

“In the desert places of the wilderness”:
The Frontier Thesis and the Anglican
Church in the Eastern Townships,
1799–1831

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The Church of England was better able to meet the challenges of the settlement frontier in British North America than historians have sometimes acknowledged. Even in Quebec's Eastern Townships, a region largely populated by American settlers, the British-backed religion of order tended to dominate the religion of dissent during the early settlement period. It was thus well entrenched by the 1830s and 1840s, when American missionary societies and revivalist sects began to take a greater interest in the region. Not only did the Anglican Church have substantial material advantages over its competitors, but the Anglican hierarchy was willing to adapt, within limits, to local conditions. This case study of the two neighbouring parishes in St. Armand, near the Vermont border, also shows that each British-born Anglican missionary responded to the challenges posed by an alien cultural environment in a somewhat different way.

L'Église anglicane était plus apte à relever les défis du peuplement de l'Amérique du Nord britannique que les historiens ne l'ont parfois reconnu. Même dans les Cantons de l'Est, au Québec, une région largement peuplée par des colons américains, la religion de l'ordre, qui jouissait du soutien britannique, avait tendance à dominer la religion de la dissension aux débuts du peuplement. Elle était donc bien enracinée quand, durant les années 1830 et 1840, les sociétés missionnaires américaines et les sectes revivalistes commencèrent à s'intéresser davantage à la région. Non seulement l'Église anglicane possédait-elle des avantages matériels substantiels sur ses compétiteurs, mais la hiérarchie anglicane était prête à s'adapter, à l'intérieur de certaines limites, aux conditions locales. Comme le montre la présente étude de cas de deux paroisses voisines de St. Armand, près de la frontière du Vermont, chaque missionnaire anglican britannique de naissance réagit différemment aux défis posés par un milieu culturel étranger.

UNTIL QUITE recently, it was generally assumed that the Church of England's attempt to impose itself on the British North American settlement

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frontier was a failure. Referring to the Anglican mission to the New Brunswick Loyalists, for example, D. G. Bell wrote in 1984 that “preaching a lukewarm gospel, one day in seven, and on only a small circuit, they failed the challenge of the environment”.¹ Similarly, a recent history of the Eastern Townships declares that the Church of England was “mal préparée à une mission itinérante de prédication, car elle s’appuie sur des pasteurs résidents, qui doivent loger dans un presbytère distinct. Le système de la paroisse anglicane est donc peu adapté à un pays pionnier.”² Yet the Anglicans were the second largest denomination in New Brunswick, according to a census taken in 1861,³ and those identified as members of the Church of England represented a higher ratio of the Eastern Townships population in the 1831 census than in the census of 1852, when they remained the largest Protestant denomination in this largely American-settled region. Faced with the fact that the Anglicans in Upper Canada also outnumbered members of other churches at mid-century,⁴ historians of religion in that province have recently begun to admit that the Church of England’s missionary effort was not entirely ineffectual.⁵ But there are still no detailed examinations of that effort which might explain why and how it was able to meet the challenges of the North American settlement frontier.

The Northern New England Frontier

Most of the early settlers in the Eastern Townships migrated from the same southern New England towns as those who populated neighbouring Vermont and New Hampshire, states known for their revivalism and sectarianism. Stephen Marini describes how radical sectarian movements such as the Universalists and Freewill Baptists emerged and developed systematic plans of church order, theology, and worship in the New England hill country just as the Eastern Townships was being opened to American settlement in the 1790s. The Second Great Awakening of 1798–1808 subsequently introduced

1 D. G. Bell, *The Newlight Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innes* (Hantsport, N.S.: Lancelot Press, 1984), pp. 64, 172.

2 Jean-Pierre Kesteman, Peter Southam, and Diane Saint-Pierre, *Histoire des Cantons de l’Est* (Saint-Foy: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1998), p. 186. Interestingly enough, Kesteman fails to apply the same critique to the Catholic missionary system, which was instrumental in organizing the early French-Canadian colonization of the region. See J. I. Little, “Missionary Priests in Quebec’s Eastern Townships: The Years of Hardship and Discontent, 1825–1853”, CCHA, *Study Sessions*, vol. 45 (1978), pp. 21–35.

3 There were 57,730 Baptists, 42,776 Anglicans, 36,632 Presbyterians, and 25,637 Methodists in New Brunswick in 1861. Canada, *Census Reports, 1870–1871*, pp. 332–333.

4 John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 224.

5 The same is true of the brief overview of the Anglican Church in the Eastern Townships to be found in Françoise Noël’s McGill MA thesis, reprinted as *Competing For Souls: Missionary Activity and Settlement in the Eastern Townships, 1784–1851* (Sherbrooke: Département d’histoire, Université de Sherbrooke, 1988), chap. 4.

Methodism to rural New England, as well as giving birth to new sects such as the Christian Connection.⁶ Similarly, Randolph Roth claims that the settlers of the northeastern frontier of the United States “dedicated themselves with extraordinary fervor to making it the most perfect society on earth”, so that by the 1830s “the region had achieved the highest levels of active church membership and of enrollment in reform societies in the world”. Vermont, in particular, would become “the symbolic fount of the young nation’s truculent egalitarianism, militant faith, and crusading idealism”.⁷ Finally, David Ludlum states that the religious revivalists found a particularly fertile field in the north-central and northeastern plateau of Vermont, which “spilled over into the Province of Lower Canada where New Englanders had settled, and these subjects of the Crown often emulated their republican kin across the border”.⁸

One would certainly expect, like Ludlum, that the radical northern New England religious culture would have had a major impact on the Eastern Townships, where only 22 per cent of its English-speaking population was British-born at mid-century, as compared with 35 per cent in Upper Canada. Furthermore, the early American settlers of the Eastern Townships lived in much the same northern Appalachian frontier environment that the American historians attribute to northern New England’s religious radicalism. For example, Michael Barkun notes that, due to its mountainous nature, Vermont “was a society where social controls were weak and political, social and religious dissent was difficult to suppress”.⁹ Similarly, Marini writes that “the mere maintenance of civil order and religious conformity proved impossible” on the New England hill country frontier.¹⁰ The state’s presence was equally weak in the Eastern Townships, where efforts to combat the counterfeiting of American bank notes and large-scale smuggling were largely ineffectual for many years. If these were crimes of fraud rather than force, Seymour Bassett has observed that lawlessness on the Vermont frontier also tended to be non-violent.¹¹ The fact remains, however, that a much more conservative religious culture developed in the Eastern Townships than in the neighbouring states.

6 Stephen A. Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 6–7.

7 Randolph A. Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791–1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 1–2, 12.

8 David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791–1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939; reprint AMS Press, 1966), p. 17. Paul Jeffrey Potash makes a sharp distinction between conservative southeastern Vermont and the radical territory west of the Green Mountains in “Welfare of the Regions Beyond”, *Vermont History*, vol. 46 (1978), pp. 109–128.

9 Michael Barkun, *Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-Over District of New York in the 1840s* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 106.

10 Marini, *Radical Sects*, p. 173.

11 T. D. Seymour Bassett, “Cabin Religion in Vermont, 1724–1791”, *Vermont History*, vol. 62 (1994), p. 79.

The Frontier Thesis in Canada

While it is generally assumed that Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis had little impact on Canadian historiography,¹² there was a longstanding assumption that the attempt by the British government to impose the Church of England on the British North American colonists failed because this rigid and hierarchical Old World institution could not adapt to the New World environment. The most comprehensive application of the frontier thesis to religion in Canada is S. D. Clark's *Church and Sect in Canada*, published in 1948. Clark's basic arguments were that this country's religious development was characterized by a fundamental conflict between forces of order and forces of separation; the church — representing the former — depended upon a condition of social stability, while the sect emerged when such a condition was not present; and, because social instability was largely confined to the frontier stage of development, "the sect has been the product of what might be called the frontier conditions of social life".¹³ Following from these arguments, a dominant theme in *Church and Sect* is the ineffectuality of the Anglican missionaries in the frontier environment.

