

Relations between the French, Irish and Scottish Clergy in the Maritime Provinces, 1774 - 1836

by Mason WADE, M.A., Ph.D.
Professor, Department of History, University of Western Ontario

Acadia omnis in tres partes divisa est. Many, perhaps, know only one side of its triangular story. It has been my concern for the last seventeen years to study the interaction in the Maritimes between the Acadian, the Loyalists (pre-, true, and late), and the early British immigrants.¹

The first permanent missionary in Acadia after the expulsion of the Acadians which began in 1755 and continued until 1764 was the Abbé Joseph-Mathurin Bourg, one of four young Acadian refugees in France trained for the priesthood at Saint-Malo, thanks to the Abbé de l'Île-Dieu. Bourg was ordained at Quebec by Bishop Briand in 1772, and in the following year he was given charge of the missions of Acadia, Gaspé, and the North Shore of New Brunswick, previously visited by the Abbé Bailly de Messein in 1769. Bourg made his headquarters at Tracadie (Carleton) on the Gaspé coast, but in 1774 he visited the Acadians of the Saint John Valley, the North Shore, and Baie Sainte-Marie. Named vicar-general for all Acadia in 1774, he proved staunchly loyal to the Crown, helping to keep the Maliceets of the Saint John Valley in the British interest during the American Revolution, and duly reporting to the justices of the peace that one "joseph terriot" had described them as "justices of the devil."² Briefly resident in Halifax at the suggestion of his bishop in 1785, the year which saw the building of the first Catholic church there, the Abbé Bourg retired to Gaspé after

¹ This paper is largely based upon the recently made available correspondence of the Bishops of Quebec with their Acadian missionaries, and the correspondence of Bishops Angus B. MacEachern of Charlottetown and William Fraser of Halifax with the rectors of the Scots College in Rome, as well as the Archives acadiennes de Moncton and the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. For access to these valuable materials I am much indebted to the Abbé Armand Gagné, Archiviste, Archives de l'Archidiocèse de Québec; Rev. Père Anselme Chiasson, Archives acadiennes, Université de Moncton; and Father Angus Anthony Johnston, diocesan historian of the Diocese of Antigonish. All three encouraged a layman to venture into a field of research which has too long been regarded as none of the laity's business, although in Acadia as in Quebec it is essential for the writing of social and cultural history.

² New Brunswick Museum: Hazen and White Papers, Vol. 20, p. 83, no. 4, Bourg-Justices of the Peace, 3 July 1781.

installing Father James Jones, newly arrived from Ireland, as Halifax's first pastor.

A Breton priest, the Abbé Thomas-François Le Roux, also came to the Magdalen Islands in 1774 and made missionary visits to Cape Breton and St. John's Island (P.E.I.) until 1782, when he became curé of Memramcook, where many Acadians returning from exile had settled. With the Bishop of Quebec shorthanded for priests and the supply from France cut off, the Acadians, except in the Chaleur Bay region, were thereafter generally served by Irish and Scottish clergy, with the latter taking the chief role after the first major Scottish immigration in the 1790s to P.E.I., the Northumberland shore, and Cape Breton. The desire of the Saint John Valley Acadians for French priests was an important factor in their migration to Madawaska and the North Shore after the arrival of the Loyalists in 1783-4. By 1790 it was already clear that northern New Brunswick was to be largely French, and southern New Brunswick English.

The tide of immigration to the Maritimes from the British Isles after 1815 is much less well documented than that of the returning Acadians, the pre-Loyalist New Englanders, and the Loyalists. It was not an organized migration, sponsored by government or individual promoters who have left records, and the colonial authorities kept poor if any records of the arrivals, whose departures from Britain also frequently went officially unnoticed. J. S. Martell, in his careful study of the subject based upon shipping notes in the Nova Scotian newspapers as well as the faulty Customs Returns, estimates the arrival in that province between 1815 and 1838 of 21,833 Scots, 12,949 Irish, and 2,120 English.³ The Scots overwhelmingly predominated among the arrivals at Sydney and Pictou, while the Irish similarly predominated at Halifax. In addition to immigration at these three main ports of entry, record was also found of the arrival at outports of 1,107 Scots, 538 Irish, and 39 English. The Irish total includes 1,769 from Newfoundland, nearly half of whom came in 1816 and 1817 when hard times afflicted those who had arrived there from Ireland in 1814 and 1815. Many of them made both Newfoundland and Nova Scotia mere way-stations in their migration to the United States, and may have been included in the considerable number of emigrants from Halifax to American ports in 1817 and 1818.⁴ Far fewer of the Scots moved on to the States, at least until the 1830s, when land had to be purchased from the government and the newcomers lacked the means to do so. The result of this great influx was the swelling of the population of Pictou County from 8,737 in 1817 to 21,449 in 1838, while that of Cape Breton grew from 7-8,000 in 1817 to 38,000 in the latter year.⁵ Immigration since 1815 was responsible for almost a quarter of the total population of Nova Scotia in 1838.

All the Atlantic provinces made great gains in population in the years after

³ J. S. MARTELL, *Immigration to and Emigration from Nova Scotia, 1815-1838* (Pub. No. 6, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1942).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 111. Emigrants totaled 346 and 370 in these years, figures not surpassed until 1835 and 1836 when Irish emigration once more peaked.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

1815 as a result of the influx of British immigrants, the majority of whom were Scottish and Irish Catholics. Nova Scotia showed a 50% increase between 1817 and 1824; Prince Edward Island a 20% increase between 1822 and 1830; Newfoundland trebled her population between 1804 and 1827; and New Brunswick had 74,000 people by 1824, as compared to 20,000 in 1803.⁶ The original enthusiasm for encouraging immigration waned quickly as the influx increased. In 1818 the Halifax Council informed the governor of Newfoundland that it could no longer afford to care for the overflow of Irish immigrants from that colony. By June 1824 the lawyer and novelist Thomas Chandler Haliburton was writing to his friend Judge Peleg Wiswall of Annapolis:

