditions was "...one of the most serious obstacles encountered in our efforts to secure the final abandonment of heathen rites and ceremonies by the Indians. ...So long as such 'shows' are patronized and supported by the gate money of this class of whites, so long will the difficulty of securing a total abandonment of such continue..."³³

McDougall's reasons for encouraging Indian participation in parades and pageants despite the criticism leveled at him is not clear; perhaps he enjoyed his own role in the celebrations. As the Calgary Eye Opener proudly reported in 1912, the first Calgary Stampede was not to be a

³¹John McDougall to the Indian Agent, Blood Reserve, Alberta, June 19, 1908, Blood Indian Agency Correspondence, 1899-1944, File 21, Glenbow Alberta Institute.

³²Indian Agent, Blood Reserve to John McDougall, June 23, 1908, File 21.

³³Canada, Sessional Papers, No. 11, 1897 (for 1896), Report of Inspector A. E. Forget.

"miserable bucking contest" but an educational experience, with a parade showing the evolution of the West.³⁴ It continued: "The famous missionary, John McDougall, will of course, handle the Indians for the occasion," and announced in a later issue that "The parade was a corker, the best part of it being the Indians, without the Indians it would not have been much of a parade."³⁵ McDougall was criticized for undoing his work as a missionary by contributing to forms of amusement that were detrimental to the morals and stability of the Indians.³⁶ John Maclean explained in his biography of McDougall how his friend defended his actions:

In his defence he pointed to the teaching of his whole life, wherein he had stated repeatedly that the effects of civilization and the commingling of white people with the Indians in many cases were injurious, debasing and degrading body, mind and soul. It was true that he had condemned the pow-wow and sun dance with their tom-tom, paint, feathers and incantations, as tending to maintain pagan worship and practice. Indeed the Stoney Indians, through his ministrations, legislated in their councils against even the making of drums until they were not allowed to be kept on the Reserves. However, he felt that there was sufficient safeguards at the Stampede and Pageants to protect the natives; the amusement would relieve the monotony of life on the Reserve, while the knowledge obtained would prove beneficial to them all. It was simply a

³⁴Eye Opener, Calgary, May 18, 1912, p. 4.

³⁵Eye Opener, Sept. 7, 1912.

³⁶John Maclean, McDougall of Alberta, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1927), pp. 259-260.

difference of attitude, and if any man had a right to speak on the matter, it was the missionary who had spent his whole life among them, and was their spiritual leader and friend.³⁷

Although the missionaries may have disagreed on whether the encouragement of Indian traditions prolonged the state of transition, they all cautioned their readers that the progress from savagery to civilization would take time, requiring patience from the whites and perseverance from the Indians. If the races were to forge a friendly relationship, the transition must be unhurried; nothing must be done to arouse latent bitterness and resentment. As John McDougall admonished the readers of the Missionary Bulletin:

While we remember how slow with the Indian the process of transformation is, we never forget that we ourselves are at the end of twenty centuries of continuous effort, and that it becomes us to be patient with these people who, within a few short years have started on this new life, so different from all their past faith and life in every particular.³⁸

John Maclean agreed, reminding his readers that it had taken centuries for the English-speaking race to evolve to its present elevated state:

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 259-60.

³⁸ Missionary Bulletin, Vol II, No. 4, June, 1905, pp. 846-7.

...ignorantly we look for as great a development in the red race from half a century of training. This transformation of civilization includes a great deal. It means the substitution of a foreign language for a large number of dialects, an entire change in their modes of life, the rejection of old ideas and modes of thinking, and the accepting of that which is difficult to comprehend, because foreign to their minds. It is unjust to expect, and impossible to conceive, the development of Indian tribes in the space of a single century to the high standing of civilization enjoyed by the white race of the present age.³⁹

The missionaries cautioned their readers that the transition period would take time and they also warned that the process was not without its frustrations and impediments. The most serious obstacle to the smooth transition from savagery to civilization was the Indians' contact with unsavoury elements of the white population. These were the people willing to satisfy the Indians' feverish desire for alcohol which gravely hindered their progress. Unwholesome whites and their alcohol taught the Indians immorality and degradation and further lowered their level of civilization. The reserves situated closest to white settlements progressed most slowly the missionaries found; they argued that, at least in the early stages of their tuition, the Indians should be isolated. It was not only the demon rum that led

³⁹Maclean, Indians, p. 279.

to the missionaries' concern about Indian - white contact; they felt that the double standard the unscrupulous white man presented - professing to be Christian yet living a sinful life - confused the Indian and hampered Christian mission work. This had the effect of strengthening the Indians' dogmatic belief that their society was superior to Anglo-Canadian civilization. The missionaries regarded the Indians' firm resolve to maintain their culture as a major impediment to the civilization of the Indian.