In his study of the frontier thesis and the Canadas, Michael Cross concluded that Clark's "arguments have a plausibility which has convinced most Canadian historians".¹⁴ Certainly, echoes of Clark's thesis can be found in William Westfall's *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario*, which stresses the dichotomy between the religion of order and the religion of experience, but Westfall cautions that "the walls between them were low and contained many openings that allowed people to pass from one to the other".¹⁵ Westfall does not refer directly to the Turner thesis, though he does state that "the environment of Upper Canada itself undermined the conservatism of this [the Anglican] pattern of interpretation".¹⁶ Nevertheless, he contradicts Clark by stressing the social impact and dedication of the Anglican missionaries, stating that their "very presence in local affairs forestalled any threats to public order and raised the general tone of society".¹⁷

Another recent study on religion in nineteenth-century Ontario, John Webster Grant's *A Profusion of Spires*, also portrays the Anglican missionaries in a positive light, though he stresses the somewhat exclusive appeal of their church to "genteel Upper Canadians for whom the social graces, cultural amenities, and religious traditions of the Old World constituted an insepara-

12 See Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing, 1900 to 1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), pp. 119–122, 168, 174–176, 229, 242–243.

13 S. D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948), p. xii.

14 Michael S. Cross, *The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas: The Debate on the Impact of the Canadian Environment* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970), p. 80.

15 William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), p. 45.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 36, 110–111.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

ble unity”.¹⁸ Finally, one would not be surprised to find, in a recent monograph on the Church of England in Upper Canada, a direct rebuttal of Clark’s thesis. Curtis Fahey’s *In His Name* admits that there was a decline in Anglican missionary zeal during the first two decades of the nineteenth century (a development not apparent in the Eastern Townships), but points to the large church membership in the colony and to the questionable assumption that “frontier societies, by their very nature, are anti-intellectual, suspicious of tradition and hostile towards anything savouring of the cultural elitism of the old world”.¹⁹ Ironically, the latter statement actually underestimates the challenges faced by the Anglican missionaries on the American-settled frontier of Upper Canada — as in the Eastern Townships — and, therefore, the degree to which they succeeded in transforming the radical post-Revolutionary religious culture of this northern remnant of the British American empire.

Frontier and Religion in the Eastern Townships

The Anglican archdeacon of the Diocese of Quebec, George J. Mountain, clearly felt that he was on an unstable frontier of British influence when he reported of his official tour through the Eastern Townships in 1829 that “mushroom-like lecturers thrown out upon the spot deal always in high excitement & address themselves to the natural love of the marvelous”. Mountain claimed that one person had recently been persuaded “that his faith would enable him to cross” the St. Francis River, while another “undertook to fast for 40 days, & was brought back out of the woods about half-starved”.²⁰ Such acts of religious zeal were rarely mentioned in the missionary reports, however, and the fact remains that the American sects or churches failed to gain a firm foothold in this northern extension of the New England settlement frontier. Even the Methodist Episcopal effort was minimal at best in the Eastern Townships, and its missionaries would be replaced by conservative British Wesleyans after 1821. The Methodists would subsequently become the second largest Protestant denomination in the Eastern Townships.

How can one explain the religious contrast between northern New England and the Eastern Townships, given the common origins of their settlers and the similarity of their physical environments? The frontier thesis notwithstanding, the fact is that the social atomization stressed by the New England historians would not in itself have led to radical revivalism.²¹ As Michael Kenny emphasizes in his biography of Elias Smith, this develop-

18 Grant, *A Profusion of Spires*, p. 57.

19 Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791–1854* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), pp. 40–41, 48–50.

20 Quoted in J. I. Little, ed., “The Journal of Archdeacon G. J. Mountain’s Visitation of 1829 ‘Principally Thro’ the Eastern Townships”, *Journal of Eastern Townships Studies*, vol. 16 (2000), pp. 87–88.

21 Marini, *Radical Sects*, pp. 29–31.

ment was essentially the product of a dynamic democratic tradition.²² That tradition simply failed to take deep root in the Eastern Townships, where the town meeting system did not enjoy official sanction and where there were no local taxes against which to rebel.²³ Independent-minded Yankees settled in the Eastern Townships partly to escape those taxes, and perhaps also to escape the publicly funded religious establishments that still existed everywhere but Rhode Island and Vermont after 1807.²⁴ Pioneer society in the Eastern Townships would, by necessity, be characterized by the voluntarism associated with the frontier, as settlers joined forces to build roads, schools, and chapels, but there was no political outlet except for petitions and informal representatives because the region remained effectively disenfranchised until divided into several constituencies in 1829. While the majority proceeded to vote for the pro-reform *Patriote* party, their minority status in the largely French-speaking colony left them powerless to follow the Vermont and Maine traditions of mobilizing effectively against the absentee proprietors who retarded the development of their region.²⁵

The Church of England was able to take advantage of this arrested state of political development and of the failure of the American evangelical missionary societies to mount a sustained effort in the region²⁶ by launching a well-funded initiative to build churches and support missionaries. Grants and donations from Britain were not only effective in attracting pragmatic Yankee settlers, who saw the advantage of not having to finance the church they attended, but in recruiting clergymen from other denominations. While Clark has argued that the Church of England was too formal and too inflexible to adapt to new settlements, Archdeacon George Mountain felt that the frontier provided his church with opportunities. He wrote in 1821 that non-Anglican ministers

22 Michael Kenny, *The Perfect Law of Liberty: Elias Smith and the Providential History of America* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994). Nathan Hatch claims, more specifically, that early American religious dissent essentially reflected a virulent anti-clericalism, or what he calls a “crisis of authority”, in *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 9–10, 44, 65.

23 On the central role of town government in New Hampshire and the rise of taxes during the revolutionary era, see Jere R. Daniell, *Experiment in Republicanism: New Hampshire Politics and the American Revolution, 1741–1794* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970). On Shay’s Rebellion in Massachusetts and the similar movement in rural New Hampshire, also in 1786, see Marini, *Radical Sects*, pp. 34–35. On backcountry dissent in general, see Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, pp. 30–34.

24 Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma*, pp. 26, 30, 32–35, 77.

25 Municipal taxation would begin to remedy this situation in the 1840s. See J. I. Little, “Contested Land: Squatters and Agents in the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 80 (1999), pp. 381–412.

26 See J. I. Little, “Serving ‘the North East Corner of Creation’: The Community Role of a Rural Clergyman in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, 1829–1870”, *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 30, no. 59 (May 1997), pp. 21–54.

have been divested, in some degree, of their religious prepossessions by their removal to this country — they are more at liberty, at a distance from their friends & from the connection in whose service they may be employed, to examine & to compare with impartiality; & the Lutheran, the Scotch Presbyterian or the American Congregationalist, finding that the Church of England, from her connection with the Government, & from the pious bounty of the Society, affords means of greater usefulness to her Ministers & more respectable provision for the spiritual wants of the people, than the communion to which they belong, — are led to look more favourably, & thence more closely into her Constitution & her Ordinances; & this terminates very naturally in conviction of her superiority.²⁷

The incentive of financial support certainly stimulated the pace of church construction and clerical ordination, but there were other facets to the Anglican expansion strategy. Clark argues that the failure of the Anglican Church “to build up an adequate body of itinerant missionaries and to integrate an itinerant system into the regular organization of the Church, were simply obvious limitations in the methods employed in the Canadian situation. The inherent weakness of the Church lay in its general failure to depart from principles of church government which had developed out of very different circumstances.”²⁸ The fact is, however, that the Methodist itinerant system had also developed out of very different circumstances, namely the urban industrial milieu of Britain, and that it was not particularly well suited to a frontier environment where there were no established local elites to fill the crucial lay roles.²⁹ Also, Anglican clerics did preach at several places within their parishes rather than confining their services to one church.³⁰ Charles Stewart even took a leaf from the Methodist book when he ensured, while on his first return to England, that “serious persons of good character, who were disposed to do so, might read the Liturgy to their neighbours (where there is no Clergyman) on Sundays”.³¹ To reach a broader territory, Stewart also convinced the SPG in 1829 that catechists should be appointed with the authority to act as lay readers. In this capacity they would serve “as a kind of imperfect substitute for Clergymen”.³²

27 Quebec Diocesan Archives [hereafter QDA], D9, G. J. Mountain to Rev. Anthony Hamilton, Quebec, June 15, 1821.

28 Clark, *Church and Sect*, p. 116.

29 See Fahey, *In His Name*, pp. 48–50; J. I. Little, “The Methodistical Way: Revivalism and Popular Resistance to the Wesleyan Church Discipline in the Stanstead Circuit, Lower Canada, 1821–52”, *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2002), pp. 171–194.