Upon the subject of Immigration I agree perfectly with you that we are ourselves too poor to maintain or receive the paupers of other Countries and that Low Irish – disbanded soldiers – hungry adventurers, and Chesapeake Blacks are not the class of emigrants we want, and that so far from courting their approach to our shores, we have already many who could well be spared from among us.⁷

From this time on, Nova Scotia generally opposed increasingly frequent British proposals to settle the “Redundant Population of the Parent Kingdom”⁸ on its lands. The disease brought by many of the immigrants hardened the opposition to their coming. The Assembly adopted drastic penalties for shipmasters whose passengers became public charges, as well as a tax on immigrants. The lack of preparation for immigrants in the early stages of the movement and the later hostility toward them caused many of them to move on to the United States when they found in the Maritimes much unemployment, low wages, poor soil, and expensive land grant procedures. Few of them felt any great desire to remain under the British flag; as one remarked: “It was all America to us.”

The story was much the same in New Brunswick, though this province received an immigration of individuals rather than the clan groups which flocked to P.E.I. and Nova Scotia. The newcomers here were mostly Lowland Scots and Irish, who obtained cheap passage in timber ships returning in ballast from Britain to Saint John, Richibucto, and Miramichi. The government was unable to organize any plans for the settlement of immigrants, who consequently tended to move on to the States. One of the few private organizations to concern itself with them was the Fredericton Emigrant Society, headed by two eminent Loyalist judges, Saunders and Bliss. Its illuminating minutes noted in 1820:

⁶ W. S. MACNUTT, *Atlantic Provinces*, 159, 118.

⁷ PANS, Wiswall Papers, Folder 2, Haliburton-Wiswall, Annapolis Royal, 7 June 1824. The Chesapeake Blacks were Negroes brought back to Halifax by the British expedition against Washington in 1814.

⁸ PANS, 234, Doe. 39, Surveyor-General Morris; cited Martell, 22.

The first week of this month, all the Welshmen [of the Cardigan settlement] came to town, asking for work and saying that unless relieved they must starve.

They were immediately employed to cut seven cords of wood; however, they proved sluggish, avaricious, and petulant.

The Irish families for the most part have been furnished with labour, and proved themselves industrious.⁹

The minutes further note:

The Welsh, who were the first cause of the Institution, prove a beggarly, helpless, inert set; and have abused the Charity.

There appears to be no evidence, except in the emigration statistics, as to the views of the objects of the Society's benevolence. Immigration to New Brunswick between 1825 and 1835, largely Irish, averaged 5-6,000 annually, with 2,500 departures annually. After half a century of immigration the 1851 census found in New Brunswick 28,776 Irish, 4,855 Scots, 3,907 English, and 1,344 "foreign" (largely Americans). Though the Irish made up 71.1% of the immigrants, they constituted only 14% of the population in 1851. Obviously many of them had moved on to Boston and New York, with the gypsiboats a favorite means of cheap transportation. But enough stayed to make Saint John as Irish a stronghold in New Brunswick as Halifax was in Nova Scotia.

The correspondence of the Bishop of Quebec from the Maritime missionaries is full of illustrations of the incompatibility of the British immigrants with one another and with the early French-speaking missionaries, who increasingly were supplemented with English-speaking and Gaelic-speaking priests to meet the needs and wishes of the newcomers. There are also echoes of the evangelical agitation of the New Lights which swept the frontier districts from 1784 to 1800, and of the persistent anti-Catholic prejudice of some Britishers and New Englanders. Father James Jones, an Irish Capuchin, the first priest in Nova Scotia whose mother-tongue was English, arrived in 1785 in response to the petitions of the Irish Catholics of Halifax. He was warmly welcomed by the Abbé Bourg. Bourg suggested to Bishop D'Esglis that Jones should be put in charge of the English-speaking missionaries of the region, since "it would be absolutely necessary to have some English and Irish priests."¹⁰ The Bishop acted upon this suggestion, and named Jones superior of the missions in Nova Scotia, while Bourg made his headquarters subsequently in the Chaleur Bay region.

Father Jones gave an account of his problems in a letter to his bishop in 1787:

⁹ University of New Brunswick Archives: Fredericton Emigrant Society, Minutes of meetings to 1833.

¹⁰ Rev. A. A. JOHNSTON, *A History of the Catholic church in Eastern Nova Scotia*, I, 113-4.

As to the mission of cape Breton it is much more regular than this because the Roman Catholic congregation there is composed of french and Indians, who are accustomed to rule and order since the days of the immortal Maillard. Here is quite the reverse, for since the peace this Province is filled with men of all nations and religions, the greater part of the Irish are bred to the fisheries and not accustomed to any rule for years back. Moreover there are many protestant ministers dispersed through this Province, at the expense of the old Country, and our people familiarized to them, it renders almost impossible to bring about a change.¹¹

Father Jones also reported that the Loyalists and veterans were not paying their “dues” like the Acadians of Cumberland and Arichat. He note: “A republican spirit prevails much, nor in fact can it be otherwise, it is the necessary consequence of the tenets the greater number possess.” He suggested that the Bishop should tell the governor that “a few Catholic missionaries would render more real service to these Provinces (I speak in the Political line) than any other.”¹² He also emphasized that preaching must be in the English tongue at Halifax, “for no other will answer [at] this place.” He pointed out, “depend upon it that there is no part of the globe (new England excepted) where prejudices run higher than this province. The Scotch calvinist on the one hand and the different sectaries of America on the other.”¹³ And while Jones was reporting the obdurate unilingualism and prejudices of Halifax, the Acadian inhabitants of Baie Sainte-Marie, headed by militia Captain Pierre “Douscet,” were petitioning for a resident priest to teach their children, who must “possède à fonds La Langue françois.”¹⁴ Decidedly the Bishop of Quebec and his Superior of the Nova Scotian missions were confronted with linguistic problems.