"It is sad to say that the settlement of the country in the vicinity of Indian reserves by white men is injurious physically, mentally and spiritually to the members of the race," mourned John Maclean.⁴⁰ Referring to the Sarcees he wrote:

Their close proximity to Calgary is injurious to the morals of the white people and Indians, as the natives of the plains always find the lower stratum of society ready to teach the willing learner lessons of immorality, and degredation is sure to follow any close relationship with white people in the early stages of their training.⁴¹

According to the missionaries, devious, corrupt white men easily damaged the good will they had laboured years to create. John McDougall was vitriolic in his condemnations

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 26.

⁴¹Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 18.

of such people; he believed that if the Indians of the plains were regarded as 100% barbaric, then the white man was 80% or 90% barbaric.⁴² McDougall was particularly maledicent concerning the white settlers that he met on his trips across the border to Fort Benton: "If these were the only products of our modern progress, then for God's sake and humanity's also, give us barbarism."⁴³ McDougall continually expressed his scorn for the products of civilization. Describing his travels with the General Secretary of the Methodist Church and his faithful guide Jacob, "two distinct types of manhood," he made it clear which he preferred: "How often it was borne in upon me that our civilization as it is called does not produce the gentleman, and even the higher influence of Christianity must struggle with our race for centuries to make real men and women."⁴⁴ On board a steamer on the Red River, McDougall was disgusted with the behaviour of some new arrivals from the East who referred to the mixed-bloods with nasty, vulgar expressions. McDougall castigated them by saying that he also was a half-breed (English and Scots-Canadian), and commented:

I have knocked about a lot and have been
thrown into association with many peoples,
but for sublime indifference to the

⁴²McDougall, "The Future of the Indians," p. 3.

⁴³McDougall, Western Trails, p. 76.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 33.

sensibilities of other folk and the most flagrant selfishness the ordinary white man "takes the cake," and were it not for the leaven of Christianity we would be at war with all the rest of mankind.⁴⁵

McDougall and Maclean believed that the strange dichotomy the white man presented to the Indian was damaging to Christian mission work. They came with the Bible in one hand and "absolute domination and rum and whiskey and many foul diseases on the other."⁴⁶ The white man was a "living paradox to the docile, passive Indians."⁴⁷ John Maclean described the double standard that the white man presented to the Indian:

He [the Indian] loved and practised unbounded hospitality toward both races; but the white men were hospitable only to their own people. They saw the white men protecting their wives and daughters, and degrading the women of the camps. How could the unsophisticated red man recognize these antagonisms. They were mysteries to him, and they remain so to us."⁴⁸

The most damaging result of the Indians' association with devious white men was that the Indians were supplied with alcohol; the missionaries wrote at length of its dangers and its effect of further degrading the Indian population. John Maclean wrote lengthy tracts denouncing

⁴⁵McDougall, Red River Rebellion, pp. 260-1.

⁴⁶McDougall, "The Future of the Indians," p. 5.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁸Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 549.

the traffic in liquor: the drinker was the slave rather than the master of his sinful passions; drink weakened the memory and destroyed the reasoning faculties. Crimes were plotted under its influence, it created greeds and lawless efforts to supply them.⁴⁹ E. R. Young's descriptions of the Indians' insatiable desire for alcohol and the hideous events that took place under its influence were the most condemning:

When once he gets a taste for the fire-water his burning, craving appetite seems to have no bounds, and he will do any thing and part with every thing in order that he may obtain the accursed stuff. I have known them to part with their furs, guns, traps, blankets, yea, even sell wives and children, for the unprincipled white man's fire-water. ...When drunk the generally phlegmatic, stoical Indian often becomes a fiend incarnate. The quiet decorum of an Indian village is changed into a pandemonium... When infuriated with drink the men used to terribly beat their wives, and often drag them for many yards by the hair of their head. The helpless children came in for their full share of suffering from their enraged or maddened fathers or older brothers. ...murders frequently happened during the carnival of sin. If one of the drunken bouts happened in winter, during the bitter cold, dreadful sufferings and often much fatality resulted. Twelve children have been known to have perished in one drunken frolic.⁵⁰

A further hindrance to the civilization of the

⁴⁹ John Maclean, The Destiny of Today: Studies in Conscience and Character, (Toronto: William Briggs, n.d.) p. 80.