30 The number of stations for each Anglican minister in the Eastern Townships ranged from two to ten in 1845. Noël, *Competing For Souls*, Appendix 3, p. 240.

31 When one man asked for compensation for performing this service, Stewart replied, “It was an indulgence, not an appointment, that was asked.” QDA, Reid Collection of Bishop Stewart Letters, vol. 1, p. 62, Stewart to Reid, Hatley, November 25, 1819.

32 The SPG set aside £500 a year for this purpose. Thomas R. Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend, the Honourable Charles James Stewart, D.D., Oxon., Second Anglican Bishop of Quebec* (London, Ont.: Huron College, 1953), p. 101.

In short, then, the Anglican Church had substantial material advantages over its competitors in the region, but it would also appear that the hierarchy was willing to adapt, within limits, to local conditions. But it was the parish clergy who actually lived on the frontier, and the following examination of Missisquoi County's St. Armand in the early nineteenth century focuses on how several British-born incumbents responded to the challenges posed by this alien cultural environment.

St. Armand

In 1799 the SPG was informed by an Anglican clergyman who had visited Loyalist-settled St. Armand on the Bay of Missisquoi that it was "a new and flourishing settlement" of 1,200 to 1,500 souls, "a very considerable part" belonging to the Church of England.³³ The latter statement was clearly an exaggeration, but the settlers did promise to contribute £30 a year towards a minister's salary, and the seigneur, Thomas Dunn of Quebec, offered 200 acres as a glebe. Others would provide sufficient land for two churches with burial grounds.³⁴ The aim was to build one church in St. Armand and another in neighbouring Dunham Township, with the clergyman's house located between them. The first clergyman to make a lasting impact on the area was Charles Caleb Cotton, who arrived in 1804.³⁵

The eldest son of an impecunious English schoolmaster, Cotton had received his degree from Oxford in 1797. He had emigrated to the United States soon afterward, with the plan of remunerating his family for its financial sacrifice (which he never managed to do). After teaching school in Charleston, South Carolina, the peripatetic Cotton served as a clergyman in the states of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Dissatisfied with an income that "is frequently uncertain & ill paid and depends entirely on the ability and disposition of the people",³⁶ Cotton was attracted to Quebec in 1804 by the prospect of an SPG subsidy. Here he was elevated to priest's orders by Bishop Mountain and assigned to St. Armand and Dunham. Reporting Cotton's appointment, the SPG journal stated, "He appears to be peculiarly suited to the situation, having great simplicity, becoming gravity of manners, good ability, and much facility in communicating his thoughts, and from his residence in America, sufficient familiarity with the manners prevalent among their new settlers, which are so apt to give an Englishman disgust."³⁷

Cotton informed his sister that the settlers were actually German Loyalists and immigrants from the Hudson Valley. While this was hardly the wild fron-

33 Quoted in Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, p. 10.

34 St. Armand was a seigneurie, not a township, but its settlers did not become censitaires. Mario Gendron et al., *Histoire du Piémont-des-Appalaches* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1999), p. 45.

35 QDA, H. C. Stuart, "Episcopate of Jacob Mountain, 1793–1825 (typescript), pp. 62–63, 67; Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*.

36 National Archives of Canada [hereafter NA], MG 24 J7, Cotton Papers, C. C. Cotton to Anna, Dunham, August 9, 1810.

37 NA, MG 24 J47, C. C. Cotton Papers; Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, pp. 8–9.

tier that he would depict in his reports to the Bishop of Quebec, Cotton's inflexibility and lack of religious ardour made him a poor choice for any new settlement. To his sister, he confided in December 1804 that he was "obliged to submit to a thousand inconveniences which I have not before experienced" and that he would likely return to one of his American positions in the summer.³⁸ On the positive side, Cotton's background as a teacher was reflected in his genuine concern for the youths of his parish. He lamented, "A surprising apathy with respect to the morals of the rising generation obtains almost everywhere," and he encouraged the local schoolmaster to assign Bible readings to his students. Cotton himself attempted to catechize and lecture to the children after his Sunday services, but this soon "fell through", he reported, due to the general laxity of morals that prevailed and the "poisonous influence of infidelity".³⁹

Cotton began complaining to the bishop about his new appointment as early as February 1805. Despite his "utmost endeavours", he had failed "to unite the hearts of the people to remove their scruples, satisfy their doubts and inspire them with an affection and zeal for the support of our Church establishment". The fault was not his, Cotton insisted, for he strongly suspected "a settled & regulated plan of secret opposition to the benevolent views of Gov.t in supporting the Mission at this place". The churchwardens had only been able to raise a subscription of £12 for his annual support, and no room had been set aside for divine service. Cotton also complained that the local people commonly went to the magistrate to be married because this alternative was less costly.⁴⁰ Two months later, he informed the bishop, "My hopes of being useful here have been very much damped by a residence of six months and when to this circumstance is added a thousand privations which every Minister must bear with in this wild country, your Lordship will easily conceive my situation to be not the most comfortable in the world."⁴¹ In May, Cotton reported that he had collected only £2 9s, adding, "With my present stipend only to depend on I have been obliged to forego many comforts which the habits of a person decently brought up have rendered necessaries." Finally, he had baptized a number of infants but only one adult since arriving in St. Armand, suggesting that little progress was being made in converting the majority, who were Methodists and Baptists.⁴²

Cotton refused to assume any responsibility for his lack of progress, claiming that "the people are well satisfied with their Minister and as desirous that he should remain with them as they are unwilling to requite his humble services". Rather, he blamed Methodism for thinning his flock and

38 NA, MG 24 J47, C. C. Cotton Papers, C. C. Cotton to My Dear Sister, Missisquoi Bay, December 31, 1804.

39 QDA, B4, 53, C. C. Cotton to My Lord, Missisquoi Bay, February 19 and April 3, 1805.

40 QDA, B4, 53, C. C. Cotton to My Lord, Missisquoi Bay, February 19, 1805; Ernest Hawkins, *Annals of the Diocese of Quebec* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1849), p. 39.