Assistance with the other major element in the Maritime melting pot came in the person of Father Angus B. MacEachern, who arrived on St. John’s Island (P.E.I.) with 250 Highlanders in the fall of 1790. Happily he spoke Gaelic, “a language very difficult for strangers,” as Jones noted, and so could serve this new contingent, 50 other Scotch families on the Island, 20 at Merigomish, 20 at Miramichi, and the same number at Pictou.¹⁵ Father Thomas Power, an Irish priest who had studied in Paris and was bilingual, was given charge of the Acadians of Chéticamp and Tracadie. This sort of cross-posting arrangement rarely worked out well in either Nova Scotia or New Brunswick, for the Acadians wanted Canadian or French priests. But in a letter of guidance to Father Jones when he was

¹¹ Archives de l’Archidiocèse de Québec: Série 312CN 1, n° 6, Nouvelle-Ecosse, I, 5 Jones-Bishop, 23 avril 1787, Halifax.

¹² *Ibid.*, I, 7, Jones-Bishop, 27 avril 1787.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I, 7; I, 12, Jones-Vicar General Gragé, 1788.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 23, Requête, 15 septembre 1790.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 25, Jones-Gragé, 5 octobre 1790.

appointed Superior of the Missions, Vicar-General Gravé of Quebec made clear the difficulty in meeting their wishes:

... we can easily understand that evangelical workers are needed in several missions of Nova Scotia which have hitherto had none. But the truth of the matter is that the Diocese of Quebec is not in a position to furnish any by itself. There are barely enough Canadian ecclesiastics to fill the places in the centre of the Diocese. Therefore, there is no help for Nova Scotia except in the zeal of Irish or English priests who may wish to come out and work under your orders If any other French priests should come to Nova Scotia, I ask you to send them to Father Bourg, who has received special orders in their regard

The Acadians established in Nova Scotia must become accustomed to English missionaries since we cannot procure others for them. Sensitiveness on their part in this matter would be out of place, especially as most of them understand and speak English passably well.¹⁶

“La langue gardienne de la foi” was not yet dogma in Quebec. The difficulties that occurred after appeal was made to the Irish bishops for more priests arose from the fact that there were many misfits who answered the call. Like the Irish immigrants in general, a number of clerics went on to the United States after becoming involved in rows with their superiors or their congregations. Some demanded too much of their poverty-stricken congregations; others were quarrelsome; and some took refuge in the bottle. Of one it was noted eloquently: “potenter bibit.” After reading the Bishop of Quebec’s stormy correspondence for these early years, one is inclined to agree with the Abbé J.-E. Morriset, a missionary on the Saint John River: “I am infallibly convinced that these poor savages [the Maliceets] are the best Christians of these places.”

There were, however, some notable exceptions to an all too pervasive picture of parochial squabbles and ethnic conflict. Two should be singled out, for they involved major groups of the population and left enduring marks upon the regions in which they took place, the Acadian colony of Baie Sainte-Marie and the Highland Scottish settlements of eastern Nova Scotia.

The Baie Sainte-Marie region had been visited by the Abbé Bailly de Messein in 1769 and by his successor the Abbé Bourg in 1774, 1781, and 1786. Despite the absence of a resident priest the people had remained devoted to their faith and their traditional ways, and they welcomed their first resident missionary, a wandering French Dominican named Le Dru who arrived in Nova Scotia from the West Indies in 1786. After less than two years, in the spring of 1788, he departed, having raised storms in Cape Breton as well as on the shores of Baie Sainte-Marie. Visits from the Irish Fathers Phelan, Power and Grace in 1789, 1790 and 1791 led the Acadian inhabitants to write to Father Jones, requesting a resident priest who

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, V.G., I, 40, Gravé-Jones, 22 Octobre 1787; quoted Johnston, *Catholic Church*, 1, 128-9.

spoke their language, in which case they would provide for his support. Father Jones then appealed to Bishop Hubert of Quebec, who replied that it was not possible to provide a Canadian priest, since the number of Quebec parishes was increasing and that of priests was declining. Father Jones renewed his request in November 1792, and received a more hopeful answer from Bishop Hubert, who reported the arrival at Quebec of three French emigré priests from London. These were the forerunners of a proposed migration of the French emigré clergy who had been assembled at Winchester in England, by the Bishop de La Marche of Saint-Pol-de-Léon in Brittany. The negotiations continued, but by June 1794 Bishop Hubert hoped for no more than a few priests from this source, instead of the fifty he had expected. It was not until 1799, after the people of Baie Sainte-Marie had petitioned Governor Sir John Wentworth and Bishop Matigny of Boston for a French priest, that their wishes were finally gratified. Bishop La Marche then informed the Bishop of Quebec that he was sending to Halifax “a good and virtuous ecclesiastic, named M. Sigogne.”

Meanwhile there had been two other French-speaking recruits for the Nova Scotian missions in the persons of the Abbés François Lejantel and Jean-Baptiste Allain, who had fled from Saint-Pierre and Miquelon in 1792 rather than take the schismatical oath required by the new revolutionary French authorities. The refugee priests were welcomed by Father Jones, the Governor of Nova Scotia, and the Lieutenant-Governor of Cape Breton. The latter felt “a good French priest at their head would be worth more than two English regiments to keep in order the inhabitants of Arichat, almost all of whom are Acadians, and a few Indians.”¹⁷ The Abbé Lejantel was assigned to Arichat and Tracadie, while the Abbé Allain was given charge of Chéticamp and the Magdalen Islands. Lieutenant-Governor William Macarmick of Cape Breton was at first alarmed about a large migration there of presumably disaffected Acadians from Saint-Pierre and Miquelon in 1793 and 1794 but in the event they never caused any trouble and proved to be peaceable and industrious.¹⁸

The Abbé Lejantel was to serve for twenty-seven years at Arichat, and for fifteen years he was the only resident priest in Cape Breton. Speaking neither English nor Gaelic, he devoted himself to the Acadians and Micmacs, while the Scots and Irish of Cape Breton had to content themselves with visiting missionaries from Pictou and Prince Edward Island until Father William Dollard was appointed in 1816 to care for the Highlanders of the Bras d’Or district and the Irish of the Eastern Shore settlements. Father Dollard was a native of Ireland who had just completed his theological studies at Quebec, and proposed to spend his first winter in Cape Breton with the Scots in order to learn Gaelic. He was clearly optimistic.