⁵⁰ E. R. Young, Stories From Indian Wigwams, pp. 70-71.

Indian was the steadfast belief of some that they possessed the superior culture. Although identifying the Indians' obstinate pride as an impediment to their civilization may appear to contradict the other obstacles the missionaries discerned - contact with white men and alcohol, which caused them to lose self-respect, - the missionaries believed that the issues were related. When the Indians saw the effect that contact with white civilization had on some of their number, they became more determined to cling to their own traditions, hampering the missionaries' efforts to introduce new ideas:

...they are dogmatists, and believe that they are right in their belief. When the trader appears with his Christian belief and un-Christian practices, they become more strongly entrenched in their dogmatic citadel, and with the advent of the missionary they are ready for an assault of their faith.⁵¹

John McDougall often described the Indians as "conceited" because of their centuries of isolation and consequent ignorance of the superiority of other cultures in the world. The Plains Cree were the self-styled "aristocrats" of the plains according to McDougall:

It was amusing to watch one of these lordly fellows visit either a mission-house or a Hudson's Bay post. He had the air of conferring a great favor. He patronized even

⁵¹Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 547.

more than the new graduate or the new curate. ...The broad plains, the big herds, the sublime ignorance had developed the wrong way with this man and the result was a conceited prig. Slow to learn, he had much to unlearn; and it takes time to do the latter. Unburdening the load of centuries of misconception is a great work, but it must be undergone by all people before the lessons of the new life can germinate and take root.⁵²

John Maclean agreed that isolation had produced some misled notions of superiority among the Indians.

The natives of our plains, forests, rivers and mountains, uninfluenced by the civilization of the white man, believe strongly in the superiority of their race. This no doubt arises from their isolation and study of their own customs and belief, without having an opportunity of comparing them with the customs and beliefs of other races.⁵³

The Indians' sense of pride prevented them from welcoming the white man's system of education:

Naturally they wish to know how all our learning will qualify them to hunt and fight, and in any measure fit them to become better Indians. They believe the native culture is best suited for themselves, and having developed under it, and enjoyed it so long, they care not to give it up for an untried system.⁵⁴

The missionaries were critical of aspects of the

⁵² McDougall, Red River Rebellion, pp. 33-34.

⁵³ Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 540.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 543.

reserve system that they believed frustrated the progress of the Indian toward civilization. Maclean and McDougall expressed grave concern over the living conditions on the reserve: unwholesome food, badly ventilated, filthy houses and poor clothing.⁵⁵ McDougall felt the sudden change in diet from meat, fowl and fish to "cereals and vegetables and salt and sugar and syrup" and the "crude cabins full of foul atmosphere and surcharged with the germ of terrible disease" caused much suffering.⁵⁶

John Maclean defined "immoral diseases" and a general "depression of spirit" as the chief causes of a high mortality rate among the Indians on reserves. As he explained this depression: "the consciousness that as a race they are fading away, and the increasing strength of the white race, has caused such a depression of spirit that many of them may be said to die of a broken heart."⁵⁷ That the Indians keenly felt their changed condition could be seen in their tawdry dress and habits of uncleanness.⁵⁸ The first generation of young men to live on the reserve felt particularly shackled and restricted; they thrilled to the stories of battles and hairbreadth escapes told by their

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 300-301.

⁵⁶McDougall, "The Future of the Indians," p. 6.

⁵⁷Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 302.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 19.

elders, but "when they [stepped] beyond the lodge they [saw] the agent's house, and they were at once confronted with the fact that the paleface dwells in the land, and he has come to rule."⁵⁹ As Maclean explained the bitterness of the Indians in 1885:

The excitement of the hunting days is gone. Idle hands make sad hearts, and many of them pine away and die. They see their great men dying, and they feel that the day is not far distant when they too shall pass away. ...The glorious days of Indian valour are speedily passing away, and the vanquished smart under the gentle rod of their Christian conquerors.⁶⁰

John McDougall also detected a sense of despair and despondency among the Indians.

