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For God, King, and Country: Nineteenth-Century Methodist Interpretations of the War of 1812

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Abstract

The War of 1812 almost ruined Episcopal Methodism in Upper Canada. During the War, the American itinerants were unable to travel in the land and, after the War, their detractors used their connection to America to undermine their influence in the loyal Province. This article offers two examples in order to highlight the ways in which the Methodists themselves used the war to prove their loyalty as well as their role in developing the land that would one day become Canada. The first example looks at how Methodists in the Reform party of the 1828 House of Assembly viewed their denomination's role during and in the years following the War. The second example looks at the publication of two popular books in 1880 that defended the contribution American Methodists had made to the British war effort. These examples moved the issue of Methodist loyalty into the sphere of politics and public policy and showed how the ongoing interpretation of the War of 1812 continued to affect these Methodists throughout the nineteenth century.

When General Hull landed American soldiers on Upper Canadian soil in the early summer of 1812, he set into motion events that were destined to shape the religious landscape of the province. In the years following the Revolutionary War and preceding the second Anglo-American contest in 1812, the clergy of the Church of England¹ and the Church of Scotland had become increasingly concerned with what they perceived to be the weakening of British sensibilities in favour of Republican sentiments from the south.² Such ideas, it was believed, were being couched in religious language and were gaining ground in the colony through the efforts and teachings of the popular, entertaining, and engaging Episcopal Methodists, an American-based denomination that

was numerically the largest in the land.³ The criticisms leveled at the traveling preachers from that denomination included charges that they were enthusiastic ‘comets’ that were entertaining to watch but left the people colder to the importance of religion once they departed.⁴ As the more rational Anglican Bishop of Quebec Jacob Mountain put it: ‘The great bulk of the people have and can have no instruction but such as they receive occasionally from itinerant & mendicant Methodists, a set of ignorant Enthusiasts whose preaching is calculated only to perplex the understanding & corrupt the morals, to relax the nerves of industry, and dissolve the bonds of Society.’⁵ They believed that the Methodists were too loud, disorganized, uncouth, and — worst of all — American to ever inculcate the people into British civilization.⁶ Indeed, Mountain ‘remained constant in the belief that the established Church of England ... was entrusted with the task not only of disseminating the principles of sound religion but also of checking the spread of sectarian “enthusiasm,” maintaining social and political stability, and defending the imperial connection.’⁷

With the outbreak of the war, the Episcopal Methodists’ numbers and influence were decimated because the Upper Canadian circuits, which were now considered enemy territory, were largely abandoned by the itinerant preachers from the United States. Ironically, the Anglican and Church of Scotland clergy were handed their greatest weapon in the religious war against the American Methodists by the actions of the American government. However, when the War ended and an amicable spirit between the former combatants returned, the Episcopal Methodists were able to take up their work again in the post-war world of Upper Canada. Despite the warm welcome from Upper Canadian Methodists, the land had been changed by the violence of the previous years

and the churches with stronger transatlantic ties utilized the war to strengthen their argument that any connection to American ideologies and particularly to American religious movements, was akin to inviting another invasion.

It is the argument of this article that the War of 1812 significantly altered the cultural influence of the Methodists and shaped the denominational interactions both internally as well as with the government and other churches for the remainder of the century. This article focuses on the ways in which the Methodist leadership viewed the War and particularly how the War was interpreted in the writings of prominent Methodists. In his work on Canadian Intellectual History, S.F. Wise saw religion as an under-appreciated but vital force in shaping popular thought during the nineteenth century and argued that religious literature was influential due to the almost universal Christian nature of the people. The ecclesiastical landscape of the time, Wise contended, was ‘wholly Christian; freethinkers kept their thoughts to themselves.’⁸ This article offers two examples of the importance of religious opinion, highlighting the ways in which the Upper Canadian Methodists sought to use the War of 1812 to prove their loyalty as well as the importance of their role in developing the land that would one day become Canada. The first example examines how self-identified Methodists who were also members of the Reform party in the 1828 House of Assembly viewed their denomination’s role during and in the years following the War. In 1828 many policies related to naturalization and education were decided and both the war and the role of the Methodists factored into the discussions. The second example comes from the 1880s which saw the publication of Egerton Ryerson’s *The Loyalists of America* and W.H. Withrow’s *Neville Trueman, The Pioneer Preacher: A Tale of the War of 1812*.⁹ Both

books examined how American Methodists had acted during the War and the contribution they had made to the British war effort. These examples from 1828 and 1880 moved the issue of Methodist loyalty into the sphere of politics and public policy and showed how the ongoing interpretation of the War of 1812 continued to affect the Methodists decades after the War was concluded.

Despite a proven record of service to the people by the 1820s, the American-based denomination was forced to operate under a seemingly perpetual cloud of suspicion, as the term ‘Loyalty’ had become a defining trait that had been forged in the furnace of war. While Methodists in 1815 and beyond were ultimately able to find prominent places within government, business, and society — much to the chagrin of the Anglicans — they also found themselves frequently accused of disloyalty. By the 1880s Methodism was independent of both America and England and was a respected Canadian denomination. The re-invention of the Loyalist tradition has received considerable attention from scholars in recent years, but Ryerson and Withrow also sought to reinterpret the War of 1812 to demonstrate how their American forebears had played a foundational role in what would become Canada.¹⁰ While over fifty years separate these two examples, and the motivation of the 1828 document was different from that of the books produced in 1880, the works this article examines demonstrate a Methodist understanding that their role in Canadian history was as servants who were loyal to God, to the King, and to their Country.

Methodist Loyalty in the War of 1812

Upper Canada in the 1820s was undergoing many changes that were not viewed positively by the Archdeacon of the provincial capital of York, Rev. Dr. John Strachan. While in England, Strachan entered into a dialogue with some Scottish Presbyterians who believed that theirs was the largest Protestant denomination in the growing Upper Canadian Province and, therefore, should be considered for co-establishment alongside Strachan's beloved Church of England. These members of the Church of Scotland argued that the Clergy Reserves should be shared equally between the two Protestant denominations and that this was the only way to reflect properly the religious composition of the imperial metropolis in the periphery of British North America. Strachan feared that this plan would weaken the Anglican Church's already tenuous hold on the colony, especially as it also faced the ongoing threat of unchecked American Methodism, which had been steadily regaining numbers and influence in the years since the end of the War. In order to address these issues, in 1826 Strachan composed a survey that, he claimed, offered an accurate assessment of the denominational inclinations of the Upper Canadian people.¹¹ However, his detractors argued that the Ecclesiastical Chart Strachan had constructed flagrantly misrepresented the religious sentiments of numerous Upper Canadians. Unfortunately for his critics, Strachan had successfully spun his lies into a royal charter to have the future King's College — the first institution of higher education in the Province — staffed only by people from the Church of England. The Assembly sent an impassioned plea to the ministers of George IV in the hopes that they would reconsider a decision to grant 'a Charter with a monopoly upon a principle so illiberal in its application to the state of this Province.' They charged Strachan with constructing the chart from fanciful reckonings with little concern for statistics (or ethics)

in order to denigrate other Christian denominations and further advance Anglican establishment by creating an institution that was neither needed nor wanted by the loyal subjects of Upper Canada. Many in the reform-dominated Assembly elected in 1828 professed to believe that, had George IV known the truth, 'He would never have given his royal sanction to such a charter.'¹² The Assembly argued that Methodists, the denomination maligned the most in Strachan's report, had proven their loyalty to the crown during the late war with America as well as in the years since.