No such linguistic problems faced Père Jean-Mandé Sigogne when he came to Baie Sainte-Marie. Born in 1763 and ordained in 1787, he had served as a curate

¹⁷ JOHNSTON, *Catholic Church*, I, 155.

¹⁸ Richard BROWN, *A History of the Island of Cape Breton* (London, 1869), 408: cited Johnston, 155.

in the Diocese of Tours. Refusing to sign the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, he is thought to have fled from France in 1792 and then returned in 1796 when persecution of the clergy had diminished, only to flee again in 1797 when the death penalty was provided for returned emigrés. He found employment in England, first in a woodworking shop and then as a teacher in an Anglican school, acquiring a thorough knowledge of English. He welcomed Bishop de La Marche's offer of a missionary post among the Acadians of western Nova Scotia, made as a result of Father Jones' reiterated requests, both direct and through the bishops of Quebec and Boston. Immediately upon his arrival at Halifax in June 1799, Sigogne took the required oath of allegiance and received a licence from Benning Wentworth, the Secretary of the Province, "to officiate to the Acadian and Irish Roman Catholic Inhabitants of this Province under the protection of His Excellency Sir John Wentworth, Baronet, L.L.D."¹⁹ Governor Wentworth was well disposed to the Acadians, describing them as "among the faithful and happiest subjects of His Majesty"²⁰ when he forwarded to London their petition of 1796 for a French priest.

When he reached Baie Sainte-Marie the new priest found a warm welcome, not only from the flock which had been so long seeking a pastor, but also from the settlement of Loyalist Anglicans on the Sissiboo River, who "regarded him as an angel who came from heaven." They visited him frequently and often attended Sunday Mass. George Taylor, the son of one of these English-speaking friends of Père Sigogne, made it a practice after he became captain of militia to turn up in dress uniform with several of his men on Corpus Christi Day to lend military *éclat* to the ceremonies.²¹ This group of Loyalists at Weymouth, which included Judge Jones, Colonel James Moody, Colonel John Taylor, and Samuel Campbell, was soon swollen by other Loyalists friendly to the Acadians in general and particularly to Père Sigogne, notably Thomas Chandler Haliburton, the novelist and lawyer, and Judge Peleg Wiswall of Annapolis. From these friends Père Sigogne received much help over the years in his efforts to improve the lot of his Acadian parishioners.

Père Sigogne began his ministry by holding an assembly in December 1799 to elect a parish council of six members. These in turn chose two churchwardens (*marguilliers*), one of whom was to be replaced each year. These parochial representatives proved useful in the disputes of the next few years about the location of a badly needed new church. One was completed at Sainte-Marie in 1808, while another at Sainte-Anne's, begun in 1803, was completed that same year. The quarrels about the location of these churches were bitter, since the expanding Acadian settlements were now spread out along the Fundy shore at increasing distances from the old center at Pointe-à-l'Église, where a larger church,

¹⁹ Archives acadiennes de Moncton, Fonds Gaudet, Région Baie Sainte-Marie. Copy of Licence, dated 20 June 1799.

²⁰ *CAR* 1908, 523. Wentworth-King, 21 May 1796.

²¹ AAM, Fonds Gaudet, recollections of Louis J. Bourque (b. 1801).

copied from an English model in Halifax, was built in 1829. Meanwhile chapels had been built at Pomcoup and Metaghen in 1815 and 1817.

Père Sigogne also concerned himself with the material interests of his flock. He had correspondence with Peleg Wiswall, later MPP for Annapolis (1812) and Associate Circuit Judge for the Supreme Court (1816), about a measure limiting the Acadian settlements in Clare to a mile and a quarter from shore:

There will be great inconvenience and disadvantage for the Acadians and their families that do now so much increase, and it makes them so much more uneasy as this restraint would soon prove a particular grievance to them, not only on account of family connexions, but also on account of their Religion, and particularly language, for being so narrowly limited, their number in no long time would oblige them to seek elsewhere for settlement.²²

The Acadians wished the right to settle in the backcountry, as was permitted in other townships. Sigogne was reassured by Wiswall that surveyors were “in this ignorant country (especially) too apt to endeavour to control things which it was never meant to have submitted to their authority and judgement.”²³ In 1811 Surveyor General Charles Morris assured Sigogne that Governor Sir James Prévost was prepared to grant lands to the Acadians of Salmon River “in the same proportions and with every other favorable consideration His Majesty’s Loyal Subjects in this Province can reasonably expect.”²⁴ In this same year Bénédict D’Entremont of Pubnico complained to Deputy Surveyor Alex Morris of the encroachments of the Larkins, who had surveyed and claimed:

many picked pieces of land to the extent of Nine miles on the great lake [Great Pubnico Lake], taking in every part that was good for anything, and where people frequently cut Timbers for Shipbuilding. And from the Lake to the Shore for the distance of four miles on the road not leaving a spot worth possessing. They have also picked the lands from the head of Pubnico river to Pubnico harbour and from there on the Barrington road, in both places to the extent of Six Miles.

By which my sons are under the necessity of taking such lands as the Larkins have refused.²⁵

It is noteworthy that D’Entremont added: “The Kindness I have always received

²² AAM, Gaudet Papers, black scrapbook, Sigogne-[Wiswall], Clare, 27 May 1807.