41 QDA, B4, 52, C. C. Cotton to My Lord, Missisquoi Bay, April 3, 1805.

42 QDA, B4, 53, C. C. Cotton to My Lord, Missisquoi Bay, May 21, 1805.

causing “some among us to act a wavering part, and wander from the Church to the meeting, and vice versa. The temperate and sober form of Episcopal worship is often unfavourably received by those whose minds have been heated by the vehemence and rant of the Conventicle.” Cotton concluded by requesting the bishop “to change my present station for another that promises more comfort and equal usefulness”.⁴³

The main reason for Cotton’s discontentment was actually boredom, for he wrote to his sister in 1807:

The people in general seem to have but little regard for a Gentleman & a person of education, they have hardly any conversation except about farming affairs, which is a standing dish with them from Jany. to December. They discover no wish for information, & no curiosity to hear anything but about the crops, the weather & a passing word or two of the latest news. — You can judge, Sister, what a burthen conversation must be, instead of a satisfaction, under these circumstances, & how impossible it is for me to derive much pleasure from this source.⁴⁴

A similar picture was painted for another sister:

The people here live very much to themselves and visit but very little. ...As they provide everything within themselves, a very little money suffices them. To a person who has resided in England their mode of living appears very parsimonious & uncomfortable. — The tea we drink here is not at all better than good bohea in England, often not so good, & they make it much weaker than at home. As I cannot endure the strong taste of maple sugar in it, & do not think it prudent under present circumstances (see what a saving brother you have got) to go to the expense of loaf sugar, I abstain from using any.⁴⁵

Nor were wine, beer, or cider readily available, forcing Cotton to drink only water. He did allow himself the indulgence of smoking, writing to his father that “a pipe of Virginia is my constant friend & solace, and I cannot perceive that it hurts me at all, for I guard against too free expectoration”. Cotton had also saved enough money by boarding with a family to travel for his “health” to Long Island during the summer of 1806 and to engage in land speculation, purchasing two 200-acre lots in Sutton for \$350. Soon afterward, he convinced the bishop to divide his charge in two, with him taking responsibility for Dunham Township.⁴⁶ Cotton clearly conforms to the stereotypical image of the worldly but rigid Anglican cleric, as depicted by Clark, but it

43 *Ibid.*

44 NA, MG 24 J47, Cotton Papers, C. C. Cotton to Frances Cotton, Missisquoi Bay, August 3, 1807.

45 NA, MG 24 J47, Cotton Papers, C. C. Cotton to Mary J. Cotton, Missisquoi Bay, July 27, 1807.

46 NA, MG 24 J47, Cotton Papers, C. C. Cotton to father, Missisquoi Bay, March 31, 1807; C. C. Cotton to Louisa Cotton, Missisquoi Bay, November 15, 1807; C. C. Cotton to Frances Cotton, Missisquoi Bay, August 3, 1807.

appears that he did eventually become acclimatized to the region after his marriage to a Loyalist's daughter in 1814, and he would remain in Dunham Parish until his death in 1848.⁴⁷

Furthermore, not all the Anglican missionaries were cut from the same cloth, and Cotton's replacement in St. Armand, Charles James Stewart, was a very different type of clergyman. While Cotton's background was marked by persistent anxiety over finances and status, Stewart belonged to one of Scotland's oldest and most prestigious families. In contrast to the rather self-centred Cotton, Stewart had a career in the Eastern Townships marked by messianic fervour, generosity of spirit and purse, and uncomplaining asceticism. Stewart had been ordained to the priesthood at the age of 24 in 1799. While studying at Oxford's Corpus Christi College, he had been strongly influenced by the evangelical and anti-slavery teachings of William Wilberforce, a friend of his older sister.⁴⁸ Stewart's health was delicate, and Bishop John Henshaw of Rhode Island described him at the age of 36 as having a robust but slightly bent frame, "with small, but keen grey eyes, a Roman nose, more pointed and hooked than ordinary; a mouth partially opened, with irregular and projecting teeth, never fully covered by the lips; hair of a bluish cast ... in thick, bushy locks, profusely covering the shoulders, and lightly sprinkled with powder, giving the appearance of a large grey wig. His limbs were badly formed, his carriage extremely awkward, the expression of his countenance void of intelligence, and the *tout ensemble* most ungainly and forbidding."⁴⁹ Henshaw concluded, however, that, just as "we sometimes find the best specimens of humanity in the thatched cottage, or other mean abode, so that unsightly form was tenanted by a soul of noble principles and lofty aspirations".⁵⁰ Despite his reputation for humility, Stewart had certainly not been raised in a thatched cottage, and he was fully aware of the advantages his privileged birth had given him in influencing the powerful.⁵¹

After eight years of service in a comfortable English parish, Stewart was inclined towards service in India, but his bishop recommended him to Bishop Jacob Mountain, who was then in England and looking for someone to replace the discouraged Charles Cotton. The young Scottish aristocrat jumped at the opportunity to minister at what was still an isolated outpost of

47 Montreal Diocesan Archives [hereafter MDA], Rev. Caleb Cotton Papers, Mary S. Wisdom to Canon Kelly, Shawinigan Falls, March 7, 1936.

48 Stewart's father was the seventh Earl of Galway. On Charles Stewart's early life, see Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, pp. 1–8.

49 Hawkins, *Annals of the Diocese of Quebec*, p. 307. Henshaw met Stewart in 1811 when he was a young missionary in northern Vermont. His memoir appears as Appendix A in Hawkins's book. Stewart's successor in Frelighsburg, James Reid, complained that Henshaw must have been "fresh from a serious perusal of Sir Walter Scott's Black Dwarf" and that he "has endeavoured to make the memory of a good man supremely ridiculous", but A. N. Bethune, editor of *The Church*, stated that Henshaw's description was substantially accurate. Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, p. 172.

50 Hawkins, *Annals of the Diocese of Quebec*, p. 308.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 104–105; Stuart, "Episcopate", p. 7.

American settlement.⁵² The King of England had warned Mountain that Stewart was suspected of Methodism, but when he arrived in Quebec in the fall of 1807 the bishop's sister, Mary Mountain, wrote that he "has charmed us all, and indeed even those who were prejudiced against him. ...With no advantages of person and address, with real disadvantages of voice and manner in the pulpit, before he left Quebec he gained general respect, and certainly *did* make converts of those who were disposed at first to call the real goodness of his design in question."⁵³

After considerable difficulty in finding someone to rent him a room in the initially hostile village of Frelighsburg, where he chose to locate because Cotton was still in nearby Philipsburg, Stewart began church services in the local school. He wrote to his mother that the country "scarcely furnishes the necessaries of life" and later recalled that "we had to get whatever we wanted from Montreal, as there were no stores in the country, and the northern parts of Vermont were as yet unsettled". Three days were required to reach Montreal, beginning with a 12-mile ride to Missisquoi Bay, "except when the roads were so bad that I had to dismount and lead my horse by leaping from log to log on the roadside. Across Missisquoi bay I went in an open boat to Plattsburg in the State of New York, whence I took a larger craft to St. Johns. From St. Johns to Laprairie, over the worst road in America, I went in a waggon, and from the latter place to Montreal in a batteau."⁵⁴

S. D. Clark states that the educated English clergy "could have little appreciation of the manner of life and peculiar problems of a pioneer farm population",⁵⁵ but Stewart informed his mother, "The people are worse in appearance, or rather manner, than in reality, or principle. They are very free and rude, but less profligate than in our country. They have all sorts of notions and sects in religion, rather than being less religious, or more unchristian than our people: far from it. I find sincere Christians of all denominations; and no wonder they are divided, where they have no teachers except Methodists and Baptists, and they very ignorant." Stewart added that the people were willing to be instructed by him and concluded, "In short, they suit my object — of being useful to them and the Church of Christ. ...I was never so much engaged in the exercises of religion as I have been since I came to St. Armand, and I never was happier."⁵⁶

Judging from a lengthy sermon on love that he delivered in 1815, Stewart did not tend to dwell on sin and retribution.⁵⁷ His positive outlook and his

52 Hawkins, *Annals of the Diocese of Quebec*, p. 38; Stuart, "Episcopate", pp. 11–13; Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, pp. 8–9.

53 Quoted in Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, p. 13.

54 *The Church*, March 30, 1839. Reprinted in *Canadian Church & Mission News*, July–August 1888, p. 164.