This episode is important because it involved competing ideas about how Upper Canada should define its British colonial identity. After 1815, tensions between Anglicans and American Methodists grew stronger, as the Anglicans, with the support of the Legislative Council and the government of Upper Canada, clashed with the Methodists who had growing influence in the Assembly and overwhelming popularity among the masses. Strachan, and other members of a conservative elite known as the Family Compact, expressed concern that the Reformers were gaining too much power over the political and cultural landscape of the loyal province that shared a border with the expanding American Republic. In terms of education, Strachan had two chief concerns. First, the lack of a University meant that young Upper Canadians had no choice but to look to America if they desired any form of higher learning in medicine, law, or divinity. Strachan believed that the fact that the Methodists were mostly from the United States made them unable and unwilling to teach generations of colonial youth proper habits and respect for the British way of life. The large number of Methodists in the Assembly and Strachan's influence in the Legislative Council guaranteed that these religious disputes were not going to remain within ecclesiastical circles but were destined

to shape provincial politics as well. Strachan's 1826 chart had made the claim that the people of Upper Canada desired a greater Anglican presence and he believed that money given to the church from the sale of the Clergy Reserves and for education could be used to advance Anglican establishment and British values in the colony. Second, Strachan believed that the Methodists should not have any influence over the education system, nor have any share in the substantial revenues derived from the sale of the Clergy Reserves.¹³

It was Strachan's attack on the Methodists' lack of loyalty that particularly offended the Assembly elected in 1828, the first Assembly with a Reform rather than a Conservative majority. Indeed, the Assembly dismissed outright any notion that the Methodists had failed to 'inculcate, by precept and example, as a christian duty [sic], an attachment to the sovereign and a cheerful and conscientious obedience to the laws of the country.' The members of the Assembly extolled the Methodists' labours for the colonists over the previous thirty-five years and insisted that 'the province has passed through a war which put to the proof the loyalty of the people,' leaving no doubt that 'the Methodists are as loyal as any of His Majesty's Subjects.'¹⁴ To reinforce this statement, and to address the chief point in Strachan's Ecclesiastical Chart, the Assembly prepared a report examining how many religious leaders of each denomination were from the United States and the extent to which they had received their education and drew their sentiments from that land.¹⁵ In his response to the latter question, the Rev. James Richardson responded that while he was 'a minister of the Methodist episcopal church in this province,' he was a 'native of Upper Canada' who had served for 'six years in His Majesty's navy on the lakes,' during which service he had '[l]ost an arm by a canon shot

at the battle of Oswego.¹⁶ Richardson was just one example of a native-born — therefore not American — Upper Canadian Methodist who had fought and suffered for the British cause in the preceding War. Egerton Ryerson stated plainly that ‘the [M]ethodists were as active and zealous in the defence of the Province as any other part of the population’ and the Assembly report provided further compelling anecdotal evidence of the loyalty of the Methodists.¹⁷ A member of the Upper Canadian Assembly by the name of John Johnston Lefferty also cited the war as support for his belief in the loyalty of the Methodists, stating ‘they are as loyal a set of men as any in the Province; they proved it during the war, and [I have] heard nothing on the contrary since.’¹⁸ These examples were designed to show the loyalty and the willingness of the people, irrespective of denomination, to defend Upper Canada in the War of 1812.¹⁹ Lefferty’s comments were also meant to show that there was no indication that the attitudes of the Methodists had changed in the years since the War.

The War lost much of its emotive power as time passed and as more British immigrants, who had not experienced the conflict, entered the province. The renewal of friendly intercourse and commercial ties between America and Upper Canada gave the people of both lands the time and ability to evaluate, in the words of John Willson, a member of the Upper Canadian Assembly, ‘the value at which each estimated his own and the country’s Government.’²⁰ Such choices over thirteen years meant that any who did not care for the colony’s attachment to Britain had had ample opportunity to go elsewhere or, at the very least, that their sentiments and political attitudes were well known. The Assembly’s *Report* revealed that all but eight Methodist clergy were either from England, Canadian-born, or naturalized subjects, that members of the denomination

had proven their loyalty in the war, and that there was no indication that Methodist loyalty to the Empire had altered in the interim period and therefore concluded that concerns about their loyalty were unfounded.²¹ The Assembly's *Report* also stressed how much the colony owed to the Methodists for the religious education and care of the people. During a time when Upper Canada was 'thinly settled, and its inhabitants were scattered through the wilderness and destitute of all other means of religious instruction' those men 'animated by christian [sic] zeal and benevolence ... carried among the people the blessings and consolations and sanctions of our holy religion.' The *Report* stated plainly the positive impact the itinerants had had on Upper Canadian colonial life, declaring that Methodist 'influence and instruction, far from having (as is represented in the letter) a tendency hostile to our institutions, [have] been conducive, in a degree which cannot easily be estimated, to the reformation of their hearers from licentiousness, and the diffusion of correct morals, the foundation of all sound loyalty and social order.'²²

Strachan and others argued that established religion was an essential safeguard against anti-British tendencies and that the Anglican Church needed an infusion of capital to increase its influence and sustain the people's sympathy for all things British.²³ However, the Assembly, having shown Methodist loyalty in the war and in the years following the war and demonstrated the denominational leaders' predominantly British and Upper Canadian roots, argued that a greater Anglican presence would achieve the exact opposite. In the words of the Roman Catholic Rev. A. MacDonnell, 'many of the people would become more disaffected by increasing the number of missionaries of the [C]hurch of England.'²⁴ William Morrison, one of the authors of the 1828 *Report*, also argued that an increase in the number of Anglican missionaries 'would rather have the

effect of alienating the people of the Province from our institutions as the majority of the people are of opposite sentiments to that church.’²⁵ The Methodist veteran of 1812, Rev. James Richardson, himself a convert to Methodism from the Anglican fold, argued that many people were leaving Anglicanism and had ‘joined themselves to the Methodists’ and cited the reasons for such defections as linked to ‘the want of a christian [sic] discipline being exercised, and a dislike to certain practices of some of her ministers.’²⁶ While Richardson remained mute on the nature of those practices that aroused the distaste of the people, other comments indicate that Anglican involvement in politics topped the list. Although it could be viewed as ironic that professed Methodists in an official Assembly Report would voice condemnations of ecclesiastical involvement in politics, the point being made was that the policies supported by Strachan and the Legislative Council were deemed beneficial by only a small, and elite, collection of Upper Canadians. Therefore, to increase the influence of the Church of England in the realm of education had the potential to make the inhabitants ‘less likely to become more attached to our civil and religious or any other institutions.’²⁷

The colonists of Upper Canada possessed a ‘deep and enthusiastic’ loyalty to the empire and, the Assembly argued, a proven spiritual maturity that would not benefit from ‘any state establishment of clergymen.’²⁸ The contention of men like Egerton Ryerson and Marshall Spring Bidwell was that to force an establishment upon Upper Canada out of an outdated or unnecessarily strict colonial policy would negate the proven acts of loyalty to the empire that had been demonstrated a little over a decade earlier. To offer one denomination undue power over the others merely strengthened the American accusations of British heavy-handedness and the argument that the Republic was the true

champion of personal and religious liberty. A Baptist by the name of Alexander Stewart humorously explained that Anglicanism is ‘spreading only among those who have some dependence on the government or are looking for some place of honour or profit. I believe if the government were to become quakers, they would have the same increase and from the same quarter.’²⁹ Despite Strachan’s assessment that Anglicanism was the only denomination that could legally claim establishment, the reality of life in the colony of Upper Canada was that ‘the benefits of the church of England are little felt or known.’ Therefore, Anglican clergy could not be counted on to influence much of anything because they simply did not reach that many people.³⁰ However, that was not the case with the so-called dissenting churches that were, according to Egerton Ryerson, ‘increasing on every side.’³¹ If England truly wanted to use religion to increase adherence to their empire in British North America, it made more sense to actively seek out the dissenting churches, not the Anglicans. The *Assembly Report* argued that the former were loyal and poised to reach a large number of colonists, while the latter were viewed with increasing skepticism when they were viewed at all.³²