²³ *Ibid.*, 2, Wiswall-Sigogne, Digby, 25 April 1808.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9, Charles Morris-Sigogne, Halifax, 24 May 1811.

²⁵ AAM, H. P. LeBlanc Papers, 111, B. D’Entremont-[A. Morris], Pubnico, 18 March 1818.

from you emboldens me...” D’Entremont’s difficulties with the Larkins went back to 1795, and had been appealed to Alexander Morris in each instance. He had first served as a magistrate at the Yarmouth County Sessions in 1795 and when he attempted to resign as a justice of the peace in 1826 Sir Rupert St. George, the governor’s secretary, was unwilling to accept his resignation, since he had long fulfilled his duties “in a manner so highly creditable to yourself and advantageous to the public.”²⁶ The first Acadian justice of the peace, however, was Aimable Doucet, who had learned English during his fifteen-year exile in New England. He was appointed to office in 1793 and held it until his death in 1806.²⁷ Père Sigogne was appointed as his successor, and held this office until 1833.

There was an increasing tendency on the part of the English of the region and the officials in Halifax to regard Père Sigogne as the secular as well as the spiritual head of the Baie Sainte-Marie community. In October 1827 Thomas Chandler Haliburton reported to Sigogne that he would do his best to have the Clare district school put under his direction:

There is something so peculiar and distinctive in the condition, feeling, language, habits, and uniform religion of its inhabitants as to claim the exclusive privilege of exception, I will endeavour to interest all my friends in its building.²⁸

Sigogne had been conducting an informal school, the first known in Baie Sainte-Marie, in his rectory, in addition to organizing classes in reading and writing in the various districts. The illiteracy which was the Acadians’ heritage from their long years of exile and isolation since 1755 was thus gradually overcome. In his eloquent speech supporting Richard Uniacke’s resolution in the Nova Scotia Assembly for the abolition of the Test Oath, Haliburton declared himself to be “the friend and the voluntary advocate of the Catholics.”

“Every man who lays his hand on the New Testament, and says that is his book of faith, whether he be Catholic or Protestant, churchman or dissenter, Baptist or Methodist, however much we may differ in doctrinal points, he is my brother and I embrace him. We all travel by different roads to the same God. In that path which I pursue, should I meet a Catholic, I salute him – I journey with him. I will kneel with him; and instead of saying like the presumptuous Pharisee, Thank God I am not like this papist, I will pray that as kindred we may be equally forgiven; that as brothers we may be both received.”²⁹

As the representative of the Acadians of Clare, Haliburton called for the

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113, 120, Gov.’s Secretary-B. D’Entremont, Halifax, 20 April 1826.

²⁷ AAM, Régions/Baie Sainte-Marie, P. GAUDET in *Halifax Herald*, 10 November.

²⁸ Public Archives of Canada (PAC): MG 23, C10, Sigogne Papers, I, Haliburton-Sigogne, 27 January 1827.

²⁹ D. ALLISON, *History of Nova Scotia* (3 vols., Halifax, 1916), II, 649-50.

abolition of the Test Oath not as a favor but as a matter of justice. Thanks to the eloquent support of Haliburton and Uniacke, this final measure of Catholic emancipation in Nova Scotia passed without a dissenting vote. The first Acadian member of the Assembly, Simon D'Entremont, son of Benoni, was elected in 1836, after declaring that he would rather swallow a dogfish than take the Test Oath.

Charged with the care of the Indians as well as the Acadians, Père Sigogne had devoted himself to the Micmacs of Bear River, negotiating through Colonel Moody, Judge Ritchie, and Judge Wiswall for a grant of 1,500-2,000 acres for them. He suggested they should have a chapel and cemetery of their own, since "I would be afraid that if the Indians were intermixed with strangers, some inconvenience might arise, the views and manners are so unlike."³⁰ He found Wiswall sympathetic in his strictures of "Meddlers of the present day" who had tried to convert the Indians from their old faith and ways. In 1815 Major Walter Bromley, a half-pay officer, had raised £500 to "civilize" and convert to Protestantism the Indians, who had gathered around Sigogne upon his arrival. The missionary persuaded them to petition Governor Sir John Coape Sherbrooke, "a most liberal and noble heart," that they might enjoy the religion of their ancestors. Sherbrooke granted their request and arranged for Sigogne to get provisions and clothing for them from the government stores. Bromley's proselytising efforts totally miscarried. Since the appointment of John Howe as Superintendent of Indians, the Indians had been pressed to learn English and given Protestant books.³¹ However, they remained firm in their faith and devoted to "French priests." Sigogne appealed to Wiswall and his friends to aid in raising funds for a chapel for the Indians, and in 1830 the Assembly voted £100 for that purpose.³² By 1835 the list of donations to the Bear River Chapel totaled £124/1/1/2, with Sigogne himself, William Hill, Wiswall, and Thomas Ritchie the largest contributors. Sigogne had also found it necessary to beg clothing for Wiswall's "pets," as he called the Indians.³³

In the papers of Judge Peleg Wiswall (PANS) there is a draft of additional material about the Acadians for a revised edition of Haliburton's *Nova Scotia*, which provides some insights as to how they were viewed by their nearest English-speaking neighbors:

The French Acadians, now extant among us, spring from some of the first settlers who adventured north of the Mississippi, — they are without mixture of any foreign blood; but have descended, for more than two

³⁰ AAM, Gaudet Papers, Sigogne: Wiswall, I, Sigogne-Wiswall, Clare, 5 January 1826.

³¹ AAM, Gaudet Papers, Sigogne, Sigogne-Dr. Walsh, Clare, 17 August 1823.

³² PANS, Family Papers: Wiswall, I, Sigogne-Wiswall, Clare, 7 April 1828; *ibid.*, 27 December 1828.