While we had done what we could we very well knew that for many of these splendid children of nature there would come a sad awakening. Ichabod would be written on their walls. For them in a generation the glory would have departed, country, liberty and their old manner of life would be gone. We as brother men felt this all too keenly and we did the best we could to make our companion understand what we believed would be the future of his people.⁶¹

In 1885, John Maclean wrote that although the reserve system had accomplished some good, prevailing discontent was due to the shoddy policies and shady employees of the

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁰ John Maclean, "The Half-Breed and Indian Insurrection," Canadian Methodist Magazine and Review, Vol 22, No. 1, July, 1885, p. 173.

⁶¹ McDougall, Opening the Great West, p. 28.

Indian department.⁶² The Indians were not given adequate food and they were given no incentive to work as the loungers and workers were fed alike. Many of the Indian agents were ill-suited to their jobs as they were appointed through political influence. Maclean's suggested remedy was the appointment of an Indian council, consisting of missionaries, teachers, chiefs, farm agents and instructors, which would meet annually in each district. He also thought an "Indian Territorial or Provincial Assembly" should be held annually in Regina or Winnipeg, with delegates from each district council:

The district representatives would be able to state the "progress and poverty" of the respective tribes in their districts and to present the resolutions of the Councils respecting matters affecting the interests of the Indians. By this means the secret dealings of "cliques," and "rings" and "officious individuals" would soon be at an end.⁶³

Also writing in 1885, E. R. Young declared his opinion that the system of reserves was a miserable failure and urged the removal of the Indians to a remote, isolated northern region:

...I think our whole system of Reserves is a failure and a great mistake. My theory is the formation of a large Indian Province

⁶²Maclean, "The Half-Breed and Indian Insurrection," pp. 173-5.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 174-5.

north and east of Lake Winnipeg in which all our Indians could be more advantageously placed, both for their own happiness and welfare and for the future progress and safety of the great prairie regions, which we hope to see yet filled with millions of people, who will till the soil and live happy and contented on its resources. And now is the time to promptly attend to it. The uprising of the Indians has destroyed the confidence of the whites. They can never again live in peace and contentment with the Indian Reserves as they now are, scattered all through the white settlements. "Heroic treatment" must be the order of the day if we expect settlers to come in after what has occurred. The strong arm of the law must punish the half-breeds; the Indians must be removed.⁶⁴

Young's article, written by a person "cognizant of the needs of the Indian," received a great deal of attention.⁶⁵ The Canadian Methodist Magazine, when it first appeared, boasted:

Brother Young's article was read in the Dominion Senate and became the subject of much conversation, both inside and outside of the House. It was also copied by a leading London (Eng.) paper, as admirably setting forth the condition and needs of the Indians.⁶⁶

It was perhaps because of the attention E. R. Young's article received that John Maclean devoted several pages of his Indians of Canada to the presentation of arguments against the policy that the Indians must "Move On!"⁶⁷

⁶⁴E. R. Young, "The Indian Problem," p. 469.

⁶⁵"The Indian Question," Editorial, Canadian Methodist Magazine and Review, July, 1885, Vol. 22, No. 1.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷Maclean, Indians, p. 267.

He believed that this attitude was seldom motivated by genuine sympathy; rather, self-interest was usually the foundation of such schemes. "The Indians must go," Maclean wrote, "becomes a very attractive heading for a sensational article in the columns of the western press, but justice is blindfold, and the reasons urged for and against a change of policy must be placed in the scales before a verdict is given."⁶⁸ Among the advantages of having a reserve in a district was the fact that it created a need for supplies of beef, flour and other staples. Freighters, farm labourers and clerks were required, and there would be little need for the Mounted Police or the Indian Department without reserves; this in turn created a market for farm and ranch produce. Maclean argued that a policy of removing the Indian was not in accordance with principles of justice:

It may be only removal to a remoter district, but is that just? In former years the Indians were almost the sole means for the existence of many people, and now that the demand is not so great, because of other means of securing a living, must they be sent to the north because of our whims? When they have gone there, settlers will follow, and the same expulsion will be demanded. Because they are no longer of as great service to many as formerly is no just reason for removal. Suppose the red man in their years of strength had demanded the expulsion of the white people, the country would have still been a barren waste. Equal rights must be given to all, and justice sacredly meted out.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 270.