In a sense, this petition showed that the people of Upper Canada were not just religious but that they were British Christians and, as such, should be allowed to choose their own denominational affiliations. The Reformers believed that perpetuating an establishment would drive the people who had willingly defended the empire into the uncomfortable position of having to choose between their King and their God.³³ M.L.A. Francis Walsh answered: ‘inasmuch as our institutions are favourable to the cause of religion; it therefore cannot be reasonably apprehended that the Methodist preachers can desire to render their congregations or hearers unfriendly to [British] institutions.’³⁴ That

statement was based on the idea that as long as the empire continued to be guided by Christian principles, the leaders could rest assured that each brand of Christian faith could only help the imperial cause. Were the authorities to trust the people, so the petition argued, they would find such trust rewarded with a loyalty of greater strength and depth and sincerity. From the perspective of the 1828 Assembly, greater trust was being placed in the laws of the empire than in the tenets of the Gospel, and this lack of faith in both God and Upper Canadians threatened to alienate both from the crown. Yet, although the rejection of establishment may have made sense in the colonial context, it embraced the dissolution of an historical British institution in favour of a greater separation of church and state,³⁵ an idea that could be viewed as more informed by American policies than Upper Canadian desires and proof therefore of the reality of Strachan's concerns.

That the Assembly was looking south was confirmed by Bidwell's statement that the churches across the border in New York, 'where all denominations have by law equal rights,' were flourishing both numerically and spiritually. He argued that the 'piety and religious prosperity of a church can gain but little from men who are induced by secular motives to assume the sacred functions of the clerical office.'³⁶ For Bidwell, monies sent from England would not increase colonial piety but would only induce ministers to worship mammon rather than serving God. This argument, drawn from an appreciation of America's religious landscape and stressing how similar the two lands were, could be seen to support the Conservative's concern about the Reformers' allegiances. While the American incursion of 1812-1814 had been successfully repulsed, many of the militia combatants had been, in the words of Jane Errington, 'reluctant warriors' who had been happy to see the return of peaceful relations with the United States once the War ended.³⁷

Strachan's concern was that the Reformers in the Assembly and the American Methodists in the colony could transform the reluctance of the previous generation into full-blown disaffection for British institutions in the generations to come if they gained a foothold in the Upper Canadian system of higher education. Bidwell, Waters, Ryerson and the other authors of the 1828 *Assembly Report* believed, perhaps naively, that they had adequately represented the sentiments of the people they were called to represent, had offered definitive proof of Methodist loyalty throughout the history of Upper Canada, and had shown the lack of American influence over that denomination. However, Strachan's chart accomplished two important goals that the 1828 *Report* was unable to defeat. The first was that the chart reinforced the predisposition of Lord Bathurst and his Tory successors as Colonial Secretary towards Church establishment, as well as many members of the Upper Canadian Legislative Council, including the powerful Family Compact. Second, the chart brought the issue of disloyalty to the foreground and somewhat tied the Reformers and the Methodists to that moniker. The next decade would prove to be a tumultuous one for the Reformers, as they would lose power in the Assembly, only to regain it again in 1834 and then, under suspicion of disloyalty yet again, lose out in 1836.³⁸ Throughout the 1830s the Reformers continued to work through legal and, as was the case with William Lyon Mackenzie in 1837, even violent means to change what they believed to be outdated and impractical British policies that did not reflect the best interests of the colonists.

Methodism, while popular among the masses, would also struggle under the cloud of disloyalty raised by Strachan's chart. The Assembly's *Report* failed in its intention and the first institution of higher education in Upper Canada was instructed, by Royal

Charter, to possess an all-Anglican faculty. The arguments used by the 1828 Assembly and the questions they raised offer a unique insight into the influence that both the War of 1812 and Methodist loyalty had on Upper Canadian politics and religion in the first half of the nineteenth century. Methodism was seen to hold sway over the colony in tangible ways and the fact that its earliest leaders and adherents had been American was considered a legitimate threat to Upper Canada's continued existence in the British Empire. The next half a century would also prove to be incredibly tumultuous for the various Methodist camps as Wesleyans and Episcopal and Canadian versions of the faith would combine, split, re-join and fight – both internally as well as with other denominations – over the denomination's role in Canada. Many of the internal and external issues raised during the nineteenth century reflected the same issues of loyalty and influence raised by Strachan in 1826 and rebutted by the Assembly in 1828.

The realities of life in the Province would eventually make the Anglican bid for religious dominance both untenable and unnecessary; even King's College would be dissolved in the 1850s. The turbulence of the 1830s demonstrated the disconnect between colonial officials, who viewed America as a threat, and the majority of the colonists, who saw America as a necessary ally, an idea that will return later in this article as the issues of 1828 were revisited in Ryerson's 1880 commentary. However, as it pertained to the 1828 Assembly (and a good portion of the 1830s) there remained a concern in London that, despite the successful defence of imperial land throughout 1812-1814, the colony of British North America contained too much that was American and not enough that was British.

Late Nineteenth-Century Methodist Views of Early Nineteenth-Century Methodist Loyalty

The year 1880 proved to be another important one for Methodist interpretations of the War of 1812 with the publication of two books by prominent leaders of the denomination. The first, by famed Methodist educator and political heavyweight Egerton Ryerson, detailed the character of American loyalists from the seventeenth century and culminated in 1816, leaving the War of 1812 as the final piece of evidence to support his arguments that American loyalists were a boon to British civilization and that the war had been a critical turning-point in Canadian history.³⁹ The second, published by the editor of *The Methodist Magazine*, W.H. Withrow, was a hagiographic account of a brave and rugged Methodist itinerant named Neville Trueman and his exploits during the War of 1812 in support of his ‘adopted country’ of Canada.⁴⁰ Both books saw the war as a unifying moment for the Canadian people that ‘first stirred in our country the pulses of that common national life.’ It was hoped that the members of the divided Methodist denomination of the late nineteenth century would imitate the unity presented in the narratives. Withrow’s work was designed to show that Trueman, and others, were no ‘less patriotic than pious’ and that these religious pioneers ‘feared God ... honoured the King, and loved their country; and many of them died in its defence.’⁴¹ The pervading issue of early Methodist loyalty apparently remained even thirteen years after Confederation.