³³ *Ibid.*, Sigogne-Wiswall, 17 January 1835; *ibid.*, 1 January 1831.

centuries, solely by Acadian intermarriage, – and yet, they exhibit the same firm [bodily] texture, and the same energy [vigorous activity], as do the present rustic inhabitants of the north of France from whence their ancestors emigrated.

As to Clare, this Township after 1789 was mostly the hovering place of a few scattered Acadians who had crept from their hiding places in the woods or sailed back from the New England shores whither they had been transported. Living by the connivance but not the acknowledgement of the Provincial government, without a shadow of legal title to their possessions, and in the face of penal statutes expressly made for their discouragement, they could scarcely be considered as either settlers or colonists – Up to this period they were very poor, and had done little more than contrived to exist by hunting and fishing. But upon the removal, after this date, of their legal disabilities, and the consequent granting them titles to their lands, their exertions were immediately put forth and considering their means have improved the face of their township, and their own circumstances as rapidly, to say the least, as any other settlement.³⁴

In a covering letter to Haliburton, Wiswall noted that he had omitted Haliburton's references to the manners of the Clare people and to "our worthy friend Fr. Sigogne," since "whatever is said of the Clare people is alike applicable to the Acadians throughout the Province," and the naming of living persons was to be avoided. Wiswall had more to say about the Acadians under the heading of religion:

The only compacted religious society is that of the Roman Catholics – It consists chiefly of Acadians who are settled together in the Western part of the Country – These people are zealous and punctual in attending the offices of their religion – The Indians are attached to them and their church; and some Irish and English, scattered in various parts of the county, occasionally attend their Priest to receive the sacraments.

This body of Roman Catholics is the most orderly of the various religious communities within the county; and is most on the increase – The Acadians neither emigrate nor spread for assimilation. – They have many children of their own and are fond of adopting stragglers – Several single men, as well English and Irish as French, have incorporated themselves with them – Many poor children of indigent or careless parents have been taken and brought up as though they were relatives, and none of them ever leave the society of the Acadians, but make a common cause with them in everything.

As yet there has been no instance of an Acadian conforming to any

³⁴ PANS, Correspondence of Judge Peleg Wiswall, MS. on Acadian History, 1834.

of the Protestant Churches, but they have made two or three converts from amongst the English settlers. The present number of Roman Catholic families within the County is something above three hundred. Exclusive of their religious information, these people in general possess but little knowledge – Only a few of them can read; and scarcely any of them see many books, or interest themselves in anything beyond the sphere of their immediate neighbourhood and proper calling.

They have a substantial finished Chapel or place of worship at Clare, and also a parsonage House and Glebe. The Buildings are of wood, but decent and kept in good repair – The present priest is a Native of France. He was an emigrant in the time of Robespierre. He is a man of strong natural understanding, well informed; and zealous and diligent in his vocation.

This idyllic picture of Clare was contrasted with religious disorder in the remainder of the county:

That wild Spirit of Enthusiasm which once prevailed at a great degree in the County of Annapolis, has for some years past abated much of its force. The same state of Society, however, and of education, still subsist, which disposes a large body of the people to receive its impulse. So that this most distressing mental disorder will, no doubt, break out again, and rage among the new subjects prepared for its reception.

Wiswall, the son of an Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel missionary and former naval chaplain, held no particular brief for the Anglicans, whom he described as mostly Loyalist refugees

with strong prejudices against every mode of dissenting worship (as being unfavourable to Royalty and the British Government), and with a full hope and strong desire of establishing the Church of England in this County to the exclusion of all other religions. They received the most liberal aid from Govt. toward the building of Churches, providing salaries for their Ministers, and securing parochial lands – and before many of their leading men had withdrawn to other countries, or had wavered away in this. – and while their influence continued over their followers, this Church had a promising appearance. Its decline however soon followed. The genius and character of the inhabitants are averse to it; and as it is a Church little adapted for proselytising, nothing but the extraordinary support of the Venerable Society [S.P.G.] and of Government at home and in this province preserves it even in name.

Thirty years after the landing of the Loyalists in Nova Scotia the Church of England found itself in last place as to numbers of adherents in the western part of the province, with Baptists in first place, followed by the Catholics and

Methodists.

In eastern Nova Scotia the Presbyterianism implanted by Colonel Alexander McNutt's Ulstermen from New Hampshire and northern Ireland in Amherst, Londonderry, and Onslow was reinforced by a shipload of Protestant Highlanders who landed at Pictou in 1773 and by the 180 persons who arrived there in the *Hector* in September of the same year. But Pictou was without a resident clergyman until the arrival of the Rev. Dr. James MacGregor in 1786, after the settlers had sent a petition to Scotland for a minister. This redoubtable "anti-Burgher" Presbyterian divine had both a sharp eye and a sharp tongue, as his diary bears witness. He had little use for the Scottish and Irish military settlers of the district:

A number of the profligate who had belonged to the army remained with [us] till the beginning of the war in 1793. Then the Governor raised a regiment [to] help in the war. A recruiting party came to Pictou, and our drunken vagabonds almost to a man readily embraced the opportunity to enlist again, that they might again enjoy the miserable life they had led before in the army. In a few months we got clear of them; and I believe not one individual of those who were sober and industrious enlisted. I look upon Pictou as purged, and I hoped I would not see it polluted again. Little did I expect to see some of those I baptized, as polluted as these. By and by we met with sewers of corruption which [we] did not foresee.³⁵

Dr. MacGregor preached in both Gaelic and English, and once officiated at a wedding in both languages:

telling the man his duties and engagements in English; and the woman hers [in] Gaelic. How they managed to court or to converse afterwards I know not, but they declared to me, and the neighbors confirmed it, that they could hardly speak a single word of one another's language.

Dr. MacGregor modestly reported how his own arrival helped to open the floodgates of immigration:

This summer many of the Highlanders wrote or rather caused to be written³⁶ letters to their relations in Scotland informing them that now they had the gospel here in purity, and inviting them to come over, promising to assist them, and telling them that a few years would free them from their difficulties.