The missionary brothers agreed that there were many obstacles that could retard the smooth and immediate transition from savagery to civilization. Until this gap was bridged however, the Indian remained a "ward of the government and not a free man." He could not be awarded the franchise. As Maclean explained, the Indian tribes of Ontario and Quebec might soon rank in privileges with the white man, but in the West the Indians were not yet able to discuss intelligently serious questions; they were still easily influenced by unprincipled men and, while they were being fed at the expense of the Canadian people, they could not hope to occupy an equal place:

But the man of the west will not be able to secure this privilege until he has removed the incubus of degraded white men and he can intelligently discuss grave questions affecting both races and not follow the dictates of unprincipled men. The time has not yet come for the natives of the west to decide for themselves on these matters, and it would be a dangerous experiment to hurl amongst us thousands of votes subject to the selfish interests and wily tactics of corrupt dictators. So long as the natives must be fed at the expense of the country, or taught to farm and engage in industrial arts and live an isolated life on Reservations, they are unfit to stand upon an equal footing in political rights, burdens and privileges.⁷⁰

In the courts of justice however, the Indian must be on an

⁷⁰Maclean, Savage Folk, p. 549.

equal footing with the white man. As John Maclean saw it, this was more for the protection of the Indian than for the white population: "An Indian is punished if he breaks the law of the land; and if even a native woman or child has been injured by a white man, the culprit is sought out and punished. In the administration of the law, if we err at all, it is on the side of leniency toward the red race."⁷¹

Readers of McDougall, Maclean and Young were warned that the transition from savagery to civilization was a complicated process that might require a great deal of time. The transition involved the elimination of the Indians' way of life in all spheres of activity: physical, mental, moral and spiritual. No matter how long this transition might take, the Indian could not enjoy an equal footing in rights, burdens and privileges as he was a ward of the government. There were numerous obstacles to a smooth transition, including alcohol, the stubborn pride of some Indians and the squalor of life on the reserve. Although the missionaries remained optimistic for the future of the Indians, it was clear to the readers of their literature that it would be some time before the Indian could fully enjoy the benefits of citizenship.

Despite some doubts, anxieties and reservations about the smooth progress of the Indians from savagery to

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 549-50.

civilization, the Methodist brothers remained optimistic for their future and they believed that Canadians could be immensely proud of the record of their treatment of the Indians of the West. When compared with the record of the United States, Canada's Indian policy appeared virtuous and benevolent. In E. R. Young's words, in the United States, "the gospel of bullets has been preached more loudly than the Gospel of love. More laws have been enacted to legislate him out of existence, than to lift him up into the condition of a loyal citizenship, and the enjoyment of consistent Christianity."⁷² With frequent trips across the border to Fort Benton for supplies, John McDougall had the opportunity to view the position of the Indian in American frontier society and he was extremely critical:

For many years, south of the 49th parallel, there had been what seemed to be a distinct law for the white men as against the Indian. The latter might fight and kill and plunder and debase the Indian; but let the Indian turn against the white man, and then the strength of military organization and the weight of the white man was set against the Indian. It was race against race and tribe against tribe, and all this created a perfectly lawless condition. A small war party committed some depredation, and the United States army, if they could come up with the Indians, massacred a whole encampment, regardless of the fact that hundreds in it were absolutely innocent in the case.⁷³

⁷²E. R. Young, By Canoe, p. 6.

⁷³McDougall, Western Trails, p. 257.

In contrast, Canada's treatment of the Indians was admirable and praiseworthy. As John Maclean boasted, "Canada may feel justly proud of the position she occupies as guide and friend of the Indian race. Deal honorably with the red men and they will abide by the treaties made between tribes and the codes of honour in war which are strictly adhered to."⁷⁴

McDougall, Maclean and Young believed that the bloodless, peaceful record in the Canadian West was in large measure due to the persistent work of the missionaries. Not even the North-West Mounted Police could share much of the credit. McDougall was amused by the boasting of the "tender-foot" police about their role in the peaceful settlement of the country. The Mounties' glorification of the famous "March West" in 1874 was "gross blasphemy" in McDougall's opinion; they portrayed it as being as formidable a journey as Sir Charles Napier's into Abyssinia when in reality it was a mismanaged trek over a well-used trail in a summer's time - a trip that McDougall had often made under much worse circumstances.⁷⁵ By the time the Police arrived in the West, the country was sick of tribal warfare and lawlessness; in McDougall's view this was due to Christian mission work. The missionaries were the "real forerunners" in this case.

⁷⁴Maclean, Indians, p. 69.

⁷⁵McDougall, Western Trails, p. 222.