Although the land of Canada had finally united from the Maritimes to British Columbia, the Methodist Churches were in danger of being unable to rise above their competing regional differences to form the kind of united Methodist church that a united Canadian nation needed.⁴² Unlike the Anglicans, the Methodists — and the Presbyterians

as well — had no nation-wide presence and, therefore, a desire was growing to move beyond inner-denominational sectarianism into a larger, well funded, and more united version of their faith. Steps in that direction were made all the more pressing when, in 1874, Canadian Methodism officially separated from the British connexion and became independent, free, and truly in charge of its own fate.⁴³

Both books heralded back to a time in Canadian history when the people were as rugged and strong as the land in which they lived.⁴⁴ The image of the brave, tough, and clever pioneer carving out a life for himself and his family was matched in the religious world with a similar picture created by Withrow of Neville Trueman.⁴⁵ Harkening back to a time when Methodist preachers possessed ‘a strong back-bone of doctrine,’ unlike the ‘boneless jelly-fish-like preaching’ of his own era, Withrow saw in those Methodists of the war a heroic image of self-sacrifice made in the name of God and in service to the people, qualities that Withrow appeared to believe were lacking in many of his religious contemporaries.⁴⁶ Withrow’s work detailed the ruggedness and unity of purpose displayed by ‘the godly forefathers of Methodism in Canada [who] nourished [colonists’] souls and enbraved their spirits for the heroic work in which they were engaged, of consecrating the virgin wilderness to God.’⁴⁷ In such ways were the readers of these works reminded of a simpler, harsher time from which the nation had been born, a nation that had been supported and protected in its infancy through the sacrifices of loyal and sturdy Methodists.⁴⁸

Ryerson’s account of the War of 1812 argued that the conflict had fused Upper Canadians together in ways that made them distinct from both Americans as well as later British immigrants who had not taken part in that defining colonial struggle. He saw the

war as the birth of a united Canadian identity because ‘it tended to cement the people together as one family’ irrespective of birth place and made ‘English, French, Scotch, Irish, and Americans ... all become Canadians,’ and granted those who had fought an ‘increased devotion not only to the land of their nativity or adoption, but to the glorious mother country which had become the victorious champion of the liberties of Europe, and leader in the civilization of mankind.’⁴⁹ Withrow would advance the notion that Britain held a special place on the global stage because the empire’s maritime, military, and commercial successes proved that it was God’s chosen instrument for the evangelization and civilization of the world.⁵⁰ Therefore, the reasons to defend the land against Republicanism went deeper than nationalism for the ‘god-fearing Canadian yeomanry ... [who] nourished at once their religious feelings and their patriotic enthusiasm’ to defend their land against American incursions out of their ‘love of King and country.’ Such love was based on the understanding that defending British territory in North America was in alignment with the Divine mandate for global evangelization and, therefore, even something as seemingly anti-Christian as war could be viewed as ‘an acceptable service to God.’⁵¹

While both men celebrated the British connection throughout their respective works, Ryerson also believed that the colonial officials had done harm to the growth of Canada by favouring immigrants from the United Kingdom over the American-born settlers who had ‘felled the wilderness, and made the country valuable and had borne the burden and heat of the war in its defence.’⁵² Ryerson concluded his treatise with a brief but poignant condemnation of some British policies up to the middle of the century, including the land, education, and financial issues discussed in 1828. However, once

‘Commissions of Inquiry’ were dispatched from England all religious groups were placed on an even footing, the Clergy Reserve funds were utilized for public education, and the Assembly received more power over public departments. Because these prudent adjustments from London restricted Upper Canadian Conservatives’ hold over education, employment, Church establishment, and infrastructure, the ‘Government became strong, the people contented and the country prosperous ... in wealth, education, and intelligence — rendering, at this day, the inhabitants of the vast Dominion of Canada the lightest-taxed and the freest people on the American continent.’⁵³ Ryerson reiterated the 1828 Assembly’s *Report* condemning the abuses of certain privileged elites who desired to construct a colony suited to their needs at the expense of the majority. For Ryerson, it was the policies of those British-born men, not the influence of American Republicanism or Methodism, that had been the true threat to colonial stability. Under the pretense of defending imperial concerns in Upper Canada, the Governor and Legislative Council governed in ‘opposition’ to the Assembly until ‘the dissatisfaction of the people’ became too strong to ignore.⁵⁴ The selfish and impractical policies previously foisted upon the people in the name of loyalty were, in Ryerson’s view, tools of oppression that threatened to disenfranchise otherwise peaceful and loyal subjects.

Despite the Fenian Invasions of 1866 and 1870, America and Canada had a long-standing and amicable relationship by the time Withrow and Ryerson penned their books in 1880.⁵⁵ The issues that had plagued the Methodist denomination in 1828 had been overshadowed by decades of respectable and influential service and the question of Methodist respectability was no longer at stake.⁵⁶ Both men were able to show that the American policies during the War of 1812 did not represent the beliefs of every

American citizen and that the actions the people took outweighed their place of birth. While Withrow called up few witnesses for his account,⁵⁷ he did quote ‘Mr. Quincy, of Massachusetts’ as stating that the War was the ‘most disgraceful in history since the invasion of the buccaneers,’ before laying the blame for the decision to go ahead at the feet of Madison’s supporters who ‘persisted in their stern policy of implacable war.’⁵⁸ Ryerson arrived at the same conclusions but based many of his arguments on facts and supported them with letters and other data. While the two approached the topic differently, at the heart of both messages was the ongoing defence of American and Methodist loyalty and patriotism.⁵⁹

For Withrow, Trueman’s awareness that ‘American-born [itinerants] ... will be liable to suspicion as disloyal to this country by the bigoted and prejudiced’ proved both the man’s astuteness and political savvy, but his decision to ‘not forsake my post, nor leave these people as sheep without a shepherd’ evidenced his abiding loyalty to the people of the Upper Canadian frontier.⁶⁰ Added to such patriotism was Withrow’s numerous accusations regarding the unjust nature of the war and the fact that America’s invasion coincided with France’s attacks on England across the Atlantic.⁶¹ These parallel assaults on Britain revealed the darkness at the heart of revolutionary lands like France and America. Withrow was particularly critical of America for attacking Britain at the very moment when ‘the champion of human liberty’ was ‘engaged in a death-wrestle with the arch despot Napoleon.’⁶² Ryerson, likewise, stated that ‘Nothing could be more disgraceful and unprincipled than the Madison (I will not say American) declaration of war against Great Britain, which was at that moment employing her utmost strength and resources in defence of European nations and the liberties of mankind.’⁶³ The justness of

the Canadian defensive position was celebrated by both authors and was juxtaposed against, in Ryerson's words, 'the democratic rulers of the United States [who] suffered both defeat and disgrace,' while the loyal inhabitants of Upper Canada 'maintained inviolate their honour and independence.'⁶⁴ Further proof of the validity of such condemnations was to be found in the recent Irish-American Fenian raids into Upper Canada in 1866 and into Manitoba in 1870, as well as the previous decade's American Civil War. Such violence confirmed that what happened in 1812 was evidence of the chaos Republicanism brought to its own subjects and the world. In Withrow's work, it was the American invasion that drove Trueman to the British side for 'this invasion of a peaceful territory by an armed host is a wanton outrage and cannot have the smile of Heaven.'⁶⁵ Ryerson was even more forthright in his attacks on the American claim that theirs was a just war. Detailing the origins of the war, he stated: 'The facts show that the real object of the American Government was to take Canada, and their invaded rights at sea was a mere pretext.'⁶⁶ In these ways did both these men frame the war to show the evils of the American cause while simultaneously extolling the virtues of those who, while born in America, had shown their loyalty to the cause and defence of Upper Canada. Ryerson did so through sources, speeches, letters, and his own commentary while Withrow used the character of Neville Trueman to shed light on Methodist attitudes and actions throughout some of the more memorable events of the war.