55 Clark, *Church and Sect*, p. 127.

56 Quoted in Hawkins, *Annals of the Diocese of Quebec*, pp. 43–45.

57 QDA, Unbound Manuscripts, case 1, folder 5, 1807–1815, Stewart, "Delivered at Trinity Church on Trinity Sunday, the 21st of May 1815, and St Paul's Church, Sept. the 10th."

tolerant attitude towards the American settlers, combined with the many acts of charity that his personal wealth made possible, quickly produced results. In his first report to the SPG in April 1808, Stewart reported, “There are many Methodists and Baptists who have Meetings in this Neighbourhood, and it is but fair to say they are not illiberal towards me.” The church services were “wonderfully well attended”, and the inhabitants had contributed toward the building of “a suitable Church on a very good situation” donated by the village’s founding Freligh brothers.⁵⁸ Stewart did not mention that he had paid the Frelighs £52.10s. for two adjoining acres, or that half the £680 cost for the construction of Holy Trinity (which was to be the first Anglican church in the Diocese of Quebec, aside from the Cathedral) had been covered by himself.⁵⁹

The conversion process had begun quickly, for Stewart’s first report stated that he had baptized three adults — all parents having several children — as well as 26 infants. In 1809 he baptized 24 people in Philipsburg, three of whom were Blacks, presumably slaves or their descendants brought by the Loyalist settlers.⁶⁰ At the Lord’s Supper on Christmas Day 1808, there had been only nine communicants, but the following Easter there were 23. In August, Jacob Mountain confirmed 60 people.⁶¹ Stewart’s diary from this period reveals that he was frequently on the move, preaching, baptizing, and so on, not only throughout the southern townships but also into Vermont.⁶² Bishop Mountain was very impressed with Stewart’s impact on the “character and morals” of the people. He stated in 1809 that “in no part of the world, perhaps, has the power of Religion more decidedly & more rapidly manifested itself than here. Mr S., without any sort of cant, & without the least appearance of enthusiasm, has more zeal, & more persevering activity, than it has ever before been my good fortune to witness; & it has pleased God to prosper his endeavours in an extraordinary manner.”⁶³

After the 1809 confirmation service, Mountain preached to a congregation of about 600, reporting that the psalmody was the best he had ever heard:

58 Seven subscribers, in addition to Stewart, committed themselves in March 1808 to having the church ready for services by the following November 1, “or sooner if possible, provided we are not prevented by War, which God forbid!” Brome County Historical Society, Frelighsburg Church, C. Stewart *et al.*, St. Armand, March 26, 1808.

59 QDA, D7, C. Stewart to Dr. Morice, St. Armand, April 22, 1808; Hawkins, *Annals of the Diocese of Quebec*, pp. 41–43; Stuart, “Episcopate”, pp. 14–17, 22–23, 26, 51–54; Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, pp. 15–17, 22.

60 QDA, D7, C. J. Stewart to Dr. Morice, Quebec, May 8, 1809 (draft).

61 QDA, Unbound Manuscripts, case 1, folder 3, Jacob Mountain Letters, 1802–1825 (Private and Personal), J. Mountain to Miss Brooke, Missiskoui Bay, August 22, 1809.

62 QDA, Bishop C. J. Stewart, 1807–1836, “The Honble and Rev. C. J. Stewart’s Brief Journal of his 1st Voyage to Canada Aug. 1807, & of his arrival at St Armand Oct. 1807”. Despite the title, the journal continues to 1812.

63 QDA, Unbound Manuscripts, case 1, folder 3, Jacob Mountain Letters, 1802–1825 (Private and Personal), J. Mountain to Miss Brooke, Missiskoui Bay, August 22, 1809.

The Singers, without any distinction of rank, (tho' the greater part of them were of the better class) assemble in the middle aisle, men & women; many of them, especially the latter, young; but no children. They sing, in three parts, not with that vulgar twang, & discordant bawling which are too common at home, but with a soft & a chasten'd tone & manner; & with a perfectness of tune, & a sweetness of voice, that were really surprising. ...I can not express to you the effect that this truly devotional music had upon my mind, any other-wise than by saying, that if you had been with me, I am sure you would have wept outright.⁶⁴

Stewart obviously felt that singing was crucial to the religious service, for he had hired a choir master and had a selection of psalms printed in Montreal at his own expense.⁶⁵

Stewart remained pleased with the advancement of his parish in 1809, and the SPG report for 1810 claimed that satisfactory progress had also been made in Philipsburg, which Stewart had been serving since Cotton's move to Dunham in the spring of 1808. Twenty-five people had taken Easter communion in the former location (St. Armand East), and twenty in the latter (St. Armand West). A church (St. Paul's) with a belfry and steeple was completed in Philipsburg in 1811 at a cost of £800. A subscription in Quebec, Montreal, Chambly, and St. Johns had raised £150 for the two new churches in St. Armand, but Stewart himself had contributed approximately £600.⁶⁶

Stewart did his best to respect the dissenter background of most people in the region. For example, he asked Bishop Mountain in 1810 if he could accommodate the wishes of a "respectable man" who wished to be baptized by immersion. Stewart explained that "the errors of the Baptists even on points of the first importance I often find troublesome with persons not belonging to that Sect".⁶⁷ The less flexible Mountain replied that baptism must be performed in the church and at the font only. The man in question "either means to be bonâ fide a member of the C. of E., or he does not. If he does not, there can be no reason why he sh^d receive baptism from one of its ministers; if he does, & thinks himself already wiser than his teachers, he can not be in a fit frame of mind to be received into that church."⁶⁸ Stewart also reported that it was sometimes impossible to find three suitable sponsors for a baptism because, he said, "The promises required of Sponsors are

64 *Ibid.* George J. Mountain had quite a different opinion of the singing at Caldwell's Manor (Noyan), West of Missisquoi Bay, and at Philipsburg. Little, ed., "The Journal", p. 106.

65 Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, p. 19.

66 QDA, D7, C. Stewart to Dr. Morice, St. Armand, November 5, 1808; May 1, 1810; November 1, 1810; C. Stewart to Bishop Mountain, St. Armand, October 1, 1810; QDA D8, C. Stewart to Dr. Morice, St. Armand, November 1, 1811; Hawkins, *Annals of the Diocese of Quebec*, p. 48; Stuart, "Episcopate", p. 26; Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, pp. 20–21.

67 QDA, B1, 75, C. Stewart to Bishop Mountain, St. Armand, November 21, 1810.

68 QDA, B1, 80, Bishop Quebec to C. Stewart, Quebec, December 6 [1810].

generally regarded here in a very difficult point of view.” Reasoning that the “Primitive Church” had allowed the use of parents as godparents, and that the Anglican Rubric did not exclude them, Stewart had resorted to this contingency in some cases.⁶⁹ Bishop Mountain replied tersely that the twenty-ninth Canon expressly forbade people from acting as baptismal sponsors for their own children,⁷⁰ but this practice became commonplace throughout the region. Persistent popular resistance to the requirements of Anglican baptism (seen by the Puritans as a popish superstition),⁷¹ as well as other church formalities, suggests that Yankee individualism remained strongly resistant to communal-oriented ritualism.