³⁵ PANS, Diary of the Rev. James MacGregor of Pictou, 1789-1815.

³⁶ The Pictou Highlanders were described as "very ignorant," and Dr. MacGregor observed "few of them indeed could read a word" (Thibau, *Education in Nova Scotia before 1811*, 90).

When he journeyed to Prince Edward Island in 1790 to visit the Protestant Scots there, Dr. MacGregor was appalled: “In a few minutes I found Charlottetown to have wickedness enough for a far larger town. Swearing and drunkenness abounded.” But if he was quick to denounce sinfulness, the dominie was also ready with charity, even to those not of his flock. In 1792 he noted:

This year arrived two vessels loaded with emigrants almost all Roman Catholics from the Western Islands of Scotland. [It was too late in the season to build houses, and so MacGregor’s congregation aided the newcomers to survive the winter.]

Many of them came to hear sermons for a time, and there was a fair prospect that numbers of them would become protestant Presbyterians, but Priest MacEachern in Prince Edward Island, hearing of their devotional situation, paid them a visit, told them of their Danger by living among Protestants, advised them to leave Pictou, to go eastward on the Gulf shore, or to Cape Breton where Protestants would not trouble them, and threatened them with excommunication if they would continue] to hear my preaching. A good number of them obeyed him instantly and the rest by degrees, except a very few who embraced my gospel.

But they were more dangerous guests in the congregation than I was aware of, not by the strength of their arguments for popish doctrines, but the powerful influence of their profane conversations. Much of their time was spent in naughty diversions, jestings which are not convenient or decent, in telling extravagant stories and miracles done by Priests and absurd tales about ghosts, witches, fairies, etc. The minds of the Protestant Highlanders being partly tinctured with these superstitions before the arrival of the Roman Catholics, were less prepared to resist their influence than the minds of more reasoning and skeptical Christians.

While the Rev. Dr. MacGregor did not succeed in making many converts among the Catholic Scots, despite his arduous missionary journeys along the Gulf shore and to Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton, which rivaled those of his rival “Priest MacEachern,” the Presbyterians grew in numbers as they gradually assimilated the Neutral Yankee Congregationalists abandoned at the time of the Revolution by their pro-Revolutionary clergy. In 1817 the Presbyterians formed a union with Dr. MacGregor as moderator. They had become the principal Protestant group in the eastern part of Nova Scotia, as well as in Prince Edward Island, and were encouraged by the new generation of Scottish governors. In the Annapolis Valley the Baptists, reinforced by former Congregationalists, were the dominant group, as they were on the New Brunswick frontier, while in the cities of both provinces there were small but influential groups of Methodists. The Anglican Bishop of Nova Scotia, Charles Inglis, despaired at the rise of these evangelical sects and their power to attract backsliders from what he persisted in

regarding as the sole established church. His son, Bishop John Inglis, was to see dissenting ministers granted equality with those of the Church of England in 1834. By that time the Maritimer was following neither English nor American ways, as Thomas Chandler Haliburton noted in a description of the Maritime character:

This distinctive character is produced by the necessities and conditions of a new country, by the nature of the climate, the want of an Established Church, hereditary rank, entailment of estates, and the subdivision of labour, on the one hand, and the absence of nationality, independence, and Republican institutions, on the other.³⁷

Just as the labors of Abbé Sigogne for forty-five years in western Nova Scotia did much to restore the Acadians to good repute and full citizenship, so did those of the Rev. Angus E. MacEachern for the Highland Scots of Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton. Upon his arrival in 1790 Fathers Jones hailed him as “a real treasure for the Scots.”³⁸ Trained in the Highland Seminary and at the Scots College at Valladolid in Spain, Father MacEachern had served for three years in the missions of the Western Isles before coming to the Island to join his family, which had migrated there in 1772 with Captain John MacDonald of Glenaladale’s company. The early arrivals in P.E.I. had petitioned repeatedly for a resident priest. Father Jones, concerned about the fact that none of his priests spoke Gaelic while there were Calvinist ministers who did, promptly urged his new recruit to visit Pictou, Merigonish, and Miramichi, and MacEachern continued to visit the mainland coast until 1793, when Father James MacDonald arrived and was made pastor of Arisaig. When the latter’s health broke down five years later, Father MacEachern had to resume until 1803 his ministry to the Highlanders of the mainland and Cape Breton. He did heroic work among the sick and wretched immigrants who poured into Pictou in 1801. In 1802 the Rev. Alexander Macdonald arrived and was stationed at Arisaig. He had studied at the Scots Colleges in Paris and in Spain, and was also a veteran of the Highland mission. He had to cope alone with the rapidly increasing number of Highland immigrants on the mainland and particularly Cape Breton, where Sidney became a principal port of entry in 1802: for the other priest who came out from Scotland in that year, Father Augustine MacDonald, a brother of Captain John, retired to the Island in 1803 and died there four years later. Bishop Denaut of Quebec on his Maritime visitation in 1803 noted that Father MacDonald was responsible for 2,200 souls on the mainland and 700 on Cape Breton, as compared to the 1,095 of the Isle Madame district cared for by the Abbé Lejantel. Two years later the bishop gave hearty approval to a scheme to bring out Scottish priests, “one to lighten the difficult labors of Mr. MacEachern on St. John’s Island, and the other to help Mr.

³⁷ T.C. HALIBURTON, *The Old Judge, or Life in a Colony* (London, 1839),

³⁸ AAQ, 312 CN I, 6 Nouvelle-Ecosse, Jones Bishop, 10 décembre 1790.