Thus without a shot being fired, government was established simultaneously at Edmonton in the North and at Macleod in the South. A mere handful of men, unused to this wilderness life, "tenderfeet" for the most part, had come across the plains...and not a man had said them nay, just because the whole country was tired of tribal war and constant lawlessness...I claim that the missionary of the Gospel of Jesus Christ had more to do with the peaceful occupation of this immense land than any other man. He was the real forerunner in this case. In buffalo and moose-skin lodges, in the centres of great encampments, beside many campfires, during countless conversations as thousands of miles across country were being traversed, he glorified the law, he extolled order, he preached forever peace and loyalty to good government, and thus the minds of the people were prepared and waiting for this day we now beheld.⁷⁶

John Maclean similarly interpreted the role of the missionaries as encompassing much more than Christianity. He assessed their accomplishments in Western Canada:

The missionaries are part of the standing army of our Dominion, who, by the principles they instill into the minds of men, and the enthusiasm they arouse in a noble cause, save to the country every year thousands of dollars, and help maintain the peace and prosperity of our land. The work of educated and pious men prepare the new districts for the advent of the settler, and the grand heritage that God has given us, is made accessible for the enterprising poor who seek their fortunes in the west. It pays to send the Gospel to the Indians, and to maintain our work among the aborigines of our own land.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 215-6.

⁷⁷ Maclean, Indians, p. 329.

The missionaries believed they were participating in a divinely ordained, inevitable historical process. "But somebody had to do it," John McDougall congratulated himself. "There have to be trail-makers and path-finders; thus the world is explored and in due time man begins his mission of subjection."⁷⁸

⁷⁸McDougall, Western Trails, p. 62.

CHAPTER VII

A VISION REALIZED

Readers of books by John McDougall, John Maclean and Egerton Ryerson Young could take comfort in the fact that, in Western Canada, white men were fulfilling their divinely ordained duty toward their weaker brethren. That the Indians were a weak, backward race was without question; they had occupied the land for centuries and yet there was no evidence of their presence. They lacked the technology to harness properly the potential of the land and there was no likelihood that they would gain the necessary skills on their own as theirs was a static, dormant culture. Further evidence of the Indians' inferiority was their awe of natural forces and the subsequent idolatry, ritualism and superstition associated with their spiritual beliefs. Tribal life was a cruel, heartless regime of utter indifference toward the suffering of women, the weak and the aged. The missionaries pointed out to their readers that the Indians had made some attempt to bring order and harmony to their existence through a primitive moral order, system of justice and education. They agreed that individual Indians possessed virtues such as superior sensory abilities, knowledge of the natural world and oratorical

skills. Even these sympathetic portraits however, tended to reinforce the inferiority of the Indian in comparison to the white man; the Indian's virtues were primitive virtues, not worthy of admiration beyond his own environment, and their attempts to bring order to their society were child-like gropings. It would be difficult to escape the conclusion after reading McDougall, Maclean and Young, that the vast, rich lands roamed by the Indians should be under the stewardship of a stronger, more industrious race of men. Indeed it would be defying God's injunction to "Arise and Subdue" not to settle the country and reap its rewards.

Readers could rest assured, however, that the Indians were not to be callously pushed aside in this march of progress. Under the guidance and protection of their trustees, Indians were already discarding their old ways and were accepting, even promoting, the settlement of the West. Heart-warming descriptions of the wonderful changes in the village and home life of the native convert, especially the new attitude toward women and the aged, were enough to convince any reader that the changes brought on by the arrival of the white man were all for the better. Not all Indians would immediately reap the benefits of the superior civilization that the white man brought; the missionaries warned that the transformation from savagery to civilization would be a lengthy process. Given the inferiority and backwardness of the Indian, it was clear that until he was on a

basis of equality with his white brethren, he could not enjoy the full benefits of citizenship. By proving the inferiority of the Indian, the missionaries provided justification for the absorption of their land; they sanctioned a system based on social inequality by writing that, for years to come, the Indian would have to be looked after by their stronger, more enlightened guardians.

If the idea that a better world was being created for the Indians provided justification for the presence of the white man, the primary motivation must have been in another realm. The missionaries themselves were active promoters, not only of a society based on firm Christian principles in the West, but of an economic vision of the future wealth of the region. Toward the end of his life, John McDougall was satisfied to see the realization of his prophecies concerning the enormous resource potential of the West. His expectations for the Indians of the West were not fulfilled to the same degree; describing a tour in the spring of 1905 he wrote, "As we drive through the Reserve we are encouraged, we are discouraged, we are elated; then again we are ashamed and mortified, and our spirits are greatly troubled within us."¹ McDougall took comfort, however, in the triumph of his vision of harnessing the vast resources of the West for man's use. In the Calgary Albertan of May 24, 1911, a brief article appeared entitled

¹"Letter from Rev. John McDougall, D.D." Missionary Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 852.