The Adventures of Neville Trueman: Pioneer Preacher & Methodist War Hero

It would be remiss to conclude this article without a brief recapturing of certain tales that W.H. Withrow included in his odyssey of Neville Trueman.⁶⁷ Many of the

places and people from Trueman's adventures would be well known to someone with even the most basic knowledge of the War of 1812. Withrow used Trueman's involvement in these episodes to create a character intertwined with the more defining moments of that contest that reflects later nineteenth-century nationalism much more than the events of the actual War.⁶⁸ While it is well documented how much travel Methodist itinerants endured, the number of famous places and people that Trueman encountered is nothing short of miraculous. Through his eyes, the reader is taken back to those troubling years and shown the character and integrity of that American-born Methodist who, once he had cast his lot in with the Canadian people, served the land with a determination that few patriots could rival.⁶⁹

Trueman was described as young man with a 'forehead [that] was smooth and white and of a noble fullness' that, perhaps in a rebuttal to the Anglican charge that Methodists were uneducated, indicated 'superior intellectual abilities,'⁷⁰ as well as a passion for the Gospel and the people of Upper Canada. According to Withrow, this was not a trait unique to Trueman, as other itinerants blessed the people with their keen, well-versed minds, and story-telling abilities. Withrow records that entire households 'hung with eager attention upon their lips as, from their well-stored minds, they brought forth things new and old.' At the feet of these traveling scholars many 'an inquisitive boy or girl experienced a mental awakening or quickening' from the words of these men who possessed 'superior intelligence.' The older colonists, as well, were blessed as 'the preacher brought them glimpses of the outer world, or read from some well-worn volume carried in his saddle-bags pages of some much-prized English classic.'⁷¹ Through such

tales Withrow portrayed the American Methodist itinerants as purveyors of education and culture to Upper Canadians in desperate need of both.

Trueman's adventures found him in Queenston during the famous battle that claimed the life of General Sir Isaac Brock⁷² — the so-called Saviour of Upper Canada — as well as at the burning of Newark where Trueman provided a prophetic commentary on what that event meant for the future of the war. Relying on the insight he had gained about the Upper Canadian temperament through his travels, Trueman looked at the ashes of Newark and stated that the people 'are intensely loyal to their sovereign. They would die rather than forswear their allegiance. They will fight to the last man and last gun before they will yield.' He then went on to record that the atrocity of Newark would spawn a 'heritage of hatred' for America 'that all good men, for all time, will deplore.'⁷³ Such words showed that Trueman was aligned with the later understanding of the War as a point of pride for brave and loyal Canadians who stood up against American aggression and savagery.

Trueman next traveled with Methodist superintendent Henry Ryan to York and surveyed the damage done by the American occupation, and did the same in the Thames Valley, where the famed Native leader Tecumseh had been killed.⁷⁴ However, in the interest of brevity, the article will look exclusively at the ninth chapter because it was in this section that Neville Trueman found himself a key player in a crucial and famous piece of War of 1812 history.

While riding through the countryside one day on his circuit, Trueman came upon someone walking through the woods. This woman, described by Withrow as 'a worthy

Canadian matron,' Neville quickly recognized. As he rode closer to the apparently exhausted woman, he noted that she was a member of his Chippewa congregation and exclaimed: 'Why, Mrs. Secord!'⁷⁵ Dropping from his saddle, he inquired what had brought her to such a remote location and discovered the important information Laura Secord was attempting to relay about an impending American invasion. While acknowledging Secord's role, Withrow explained that Trueman, the 'American-born youth,' did not hesitate for one moment in his 'duty to his adopted country' but wheeled his horse about and exclaimed to Secord: 'You brave woman, you've nobly done your part, let me take you to the nearest house and then ride on and give the alarm.' Secord's patriotic role in the War of 1812 was, and remains, legendary within the social memory of most Canadians but, in Withrow's account of the war, she was only a secondary character in a tale that now featured the bold American Methodist itinerant as the true hero of the moment. The author went on to state that once Mrs. Secord was safe in a local house, Trueman rode to the nearest militia station and 'flung himself off his reeking steed — incurring imminent risk of being bayoneted by the sentry, because he took no notice of his peremptory challenge.' Hurling past the confused guard, Trueman literally kicked open the door of the guard room and 'called for the officer of the day, Lieutenant Fitzgibbon,' and relayed to the famous and clever military hero 'the startling intelligence' of the American plans.⁷⁶ For a student of 1812, the rest of that encounter is a matter of military and historical pride as Fitzgibbon used that information to defeat the invaders through deception and trickery and forced the surrender of the enemy despite Fitzgibbon's vastly inferior numbers. While this is only one story among many, and while the reader is left to decide for him or herself the veracity of such a claim, the point

is that, for Withrow, this ‘true man’ was an embodiment of the kind of selfless, brave, and ultimately beneficial actions of American Methodist loyalty that helped shape the successful outcome of the struggle.

The American declaration of war had left a ‘meagre handful of Methodist preachers’⁷⁷ present and active during 1812-1815 but those that did remain, like Neville Trueman, struggled bravely ‘against the various obstacles in their way — the recklessness and spiritual indifference begotten by the war — and the unjust and cruel suspicions and aspersions to which they were themselves subject.’⁷⁸ Withrow closed his account of Trueman by offering the following hope for his work:

If this retrospect of one of the most stirring episodes in our country's history shall kindle warmer fires of patriotism in the hearts of any of its readers; if the records of the trials and triumphs, the moral heroism and brave achievements of our Canadian forefathers shall inspire a stronger sympathy with their sufferings, and admiration of their character; and, above all, if the religious teachings of this story shall lead any to seek the same solace and succour which sustained our fathers in tribulation, and enbraved their souls for conflict with the evils of the time -- it shall not have been written in vain.⁷⁹

These men proved their loyalty and even as late as 1880 their stories were, according to Withrow, worth remembering and emulating.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the War of 1812 factored into discussions about Episcopal Methodism's role in Upper Canada because, even after Confederation, the connections between the popular denomination's early days and the United States was seen by some as a liability in the loyal Province. In 1828, Methodism was still operating under the suspicion of disloyalty and was struggling to find an equal footing with other Protestant denominations in Upper Canada. The Reformers in the Assembly of that year argued that Methodists had been as loyal in defending the Province as any section of the population and did not deserve the suspicion of the colonial authorities. By 1880, Methodism was a respected Canadian denomination that had little to fear from any earlier association with the United States. However, Withrow and Ryerson both used the War of 1812 to emphasize the loyalty of their denominational forebears and the valuable contributions that American Methodists had made in the contest. While the denomination proved itself loyal to both God and King and the popularity of Methodism would falter only during the actual conflict, those who were in leadership of the so-called dissenting faction felt the need to defend their denomination's role in the War periodically when a challenge arose.

In the 1828 political disputes as well as the 1880 publications of Ryerson and Withrow, Methodists argued time and again that the war proved the value, not threat, of a continued Methodist presence. The need to provide evidence to support such a position diminished throughout the century as Methodism grew into an accepted and beneficial aspect of Canadian religious culture and, thanks to men like Ryerson, Canadian political expression. However, the stigma attached to the denomination after the War of 1812 proved difficult to shake and the 1828 and 1880 publications showed that, on some level,

Methodists still felt the pressure to proclaim their loyal support of the land in which they had served from the decade immediately following the War up to post-Confederation Canada. Nineteenth-century rhetoric often referred to Canada as a place unique within the British Empire and the Kingdom of God and, as such, the people were called to see how faith was integral to the ongoing health and history of the nation. Contained within that history was the War of 1812, a war that later generations would say united a disparate collection of people into ‘Canadians’ because each person’s loyalty, regardless of their place of origin, had been proven on the fields of battle. The Methodist interpretations of that war argued that the denomination, despite the accusations of its detractors, had a proven record of loyally serving their God, their King, and the country of Canada.

Endnotes

¹ Hereafter referred to as the Anglican Church. While the term Episcopal Church was frequently used to refer to the Church of England in Upper Canada, this paper will use the term Anglican because the term Episcopal was also used of the American Methodists and can be somewhat confusing.