The loyalty of most of the local American-born settlers during the War of 1812 confirmed Stewart’s warm feelings towards them, however. In a pamphlet published in 1815 to encourage the government to develop the region, he stated that it “must and will be settled chiefly by persons emigrating from the United States”. Stewart added, “In many respects they make the best settlers in a new country; and the most certain way of making them, and all men, good subjects, is, taking care to promote the welfare and prosperity of the country they live in. This is chiefly to be done by making laws and regulations calculated to maintain industry, morality, and religion among the inhabitants.”⁷² Stewart, nevertheless, warned that the real “evils which are to be dreaded, and of which there are some instances in this part of the country, are the spread of enthusiasm and fanaticism among the people, and their being led by false and ignorant teachers into many errors and irregularities in their lives and conversation”. It was crucial, therefore, that a watchful eye remain on that “noble institution”, the clergy reserves, which would provide considerable revenues as settlement of the region progressed.⁷³

Stewart was not content to wait that long, however, for, during the same year in which he published his pamphlet, he embarked on a fund-raising mission in England. Taking over his duties was the recently ordained Scot, James Reid. The detailed advice Stewart subsequently sent Reid concerning the communicants illustrates his careful attention to pastoral work:

Old Mr. Strike has been negligent, but I sh^d hope he will improve, & be fit if duly exhorted. Young Mrs. Wehr sh^d be counselled to be watchful and diligent, also Jo Smith & R.... Duncan has drawn back, but perhaps is recoverable. Mrs Varney, I told you, is not acceptable, at present. Miss Su Stewart, you will remember, sh^d be examined. Exhort D^f May, Mrs Moul & Mrs Yates, Hum-

69 QDA, B1, 75, C. Stewart to Bishop Mountain, St. Armand, November 21, 1810.

70 QDA, B1, 80, Bishop Quebec to C. Stewart, Quebec, December 6 [1810].

71 Edward H. Tebenhoff, “Tacit Rules and Hidden Family Structures: Naming Practices and Godparentage in Schenectady, New York, 1680–1800”, *Journal of Social History*, vol. 18 (1984–1985), p. 575.

72 Charles Stewart, *A Short View of the Present State of the Eastern Townships ... With Hints For Their Improvement* (Montreal, 1815; reprinted London: J. Hatchard, 1817), pp. 9–10.

73 *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

phreys — his Wife & her Sister to exercise private Devotions, etc. The following Young People particularly attend to — Vanderwaters, all Rosses & Aitkens' Family — Wehr's & Jovⁿ Rychard's Daughters — Fittermores — Millers — Russells — & my Godchildren — as far as you can.

Stewart also included a list of 30 books that he commonly lent out.⁷⁴ A week later, before his ship had sailed from Quebec, Stewart added: "Write to me often, & never think that I shall mind the expense of Postage — *quite the contrary* — & do not think it necessary to be exact about your sentences, compositions, hand-writing, etc. for I wish you to write much."⁷⁵ Clearly, then, Stewart was not almost exclusively interested in fostering local elites, as has recently been claimed.⁷⁶

While in England, where he received an honorary doctorate from Oxford, Stewart took advantage of his powerful connections to launch a very successful public subscription campaign for the construction of churches throughout the Eastern Townships.⁷⁷ The tactic of erecting a physical structure even before missionaries had been assigned to a parish reflected the Anglican belief that public worship should take place in a sanctified space. But it also resulted from the SPG's policy of providing £200 sterling a year for a missionary to any place that built a church.⁷⁸ Noting that there were 20,000 Protestants in the region bordering the United States, but no churches except in St. Armand, Stewart's public circular declared: "In the early stages of society, in a newly settled country, it is of the first importance to introduce sound religion, and to afford to all classes an opportunity of worshipping God in public; by which vice and infidelity are checked, and habits of piety, morality, and industry are promoted." The people were willing to build churches, but unable to do so without financial assistance. Neglecting to mention that relatively few of the settlers were Episcopalians (or even that they were Americans),⁷⁹ Stewart excused the lack of Anglican churches in the region:

When it is considered that twenty five years ago the greater part of this country was an uninhabited wilderness: that all the settlers in it were either labourers or poor farmers: that it was necessary to build houses for themselves, and barns for their stock and grain: that roads were to be made, and schools erected, and

74 QDA, Reid Collection of Bishop Stewart's Letters (1812–1835) [hereafter Reid Collection], C. Stewart to J. Reid, Steamboat, River St. Lawrence, July 26 [1815].

75 QDA, Reid Collection, C. Stewart to J. Reid, Que., August 1, 1815.

76 Gendron *et al.*, *Histoire du Piémont*, p. 110.

77 QDA, G8, Travelling Missionaries, C. Stewart to Bishop, London, July 13, 1816; D8, C. Stewart to Earl Bathurst, Davies St., July 24, 1816.

78 Stuart, "Episcopate", p. 33.

79 James Reid wrote in 1839 that there were very few British settlers in the parish, and "they are either like Gallio [Galileo?], or sectaries". MDA, Reid Papers, J. Reid to Bishop of Quebec, St. Armand, February 18, 1839.

all this without the least assistance from any public fund, it cannot be a matter of surprise that there are scarcely any churches; and that in order to encourage the erection of them some foreign aid should be required.⁸⁰

Stewart's fund reached £2,547 by 1820, by which time it had supported the construction of six churches in the Eastern Townships.⁸¹ It was also extended to Upper Canada, which remained within the Diocese of Quebec until 1839. Claiming that he had contributed £1,000 of his own money for churches in Lower Canada alone, Stewart petitioned the Colonial Office for a grant of land as compensation, and received 2,000 acres in Shefford Township in 1821.⁸² He went on to establish a second church-building fund which raised the impressive sum of £2,441.⁸³

Because Stewart never returned to Frelighsburg, James Reid became the permanent incumbent. Raised a Presbyterian, Reid had been converted by a lay missionary associated with the Congregationalist Haldane brothers. In return for his training in their Edinburgh seminary, Reid agreed to go to Upper Canada as a missionary in 1810, but here he had felt abandoned because there already was a Presbyterian minister in the Glengarry Scots settlement. Due to the influence of the Anglican Reverend John Strachan of Cornwall, himself a former Presbyterian, the disgruntled Reid was appointed to the Royal Institution school in St. Armand in 1812.⁸⁴ In supporting Reid's ordination into the Church of England, Stewart described him as "a pious & a sensible man", as well as "a modest man" who "admires our Liturgy & subscribes to the Thirty-Nine Articles". Strachan added that, while Reid "entertains a calvinistic view

80 [Charles Stewart], "The Church of England in Canada", London, June 24, 1816, pp. 1–2. Copy found in QDA, G8, Travelling Missionaries.

81 Stuart, "Episcopate", pp. 45–48; Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, p. 37; QDA, D8, "Year 1820. Extract from S.P.G. Reports, Pages 101–36, The Hon. and Rev. Dr Stewart's Report submitted to the Board at the Meeting of the Society, December 15th, 1820"; QDA, D9, J. Quebec to Mr. Hamilton, Belmont, August 15, 1821. Stewart reported that the fund was nearly exhausted in November 1821. QDA, Mountain Papers, vol. 80, p. 128, C. Stewart to Archdeacon Quebec, Hatley, November 7, 1821. On its distribution, see vol. 81, p. 49.

82 QDA, D9, C. Stewart to Henry Goulburn, London, April 27, 1821; D9, folder 90, C. Stewart to Henry Goulburn, Orton near Peterbro', June 25, 1821. Stewart sold 755 acres to the British American Land Company for £124 in 1835–1836. Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, p. 45, n. 15. Stewart's plea for funds was essentially reprinted in 1823, but with an additional reference to the British immigrants who had been arriving in the Canadas since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. QDA, G8, "The Church in Canada", p. 1. Stewart's fund ultimately contributed to the construction of 24 churches. Stuart, "Episcopate", p. 209.

83 This fund produced gifts of up to £100 to 46 churches and loans to two others. Millman, *The Life of the Right Reverend*, p. 142.