"Dr. McDougall's Vision Realized." Now proudly sporting the title "Doctor," having received an honorary degree, McDougall described a morning in April of 1873 when he, his father and three Indian chiefs rode up the valley of the Bow, lunching on pemmican beside the swift waters of the Kananaskis. As McDougall and his father gazed at the mighty power of the Kananaskis and Horse Shoe Falls, they speculated that the time was surely not far away when man would step in and harness these "bud and blossom" where nature had done so much to prepare the way. Thirty-eight years later, McDougall and his son returned to the site of the Horse Shoe Falls and toured the power plant where millions of tons of water were backed up, supplying the city of Calgary with its power. McDougall took a great deal of pride in the realization of his vision:

Truly, all this marvellous - brains and nature, cement and steel - verily a strong combination and stronger still, the great God in His mighty purpose for His own child, man. ...Doubtless there are more which some day will be developed. In the meanwhile, last Friday I stood on the edge of the chasm below the present power plant and the huge dam above it and was thankful for this realization of my vision - thirty-eight years and a month to wait - but what are these periods in the presence of the huge problem now given to men that they should subjugate this big Dominion for the glory of God and the blessing and comfort of man?²

²Albertan, Calgary, May 24, 1911.

APPENDIX A

Chronological outlines of the careers of John Maclean,
John McDougall and Egerton R. Young.

John Maclean

- 1851: Born at Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland.
- 1873: Came to Canada.
- 1874: Entered the ministry.
- 1880: Ordained
Married Sarah Anne Barker of Guelph, Ontario.
- 1880-89: Missionary to the Blood Indians
- 1882: B.A. Victoria University, Coburg
- 1887: M.A. Victoria University, Coburg
- 1888: Ph.D. (History) Wesleyan University, Bloomington, Illinois
- 1888: Appointed Historian for the Manitoba and North West Conference.
- 1889-92: Pastor, Moose Jaw, N.W.T.
- 1892-95: Pastor, Port Arthur, Ontario
- 1895: President, Manitoba and North West Conference
- 1896-1900: Pastor, Neepawa, Manitoba
- 1901-02: Pastor, Carman, Manitoba
- 1902- ? : Pastor, Morden, Manitoba
- 1911: Founded Maclean's Bethel Mission, Winnipeg.
- 1925: Appointed Dominion Archivist of the United Church of Canada.
- 1928: Died at Winnipeg.

John McDougall

- 1842: Born at Owen Sound, Ontario.
- 1857-60: Attended Victoria College, Coburg.
- 1860: Moved to the North West and taught school for two years at Norway House.
- 1862: Settled at Victoria, N.W.T.
- 1862-63: Established missions at Woodville, Pigeon Lake and Morley and assisted in the establishment of missions at Victoria, Edmonton, Fort MacLeod, Calgary, Wolf Creek, Battle River and Bear's Hill.
- 1864: Married Abigail Steinhauer.
- 1872: Ordained
Married Elizabeth Boyd.
- 1874: Appointed Government Commissioner to inform the Indians of the arrival of the North West Mounted Police.
- 1876: Appointed Chairman, the Saskatchewan District.
- 1885: Chaplain and scout for General Strange's column.
- 1893: President of the Manitoba and North West Conference.
- 1906: Retired
Appointed Commissioner to the Doukhobors and Indian Commissioner for the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan.
- 1917: Died

Egerton R. Young

- 1840: Born at Smiths Falls, Ontario.
- 1846: Taught school at Emily, Victoria County.
- 1848-63: Attended Normal School, Toronto, appointed head master of the school in Madoc.
- 1863: Entered the ministry.
- 1867: Ordained
Married Elizabeth Bingham
Appointed pastor, Hamilton First Methodist Church.
- 1868-73 Missionary at Norway House and established a mission at Nelson River.
- 1874: Established mission at Beren's river.
- 1876-88: Returned to Ontario and worked as a pastor at Port Perry, Colborne, Bowmanville and Meaford.
- 1888: Released from pastoral duty.
- 1888- ? : Worked as a lecturer and writer.