² The first British Wesleyan missionaries to the Canadas held similar beliefs that their duty was to ‘save those colonies from the threat of republican and revolutionary subversion.’ Todd Webb, *Transatlantic Methodists: British Wesleyanism and the Formation of an Evangelical Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ontario and Quebec* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013), 165. By 1820 the Wesleyan Missionary Society desired unity with the American Episcopal Methodists, an arrangement that the Wesleyans in the Canadas staunchly opposed due to the lingering belief that such connections to America undermined the efficacy of Methodism in the colony. Since this issue was not presented in either

of the sources being consulted for this article, it will not factor into the discussions presented here. For a fuller treatment of this issue, see Webb, *Transatlantic Methodists*.

³ Amelia Harris, daughter of the founder of the Long Point settlement, was very sympathetic to the Methodists and their attention to her isolated community. Her comments on the Methodists in the pre-war period were as follows: ‘Their sermons and prayers were very loud, forcible and energetic and if they had been printed verbatim would have looked a sad jumble of words. They encouraged an open demonstration of feeling amongst their hearers, the louder the more satisfactory, but notwithstanding the criticisms and ridicule cast upon those early preachers. They shared their poverty and entered in to all their feelings and although unlearned they taught the one true doctrine to serve God in Spirit and in Truth. And their lives bore testimony to their sincerity.’ James Talman, ed., *Loyalist Narratives of Upper Canada* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1946), 141-2.

⁴ ‘The novelty of [the Methodist preachers’] appearance, and the rapidity of their motion, may like the *Comet*, attract the gaze.... But on their departure the mind is not less in ignorance and darkness than on their approach ... they will be found on inspection to be dark bodies, with only the *semblance* of light.’ James Kendall, *Sermon delivered before the Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians and Others in North America at their anniversary, November 7, 1811* (Boston: John Eliot, 1812), 21. Italics added for emphasis.

⁵ As found in Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), 10-1.

⁶ ‘The Methodists are making great progress among us and filling the country with the most deplorable fanaticism. You can have almost no conception of their excesses. They will bawl twenty of them at once, tumble on the ground, laugh, sing, jump, and stamp, and this they call the working of the spirit.’ John Strachan, ‘letter, 13 July 1806,’ in *John Strachan: Documents and Opinions*, ed. J.L.H. Henderson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), 25.

⁷ Fahey, *In His Name*, 10.

⁸ Sydney F. Wise, 'Sermon Literature and Canadian Intellectual History,' *Readings in Canadian Intellectual History Volume 2: Pre-Industrial Canada 1760-1849*, eds. Michael S. Cross and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 83.

⁹ Egerton Ryerson, *The Loyalists of America and Their Times From 1620 to 1816*, 2 Volumes (1880; reprinted Honolulu: University of the Pacific Press, 2004); William Henry Withrow, *Neville Trueman, Pioneer Preacher: A Tale of the War of 1812* (1880; reprinted on-line by Project Gutenberg). References to Trueman's book will be given as chapter and page number.

¹⁰ Chief among the works on this topic is Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition & The Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); See also E. Jane Errington, 'Reluctant Warriors: British North Americans and the War of 1812,' *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754-1814*, eds. by David Curtis Skaggs and Larry L. Nelson (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 325-36.

¹¹ While the Methodists took the brunt of Strachan's condemnations, it should be noted that the Chart was inspired by Scottish Presbyterian claims of their own numerical superiority. As John Moir states: 'Nothing came of these activities immediately, probably thanks to the effective counter-petition of Archdeacon Strachan and the Upper Canadian Clergy Corporation arguing that the Church of England was "by far" the largest body in the colony, and that all Upper Canadians would soon "conform" to Anglicanism provided no encouragement was offered to other denominations. To this petition, Strachan appended an ecclesiastical chart, predecessor to his controversial chart of 1826, to show the paucity of Presbyterian ministers in the province.' John S. Moir, *Early Presbyterianism in Canada* (Saskatoon: Gravel Books, 2003), 90.

¹² Bulkley Waters, Marshall S. Bidwell, Edward Armstrong and Others, *Report of The Select Committee to which was referred the Petition of Bulkley Waters and Others, Entitled the Petition of Christians of All Denominations in Upper Canada; and other Petitions on the Same Subject; and the Petition of E.W Armstrong & Others* (Toronto: Legislative Assembly, 1828).

¹³ The petition combated this ideology as well. When asked whether or not people educated in America were a threat to British interests in Upper Canada, Waters answered: 'Among the itinerant ministers of the

Methodist church only one fifth are natives of the United States, and the remainder are British born subjects.... In regards to the teachers of the other religious denominations, I believe that very few of them are from, or have formed their sentiments, or gathered their knowledge in the United States.’ Waters et al., *Report*, 6.

¹⁴ Waters et al., *Report*, 4.

¹⁵ The charts at the end of the report provide, in detail, who the leaders of the various denominations were, where they were born, where they were educated, and if they were naturalized subjects and, if so, for how long.

¹⁶ Waters et al., *Report*, 8. Richardson concluded his answer by stating that he was ‘brought up a member of the [C]hurch of England,’ indicating that he had changed his denominational affiliation.

¹⁷ Ryerson would also state: ‘Several of their clergymen voluntarily served in the Flank companies and were in several engagements. One, who is now a Preacher, was a master in the navy, and lost his arm in the battle of Oswego [Richardson]. Another was wounded on his way to the Army at Chippewa.’ Waters et al., *Report*, 10.

¹⁸ Waters et al., *Report*, 10.

¹⁹ The only mention of the disloyalty of a religious person came from the Attorney General, J.B. Robinson, and was directed at a Baptist, not a Methodist, minister: ‘As to any irregular or improper interference, I remember that a preacher in this district by the name of [Elijah] Bentley, I think of the Baptist society, who had come from the United States, was convicted upon very clear evidence, at the Assizes, during the last war of exhorting his congregation publickly [sic] to join the enemy, and congratulating them upon the prospect of belonging to the United States; and I recollect that some of the most respectable members of his congregation gave evidence against him, and seemed very indignant at his conduct. I have observed it to be a very general impression that the preachers of the Methodist persuasion exert themselves much to influence the elections of Members of the Assembly throughout the Province, by communicating with their several societies, but I cannot say they do, of my own knowledge.’ Waters et al., *Report*, 20.

²⁰ Waters et al., *Report*, 10.

²¹ In the chart at the conclusion of the report, only eight of the Methodist ministers were shown to be non-naturalized.

²² Waters et al., *Report*, 3.

²³ ‘Question 4: Is the tendency of the population of this Province toward to Church of England? Is it spreading over the province? Is it not as well-supported by its members ... as any other church in the province?’ Waters et al., *Report*, 11. D. McCall answered in a similar fashion as the vast majority: ‘I do not think so -- very slowly. It is well supported.’ Waters et al., *Report*, 11.

²⁴ Waters et al., *Report*, 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Waters et al., *Report*, 14.

²⁷ C. Fothergill, a member of the Assembly, declared: ‘If missionaries of the Church of England meddle with the politics of the country, and other civil affairs, with which they ought to have nothing to do, as much as many of those already have, and particularly as much as one of their Archdeacons has done, the people generally would be less likely to become more attached to our civil and religious or any other institutions; which has already been proved to a certain extent.’ Waters et al., *Report*, 13.

²⁸ Waters et al., *Report*, 13.

²⁹ Waters et al., *Report*, 14.

³⁰ However, some viewed increased immigration as a potential source of people for the beleaguered Anglicans. B.C. Beardsley replied: ‘I think [the denomination] is not spreading except from the consequences of emigration’ Waters et al., *Report*, 14.

³¹ Waters et al., *Report*, 13.