84 M. E. Reisner, ed., *The Diary of a Country Clergyman, 1848–1851: James Reid* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), pp. lviii–lxv; H. D. MacDermid, "The Rev. James Reid", in *Rovers, Rebels, and Royalists, Missisquoi Historical Society Reports*, vol. 18 (1984), pp. 104–110.

of them, at the same time he is averse to meddling with disputed points, or infringing on the free-agency of Man".⁸⁵

When Stewart turned St. Armand over to Reid in 1815, its two parishes were still growing slowly but steadily, for he reported 64 communicants in the Trinity church and 54 in St. Paul's.⁸⁶ The following year, Reid filed a parish report which stated that the population was 2,057, of whom there were 878 Anglicans, 559 Baptists, 322 Methodists, 254 Presbyterians, and 42 "Canadian Papists".⁸⁷ During the next four years, the Church of England grew at nearly the same rate as the other denominations combined, for in 1820 Reid reported that the number of Anglicans had increased by 201 and the number of dissenters by 249.⁸⁸ The growth rate slowed in the 1820s, and in 1827 Reid complained, "Baptist sentiments, the exertion of Methodist preachers, and the carelessness of many of the Inhabitants about all religion, are the principle obstacles to a coalition with the Church of England."⁸⁹

Like Cotton, Reid placed his hopes largely with the second generation. He had established a Sunday school in 1823, "conducted purely on the national system, by a person who understands it well".⁹⁰ Within a year it had 95 scholars and an average attendance of 54. The classes clearly served a serious pedagogical function, as Reid reported that "the time is occupied, after commencing by prayer, in reading, spelling, reciting portions of scripture, and catechizing". Reid measured productivity carefully, reporting that not only had the 46 students memorized the Catechism, but (collectively) "982 Collects from the Book of Common Prayer, 1360 Barrow's questions, 204 Chief Truths of the Christian Religion, and 26,535 verses of the Scriptures have been recited." Children were "classed according to their progress", and, needless to say, "every moment is well occupied".⁹¹

Upon Reid's strong urging, Bishop Mountain finally recommended that the SPG provide the western part of St. Armand with its own pastor in 1823, but this did not take place until 1826, apparently because the rectory had not been completed.⁹² The English-born Richard Whitwell was then transferred from Shefford Township, and a little over a year later he reported that, of the 1,964 inhabitants within range of his labours, 796 attended his preaching, excluding children under the age of eight. There were 520 adherents — again

85 QDA, D8, C. Stewart to Bishop of Quebec, St. Armand, June 14, 1813.

86 QDA, D8, C. Stewart to Dr. Morice, St. Armand, July 13, 1815.

87 The report is undated, but the year can be identified from the fact that the 1820 report refers to it as four years earlier.

88 MDA, Parish Reports, Frelighsburg, Report of St. Armand and addendum, October 2, 1820.

89 QDA, B1, 96, printed report for St. Armand East, November 15, 1827.

90 MDA, G. J. Mountain Correspondence, J. Reid to G. J. Mountain, St. Armand, November 29, 1823.

91 QDA, *Annual Report of the Quebec Diocesan Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, 1824–1825, p. 16.

92 QDA, G. J. Mountain Papers, G. J. Mountain to J. Reid, Quebec, April 26 and July 29, 1823; MDA, RG 1.3, Jacob Mountain Papers, Petition to Bishop of Quebec, Church wardens and congregation of St. Paul's [1826].

excluding children — and 81 communicants, the largest number in the region. Whitwell had also ascertained that 83 people in the parish were not attached to any denomination, but he felt the true number was much higher. The Anglican Church dominated St. Armand West, for there were only 119 Methodists, 97 Roman Catholics, 21 Baptists, 10 Congregationalists, and three Presbyterians. Through an interpreter, Whitwell had convinced three or four very elderly Lutherans (who were clearly German Loyalist pioneers) to take communion in the Anglican church the following Easter. In addition to his services in St. Paul's, Whitwell preached at five private houses and school houses within a twelve-mile radius.⁹³

A year later, Whitwell added two new school houses to his circuit, including one in Stanbridge Township, and reported that they attracted the largest congregations that assembled outside the church itself.⁹⁴ In 1830, however, he reported that he had found that “too widely distributed exertions, & the consequent length of time, which necessarily elapsed between the periods of visiting each of the several congregations I had established, was not so favorable to the permanency of good impressions already produced on the minds of the people”. He had therefore reduced the number of outposts to the two mentioned in the previous report, which were most distant from the Philipsburg church. Whitwell claimed that this strategy had proven successful, with four individuals having been “awakened ... to a sense of their sin and danger”, though the number of communicants he reported had declined to 42.⁹⁵ Whitwell was clearly an evangelical by inclination, and he wrote in 1828, “The piety & prosperity of the Church correspond, in the main, with the piety & well-directed zeal of the Clergy. Without this, there may be, from pecuniary facilities, an outward attachment to the Church, but there cannot be an attachment which will contribute to the real interests of our Zion.”⁹⁶

In 1831 the provincial census would record that there were 1,620 Anglicans in the combined parishes of St. Armand, which was 60 per cent of the Protestant population. In sharp contrast to the townships further east and north, very few individuals declared no religious affiliation in St. Armand or Dunham, but, judging from the numbers who attended weekly services, many had a rather loose affiliation with the Church of England. They may have relied on it largely for baptisms, marriages, and burials in the era before the clergy of other denominations could legally perform these services, though the Wesleyan Methodists had gained this right in 1829, and others

93 QDA, B13, 54, St. Armand West Report, January 16, 1828; NA, SPG Papers (Reel A 204), folio 378, no. 114, Richard Whitwell to Rev. Sir, Missiskoui Bay, January 24, 1828.

94 NA, SPG Papers (Reel A 204), folio 378, no. 115, Richard Whitwell to Rev. Anthony Hamilton, Philipsburg, December 31, 1828.

95 NA, SPG Papers (Reel A 204), folio 378, no. 116, Richard Whitwell to Rev. Anthony Hamilton, Philipsburg, January 6, 1830.

96 NA, SPG Papers (Reel A 204), folio 378, no. 114, Richard Whitwell to Rev. Sir, Missiskoui Bay, January 24, 1828.

would soon follow.⁹⁷ James Reid would become discouraged many times during the following years, and the number of Anglicans in St. Armand would decline to 1,099 in 1852, partly as a result of emigration and partly because of more active competition from evangelical preachers, but the Anglicans remained the largest denomination in the two parishes.

Conclusion

While S. D. Clark and others have been led by the frontier thesis to assume that the Church of England was incapable of adapting to the new Canadian settlements, the Anglican hierarchy argued that the frontier, where denominational identity tended to fade, was ideally suited to a well-organized, state-supported missionary effort. George J. Mountain wrote in 1821: “There never was a population more malleable, ... in terms of Religion than the mass of the Protestant population in the more nearby settled parts of this Diocese. They are very generally speaking, loose and disengaged from any strong religious preferences ... and ready to close with any overtures from Protestant bodies which are advantageously recommended and supported.”⁹⁸ This was admittedly wishful thinking on Mountain’s part, but the 1831 census indeed revealed that a very large ratio of the Eastern Townships population (37 per cent) failed to identify with any religious denomination.

Furthermore, those recorded as belonging to the Church of England were more numerous than all the other Protestant churches combined, and it would remain, marginally, the largest Protestant denomination in 1852. Nor was the Anglican strength confined largely to urban and British-settled areas, as Jean-Pierre Kesteman has assumed,⁹⁹ for American-settled St. Armand, Dunham, and Stanbridge were early Anglican strongholds, even if membership began to slip as their incumbents aged. Finally, despite the common assumption that the Church of England appealed largely to those of higher socio-economic status, computer-assisted analysis of the agricultural schedules for eleven townships enumerated in the 1831 manuscript census revealed relatively little difference in land holdings, livestock, and agricultural production between the various Protestant denominations. The Baptists were clearly the most affluent group, while the Anglican households were only marginally higher than the overall mean in every economic variable examined.¹⁰⁰

While it appears that a considerable number who reported themselves to be Anglicans were not recognized as adherents by the local clergy, much less

97 Noël, *Competing For Souls*, 145–147.

98 QDA, Unbound Manuscripts, case 1, folder 8, G. J. Mountain 1759–1821, “Sketch of the Church of England in Canada” by the Ven. G. J. Mountain, 1821, p. 17.