Figure 1: Map of Western Canada showing the mission sites of John Maclean, John McDougall and Egerton R. Young.

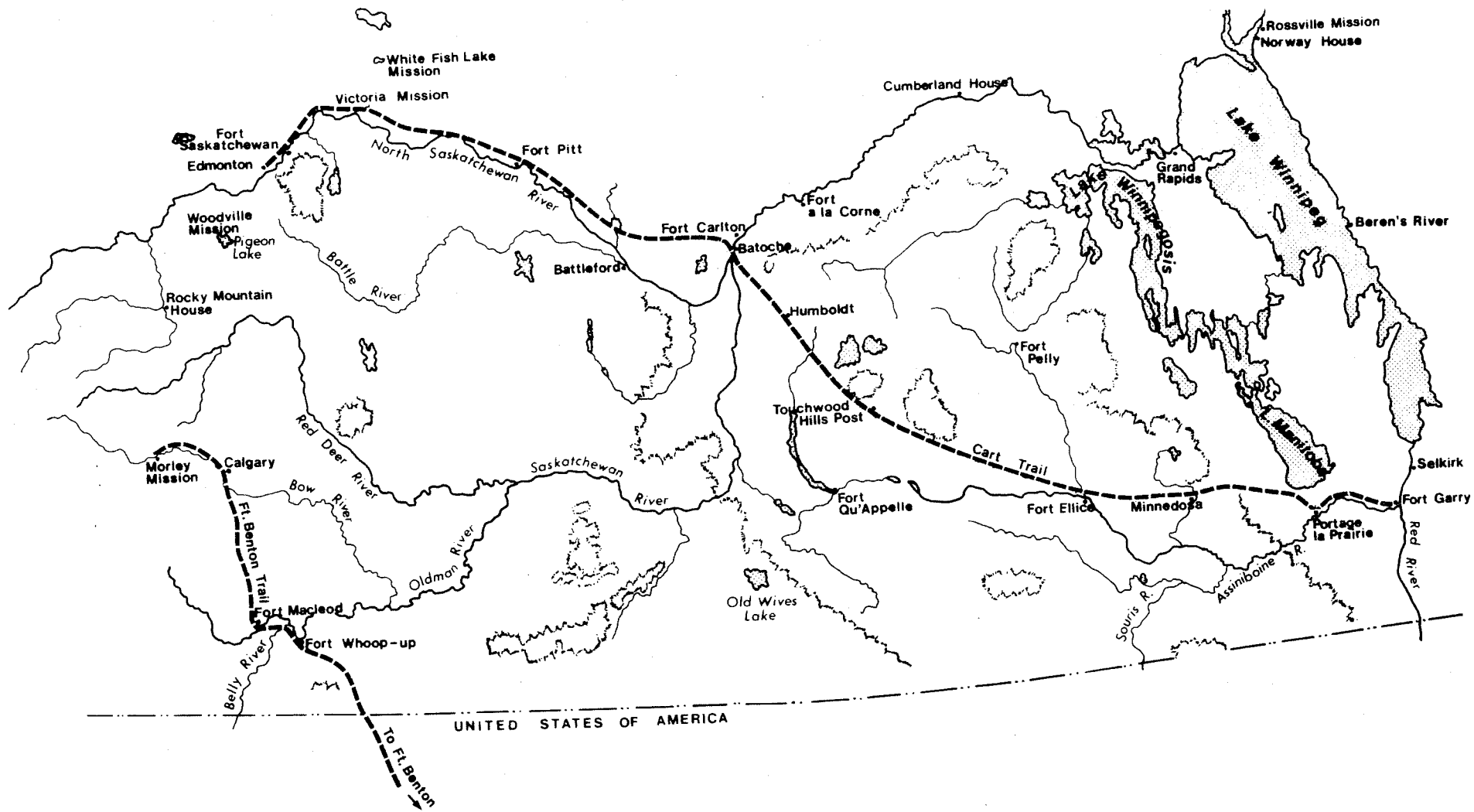


Figure 2: John Maclean
(John Maclean, Canadian Savage Folk:
The Native Tribes of Canada,
Toronto: William Briggs, 1896 ,
frontpiece.)



Figure 3: John McDougall (centre), teachers
and pupils, McDougall orphanage, Morley, Alberta,
1890. (Glenbow-Alberta Institute.)



Figure 4: Egerton Ryerson Young
(E. R. Young, By Canoe and Dog Train
Among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians.
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