³² The establishment question only became an issue in the post-war years as ‘the position of the Church of England as the legally established religion of the two Canadas and as the sole beneficiary of all government largesse ... was apparently unquestioned and unnoticed until after the War of 1812.’ Moir, *Early Presbyterianism*, 88. This does provide some evidence that the war helped create a more unified consciousness, if not entirely a national one, among the people of Upper Canada. Moir also argues: ‘did the establishment extend to all British colonies or only to those acquired after the union of 1707? Such

questions seem to have remained hypothetical or even unasked as far as British America was concerned until after the American Revolution, and even then the questions were certainly not put immediately or even effectively in the residual British American colonies until after the War of 1812.’ *Ibid.*, 85-6.

³³ ‘Religious instruction, it is true, will promote and strengthen loyalty and all other virtues; but no more when communicated by clergymen of the Church of England than by those of other sects, and probably less if they are or appear to be political teachers and servants of the state, rather than ministers of the Gospel.’ Waters et al., *Report*, 12.

³⁴ Waters et al., *Report*, 11.

³⁵ William Westfall records a correspondence between William Knox and Charles Jenkinson in which the role of the church is deemed essential for the development of the community: ‘The influence of Religion on the Opinion, Temper and Conduct of Mankind – its Tendency to promote the Internal Peace of Society, when under proper Regulations; and how capable it is of being made an Engine of Discord and Sedition -- are matters too well understood, and generally acknowledged, to require any Proof in this Place. The National Religion of any state may be presumed to be best adopted to the Civil Constitution of the state, hence it claims the Countenance and Support of the Civil Magistrate, which should be considered not only as a Matter of Piety and Prudence, but of the utmost Necessity in a Political View, being connected with the Peace and Welfare of the Community.’ William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 95-6.

³⁶ Marshall S. Bidwell, *Report of a Committee of the House of Assembly, Upper Canada, 15 March 1828* [n.p.].

³⁷ ‘[C]olonial leaders lived with the knowledge that some, if not most, Upper Canadians were not only reluctant, but would refuse to fight at all.’ Errington, ‘Reluctant Warriors,’ 327.

³⁸ This is a simplistic overview of the political events during that time. It was not solely the idea that the Reformers were disloyal that drove them from influence. Donald Akenson argues that it was the arrival of numerous ‘hyper-loyal’ Irish Protestants who had a desire to benefit financially and political experience in forming and organizing popular movements that ultimately undid these earlier Upper Canadians’ ability to maintain their advantages. Loyalty to England remained, as all concepts must, on some kind of scale and

few could demonstrate greater loyalty than these Irish Protestant immigrants. In this sense it was the Irish Protestants, not the American settlers, who were the real threat to the hegemony that veterans of 1812 attempted to build into Upper Canadian culture. Akenson makes the following simple yet powerful critique on the use of the war: ‘That the actual events of 1812-14 were so distorted as to be virtually unrecognizable is irrelevant; what counts is that the historical events were malleable and could be fashioned into a past that could be used.’ Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1984), 134.

³⁹ ‘The Gideon hundreds of loyal Canadians repelled and scattered, for more than two years, the Midian and Amalekite thousands of democratic invaders, until Great Britain, having chained the marauding tiger of Europe to the rock of St. Helena, despatched [sic] her thousands of soldiers to the aid of Canada, and sent her fleets across the Atlantic ... taking and burning their capital in retaliation for the American raid upon the capital of Upper Canada, and soon compelling the heretofore boasting Madison partizans to seek for peace’ Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 470.

⁴⁰ ‘[Neville’s] own flock, who knew the man, knew how his loyalty had been tested, and what sacrifices he had made for his adopted country. By a few religious and political bigots, however, his American origin was a cause of unjust suspicion and aspersion, which stung to the quick his sensitive nature. He was especially made to feel the unreasoning and bitter antipathy of the Indians to the nation of American “long-knives,” with whom they classed him, notwithstanding his peaceful calling and his approved loyalty.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 6:34.

⁴¹ Withrow, *Trueman*, preface.

⁴² Neil Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996)

⁴³ For the most complete research on the development of Methodism in Upper and Lower Canada, see Webb, *Transatlantic Methodists*.

⁴⁴ William Canniff recorded the daunting ruggedness of Upper Canada: ‘a vast wilderness, and no roads. The only way of traveling from one clearing to another was by the canoe and bateau, or by foot through the trackless woods, guided by the banks of the bay, or a river, or the blazing of the trees.’ William Canniff,

The Settlement of Upper Canada: With Special Reference to The Bay Quinte (1869; reprinted Belleville: Mika Silk Screening Limited, 1971), 224. See also the introduction of Charlotte Gray, ed., *Canada: A Portrait in Letters 1800-2000* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2004) for her discussion on an early Canadian creation myth that grew out of the ability to survive in a windswept wilderness.

⁴⁵ However, the image of the ‘manly Methodist’ was not reserved for Trueman alone. This is a story about a soldier who took issue with a Methodist named Jonas Evans and Evans’ attempt to preach to the soldiers: ‘Once a drinking, swearing bigot constituted himself a champion of the Church established by law, and complained to the commanding major that “the Methody [sic] preacher took the work out of the hands of their own chaplain,” -- an easy-going parson, who much preferred dining with the officers' mess to visiting the soldiers' barracks. “If he preaches as well as he fights, he can beat the chaplain,” said the major. “Let him fire away all he likes, the parson won't complain; and some of you fellows would be none the worse for converting, as he calls it. If you were to take a leaf out of his book yourself, Tony, and not be locked up in the guard-house so often, it would be better for you!”’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 6:36.

⁴⁶ Withrow, *Trueman*, 16:78.

⁴⁷ Withrow, *Trueman*, 16:82.

⁴⁸ ‘[O]ld Jonas Evans, now a sergeant of militia, was quietly reading his well-thumbed Bible, lifted his stentorian voice in a stirring Methodist hymn: “Soldiers of Christ, arise, And put your armour on, Strong in the strength which God supplies Through His eternal Son. Stand then against your foes, in close and firm array: Legions of wily fiends oppose throughout the evil day.” The old man sang with a martial vigour ... then earnestly exhorted his comrades-in-arms to be on their guard against the opposing fiends who especially assailed a soldier's life. “Above all,” he said, “beware of the drink-fiend--the worst enemy King George has got. He kills more of the King's troops than all his other foes together.” Then, with a yearning tenderness in his voice, he exhorted them to “ground the weapons of their rebellion and enlist in the service of King Jesus, the great Captain of their salvation, who would lead them to victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and at last make them kings and priests forever in His everlasting kingdom in the skies.” Those rude, reckless, and, some of them, violent and wicked men, fascinated by the intense earnestness of the Methodist local-preacher, listened with quiet attention.... The moral elevation which

Christian-living and Bible-reading will always give, commanded their respect, and the dauntless daring of the old man -- for they knew that he was a very lion in the fight, and as cool under fire as at the mess-table -- challenged the admiration of their soldier hearts.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 6:35-6.

⁴⁹ Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 471. Withrow would also use fairly anachronistic terms like ‘country’ in his own telling of the tale: “‘God grant, my son,’ said the farmer solemnly, “that we may not see more fighting than we wish. I’ve lived through one bloody war and I never want to see another. But if fight we must for our country, fight we will.”” Withrow, *Trueman*, 1:10.

⁵⁰ ‘In the British Empire, and particularly in what is historically known as the ‘second’ era of British imperialism (1784-1867), missionary activity was frequently involved with the initial steps of imperial expansion. A heightened sense of religiosity in Britain at this time ensured that Christianisation was seen as a crucial part of the colonizing and civilizing projects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.’ C.F. Pascoe, *Two hundred years of the S.P.G. an historical account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1900* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1901), 13.