99 Jean-Pierre Kesteman, “Au pays des ‘sectes’. La difficile percée de l’anglicanisme dans le comté de Stanstead au XIX^e siècle”, SCHEC, *Études d’histoire religieuses*, vol. 66 (2000), pp. 9–28.

100 The townships were Stanbridge, Shefford, Brome, St. Armand, Durham, Ascot, Orford, Inverness, Ireland, Leeds, and Halifax; the variables (restricted to those occupying at least ten acres) were land owned, land improved, wheat, oats, potatoes, cattle, horses, sheep, and hogs. For further details, see J. I. Little, *Borderland Religion: The Emergence of an English-Canadian Identity, 1792–1852* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

as confirmed members of the church,¹⁰¹ the fact that they did not gravitate to more evangelical sects was a victory of sorts for the Church of England and the imperial government. Much of the Anglican Church's success was due to the practical strategy it had applied to the region. Central to that strategy was the payment of generous salaries to its missionaries and the provision of most of the funding for the construction of local churches. These colonializing tactics were interpreted as simple bribery by members of other denominations, but the policy of the Anglican Church was clearly that exposure to its liturgy and its doctrines would make a profound impact on a population that had been prejudiced against all things British and formally ritualistic. Thus the 1824–1825 report of the SPCK expressed confidence that the people of the Eastern Townships, “having arrived ... at some settled notions on the subject of Religion, may gradually be brought within the fold of the establishment, and the Church of God be built up, in all its beauty, in the desert places of the wilderness”.¹⁰²

While the settlement frontier may have tended to wear away at Anglican formalism, the episcopacy never lost sight of the Church's Catholicism, even prior to the rise of the Oxford Movement in the early 1830s.¹⁰³ Stating in 1829 that Anglican ministers needed “to combine the wisdom of the Serpent with the innocence of the dove”, Archdeacon Mountain admitted that they might occasionally have “to do what is unusual, if not irregular”, but he insisted that “any too free & frequent deviation from our rules & forms” would only reinforce the objections to them.¹⁰⁴ Concerning baptism, for example, Mountain lamented that to find a proper sponsor is “a great stumbling block with many in these countries, in our requisites for the administration of baptisms, & it must be confessed, often a just scandal from the careless manner in which it is undertaken”.¹⁰⁵

It is tempting to assume that forms and rituals were a deterrent, if anything, to the Anglican Church's expansion, particularly in the early years of the settlement frontier.¹⁰⁶ As David Cressy has observed of Post-Reformation England, however, “Routine religious observances — the weekly and seasonal round of services and the life-cycle offices of baptisms, weddings and

101 The clergy reports for 1845 suggest that there were approximately 4,500 adherents in the region's 18 parishes, which was less than a third of the 15,109 residents of the Eastern Townships who were reported to be Anglicans in the 1852 census. It is not clear, however, whether children who had not been confirmed were consistently included among the adherents.

102 QDA, *Annual Report of the Quebec Diocesan Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*, 1824–1825, pp. 17–18.

103 On this theme, see Fahey, *In His Name*, chap. 8; Christopher Headon, “Developments in Canadian Anglican Worship in Eastern and Central Canada, 1840–1868”, *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, vol. 18 (1975), pp. 26–37; Richard W. Vaudry, *Anglicans and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

104 Quoted in Little, ed., “The Journal”, p. 99.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 118, n. 62.

106 See Clark, *Church and Sect*, p. 120.

funerals — served as primary points of contact between family and community, centre and periphery, and between men or women and God.”¹⁰⁷ Jon Butler argues, similarly, that in the American colonies “The *Book of Common Prayer* furnished stability amid the confusion engendered by new landscapes, new settlements, new economies, new elites, new labor, and new forms of government.”¹⁰⁸ The most obvious cause for resistance in the Eastern Townships to some of the Anglican rituals — apart from persistent Yankee individualism — is simply that they represented a major move away from the Puritan and evangelical beliefs and practices with which most of the settlers from New England had been familiar.

The Anglican strategy was a long-term one, based not only on establishing a solid footing in each parish but also on molding the minds of future generations. From this perspective, the Reverends Cotton, Stewart, Reid, and Whitwell were strictly within the Church’s mainstream, for Walsh and Taylor state that in England most Anglican clergy “saw themselves first and foremost not as priestly mediators between God and man, dispensing the sacraments, but as pastoral educators, spiritual and moral teachers and guides. ...In this respect there was little difference between Evangelicals and their brethren.”¹⁰⁹ On his tours throughout the Townships, even the conservatively inclined George Mountain did more than emphasize the observance of religious holidays, proper ecclesiastical dress, and conformity to ordinances such as the institution of sponsors (godparents) and the churching of women. He also stressed the importance of Sunday schools, catechizing, family devotion, pastoral visits, and preaching at outposts.¹¹⁰ Finally, disdainful as the Anglican hierarchy may have been towards the religious enthusiasm displayed by their more evangelical rivals, the bishops insisted on the need for zealous missionaries. While inspecting the Eastern Townships parishes in 1829, George Mountain wrote that the clergy must be “exemplary in their conduct & faithful in dealing out the breath of life; awake themselves to the awful and glorious truths of the Gospel & deeply concerned to excite the same regard for them in others”.¹¹¹ Charles Cotton may have been the stereotypical Anglican curate, with his lack of evangelical zeal and his concern for external appearances and comforts, but Clark’s sweeping statement about the indolence and immorality of the Anglican missionaries (based largely on the comments of their Methodist rivals) is far from fair.¹¹²

107 David Cressy, “Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England”, *Past and Present*, no. 141 (1993), p. 106.

108 Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 128.

109 John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, “Introduction”, in John Walsh, Colin Hayden, and Stephen Taylor, eds, *The Church of England c.1689–c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 14.

110 These are the topics discussed in Mountain’s 1829 journal. Little, ed., “The Journal”, p. 115, n. 33.

111 Quoted in Little, ed., “The Journal”, p. 114, n. 22.

112 Clark, *Church and Sect*, pp. 117–118.

Clark also wrote that the Anglican Church was “an outside body that lacked any basis of support in the mores and sentiments of the Canadian frontier population”.¹¹³ One must obviously be careful not to exaggerate Anglican domination over the Eastern Townships, or the resulting cultural transformation. Many who claimed to be members of the Church of England when the census enumerators called on them rarely attended Sunday services. But, due also to the activities of the conservative British Wesleyan missionaries, the religious identity of the largely American-origin people of this borderland region became markedly different from that of their radically sectarian cousins and neighbours on the other side of the forty-ninth parallel, where, according to Nathan Hatch, the post-Revolutionary era was characterized by a popular quest for religious freedom.¹¹⁴ In short, the British-backed religion of order dominated over the religion of dissent during the early settlement period of the Eastern Townships. The post-frontier era of the 1830s and early 1840s would bring the greatest challenge to that dominance simply because American missionary societies and revivalist sects began to take a more active interest in the region. By then, however, the Church of England was well entrenched, here as in Upper Canada. Historians seeking to explain the persistent popularity of British imperialism, the reification of peace, order, and good government, and the weakness of patriotic religious fundamentalism in this country might begin by acknowledging the influence of the Church of England during its formative years.¹¹⁵

113 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

114 Nathan O. Hatch, “In Pursuit of Religious Freedom: Church, State, and People in the New Republic”, in Jack P. Greene, ed., *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits* (New York: New York University Press, 1987).

115 On this theme, see S. F. Wise, “God’s Peculiar Peoples”, in W. L. Morton, ed., *The Shield of Achilles: Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968).