⁵¹ Withrow, *Trueman*, 15:77. Withrow would reiterate such claims throughout his work through writing down the final words, or battle time phrases of certain Methodist men. The following is one example: ‘Jonas Evans, who had been an old artilleryman, takes the place of a wounded gunner, lifts the big sixty-eight pound balls, rams them home, and handles the linstock as coolly as if on parade. “Bless the Lord!” he said to a comrade while the piece was being pointed, “I am ready to live or die; it’s no odds to me. For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. Sudden death would be sudden glory. Hallelujah! I believe I am doing my duty to my country, to God and man, and my soul is as happy as it can be this side heaven.”’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 7:40-1.

⁵² Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 472.

⁵³ Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 474. Ryerson also noted: ‘The administration of the Crown or Public Lands was sadly defective and partial, giving whole blocks to friends [of the Executive Government in the days following the war] and speculators, while the applications of the legitimate settler were often rejected. It also began to be complained that these large blocks of land given to individuals, and the one-seventh of the

lands set apart as Clergy Reserves, greatly impeded the settlement and improvement of the country.’ Ibid., 472-3.

⁵⁴ Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 473.

⁵⁵ However, Ryerson did not equate that invasion with America but with a ‘democratic mob faction’ who did not represent the ‘sentiments or feelings of the industrious, business, commercial, intelligent, and Christian people of the United States.’ Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 472.

⁵⁶ For Withrow, the fact that the Americans chose to support Canada despite the threat that both countries might disown them was one of the most laudable evidences of their fidelity to the people and king. He wrote: ‘most of [the American Methodists], although cut off from fellowship, and largely from sympathy with the Conference and Church by which they were appointed, continued steadfast at their posts and loyal to the institutions of the country, notwithstanding the obloquy, suspicion, and persecution to which they were often subjected.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 1:13-4.

⁵⁷ Withrow would most likely disagree with such an assessment. He stated in his opening that the ‘principal authorities consulted for the historical portion of this story are: Tupper’s Life and Letters of Sir Isaac Brock, Auchinleck’s and other histories of the War, and Carroll’s, Bangs’, and Playter’s references to border Methodism at the period described. Many of the incidents, however, are derived from the personal testimony of prominent actors in the stirring drama of the time, but few of whom still linger on the stage. For reasons which will be obvious, the personality of some of the characters of the story is slightly veiled under assumed names.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, preface. However, this author examined the footnotes and quotations and discovered that there are few citations and of the ones that do exist, many were from personal interviews and Withrow’s other works.

⁵⁸ ‘In the United States Congress this unnatural strife of kindred races was vigorously denounced by some of the truest American patriots.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 6:33.

⁵⁹ The following quote records the moment Trueman decided to remain and serve in Upper Canada:

“‘Young man, I honour your choice,” exclaimed the Squire effusively, grasping [Trueman’s] hand with energy. “I know what it is to leave home, and kindred, and houses and lands for loyalty to my conscience and my King...we found our way, I and a few neighbours, to this spot, to hew out new homes in the forest

and keep our oath of allegiance to our King.” Withrow, *Trueman*, 1:11. Squire Drayton was referring to his own service in the Revolution as a United Empire Loyalist. The decision of men like Trueman to side with Britain was thus given similar standing to the eighteenth-century decisions made by the celebrated and venerated United Empire Loyalists (who had also been American-born).

⁶⁰ Withrow, *Trueman*, 1:12.

⁶¹ ‘General Smyth, who had succeeded Van Rensselaer [after Queenston], assembled a force five thousand strong, for the conquest of Canada. At the expiration of the armistice, he issued a *Napoleonic proclamation* to his “companions in arms.”’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 6:32. Italics added for emphasis.

⁶² Withrow, *Trueman*, 1:12.

⁶³ Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 450. ‘Even the patriotic and intellectual part of the American people denounced this unholy intrigue between their own President and the bloody usurper of Europe, and this causeless war against Great Britain.’ *Ibid.*, 451.

⁶⁴ Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 449.

⁶⁵ Withrow, *Trueman*, 1:10. Trueman did not condemn the Revolutionary War but simply the invasion of 1812: “I believe the colonists were right in resisting oppression in ’76,’ continued Neville; “but I believe they are wrong in invading Canada now, and I wash my hands of all share in their crime.” Withrow, *Trueman*, 1:11.

⁶⁶ Ryerson, *Loyalists*, 462 n.

⁶⁷ Withrow was attempting to relay honest stories from credible witnesses despite the lack of both: ‘The details of the account above given were narrated to the author by the venerable Father Brady, for many years class-leader of the Methodist Church at Niagara, who was an actor in the events described.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 7:42, n1.

⁶⁸ Chapters thirteen to eighteen are dedicated solely to the religious works of the Methodists and the religious landscape of the time. After that, the book returned to the events of the war and the actions taken by Trueman, Jonas and others.

⁶⁹ [Neville] was soon busily engaged, skillfully helping the surgeon and ministering alike to the bodies and the souls of the wounded soldiers. He also found time to visit the ramparts and speak words of cheer and

encouragement to the members of his spiritual flock. Although shot and shell screamed through the air, and fragments and splinters were flying in dangerous proximity, he felt himself sustained by the grace of God. Amid these dreadful scenes he knew no fear, and his calm serenity inspired confidence courage and in others.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 7:41.

⁷⁰ Withrow, *Trueman*, chap. 1.

⁷¹ Withrow, *Trueman*, 2:16.

⁷² In the winter following the death of Brock, Withrow recorded ‘A deep seriousness pervaded the entire neighbourhood [in Queenston]. The usual winter amusements and dancing parties were, to a great extent, forgone [sic].’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 16:79. Trueman was not the only Methodist celebrated at Queenston. Withrow provided the following commentary from a wounded man, Jim Larkins: ‘Old Jonas Evans, the Methody [sic] local preacher, was aside me, a-prayin’ like a saint and a-fightin’ like a lion. “The Lord ha’ mercy on his soul,” I heard him say as he knocked a feller over. Well, he helped me out o’ the fight as tender as a woman, and then went at it again as fierce as ever.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 4:27.

⁷³ Withrow, *Trueman*, 12:67.

⁷⁴ Henry Ryan was appointed the superintendent over the Upper Canadian circuit at the Genesee Conference of 1812. Nathan Bangs was appointed over Lower Canada. However, Bangs was in New York when war was declared and spent the entirety of the war in the United States, leaving Ryan the sole leader of Episcopal Methodism in both Canadas throughout the war. Ryan, a figure of controversy in many later Methodist fights, was remembered fondly by Withrow: ‘Mr. Ryan, by his loyalty, gained the confidence and admiration of all friends of British supremacy, and, by his abundant and heroic labours, the affections of the God-fearing part of the community.’ Withrow, *Trueman*, 14:73. ‘Strange work for a Christian man to do! It seems the work of demons rather than of men, and yet godly men have, with an approving conscience, wielded the weapons of carnal warfare. But in this much at least all will agree: An unjust war is the greatest of all crimes, and even a just war is the greatest of all calamities. And all will join in the prayer, Give peace in our time, O Lord, and hasten the day when the nations shall learn war no more!’ *Ibid.*, 7:41.

⁷⁵ Withrow, *Trueman*, 9:47-8.

⁷⁶ Withrow, *Trueman*, 9:48.

⁷⁷ Withrow, *Trueman*, 1:13.

⁷⁸ Withrow, *Trueman*, 14:73.

⁷⁹ Withrow, *Trueman*, 21:108-9.