MacDonald in his greatly extensive missions, which he cannot possibly serve alone.³⁹ But Father MacEachern, who was making his own efforts, was informed that there was a shortage of priests in Scotland. Bishop Plessis in turn made repeated efforts to obtain Scottish priests, but in 1809 he wrote Vicar-General Edmund Burke in Halifax: “The Scottish missions offer a frightening prospect: Mr. Macdonell alone in Upper Canada, Messrs. MacEachern and Macdonell alone in the missions of the Gulf, and no sign of any successors.”⁴⁰ But in 1811 Father MacDonald finally did get some assistance with the arrival of Father Alexander MacDonell, who served as curate at Arisaig until MacDonald’s death in 1816, and subsequently at Judique, the first Highland parish in Cape Breton.

In Bishop Plessis’ account of his visitation in 1812 there are some interesting comments on the state of the Gulf missions. He found that the Scots of P.E.I., like the Acadians, were “living in fear of being evicted at any moment, and seeing newcomers reap the benefit of their labours”:

Among those who are not landowners there are already some Acadians going to New Brunswick and some Scots crossing over to Cape Breton. In these two provinces they find that the crown grants are secure settlements which they could have obtained 20 years earlier, were it not for the common characteristic that the Scots always want to live among Scots, and the Acadians among Acadians. This consideration has often made them blind to everything else.

The population of the Island is now estimated at 8,000 souls, half of whom are Protestants. Of the 4,000 Catholics there are about 250 Scottish families, and the rest are Acadians. The most perfect harmony reigns between the Acadians and the Scots. However, there has not yet been any intermarriage between the two nationalities. Each nationality holds to its own customs and manners, and prefers marriages between its own nationals rather than with strangers at the risk of living in discord.⁴¹

The bishop noted that few of Father MacEachern’s parishioners could speak any other language than Gaelic, and that when he himself preached in English as well as French at Rollo, “the Scots seemed to be bored by his French instructions.” He was impressed with the extreme poverty of both the Acadian and Scottish chapels, and by the lack of concern for pomp and circumstance of both the Scottish priests

³⁹ Denaut-De Calonne, 4 January 1805; cited Johnston, *Catholic Church*, I, 219.

⁴⁰ AAQ, BL, vol. 6, 345, Plessis-Burke, 22 mars 1809; cited Johnston, *Catholic Church*, I, 219.

⁴¹ J.-O. PLESSIS, *Journal de deux voyages apostoliques dans le Golfe Saint-Laurent et les Provinces d’en bas, en 1811 et 1812*, *Le Foyer Canadien*, III, 1865: quoted Johnston, I, 228-9.

and people. However, he found that “apart from this the good Scottish people seem sincere in their religion, strongly attached to their pastors, and as demonstrative in their piety as the Irish.” He noted a sharp contrast between the familiar French ways at Chéticamp and those of the primitive Scottish settlement at Port Hood, which moved him to thoughts of the urgent need to provide a succession of priests, “since he was alarmed at seeing 800 Catholic families doomed to remain without help for their religion when death should take away their present missionaries, unless they think in advance of means to provide successors to them who speak their language.”⁴² The bishop was clearly sympathetic to Captain John MacDonald’s scheme of sending six young Maritimers to the Canadian seminaries.

When Bishop Plessis returned to Quebec from his visitation in 1812, he took steps to reinforce the Gulf missions. He sent the Abbé L.-G.-A. Dufesne to minister to the people of Chéticamp, Margaree, and the Magdalen Islands, aided by a subdeacon, Jean Vézina. Unhappily both were lost in a shipwreck caused by a drunken skipper. The plans for the education of Scottish boys for the priesthood at Quebec, which had been discussed since Father MacEachern had written to Bishop Hubert about the matter in 1791, finally bore fruit in the fall of 1812, when two boys from Prince Edward Island were sent to Quebec. Six others from the Island, Cape Breton, and Arisaig followed the next year. Two of them became priests, after financial difficulties caused by the death of Father MacDonald in 1816. In October 1812 Bishop Plessis also appealed to the Diocese of Kilkenny in Ireland for priests or seminarians “acquainted with the Irish or Gallic Language.”⁴³ He obtained at least five seminarians from Kilkenny, among them William Dollard, the future first Bishop of New Brunswick. After serving as assistant at Arichat for a year, Dollard was placed in charge in 1818 of the Highlanders of the Bras d’Or district and the Irish of the eastern settlements, while Father Alexander MacDonald was made pastor of Judique. The latter appointment was a great relief to Père Gaulin of Chéticamp, who found that very few of the Scots understood the English language, and “as to exhorting them or instructing them in their native tongue, it is, in spite of all exertions, to me yet impossible. This Language, My Lord, is so very difficult to a foreigner”⁴⁴

The establishment of the Vicariate Apostolic of Nova Scotia in 1817 under Bishop Edmund Burke was followed two years later by the appointment of Father MacEachern as Vicar General for the district of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and the Magdalen Islands, with the title of Bishop of Rosea. Cape Breton, which Bishop Plessis thought should be included in the new Vicariate of Nova Scotia, was briefly annexed to the Vicariate Apostolic of Newfoundland

⁴² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴³ AAQ, RL, VII, 437, Plessis-Mansfield, 31 octobre 1812: cited Johnston, *Catholic Church*, I, 267.

⁴⁴ AAQ, I.M., 41, Gaulin-Plessis, 13 octobre 1817; Johnston, I, 385.

in 1818 and then included in Bishop MacEachern's territory in 1820. In a letter to the Rector of the Scots College at Rome, Bishop MacEachern expressed the wish that Cape Breton rather than New Brunswick had been put under his care, "because Cape Breton is inhabited by Highlanders and Acadian French ... with all of whom, both Scots and French, I am acquainted, and am on the best of terms." He pointed out that Cape Breton was only some 12 or 15 leagues from Prince Edward Island, but 150 to 200 leagues from Newfoundland. He proposed to send the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda a detailed map of the Gulf, obviously hoping to improve Roman notions of North American geography. He reported:

The Catholics of these countries are well attached to their Religion. And Government is vastly kind to us. The acadian French, in the Gulf are the most correct Christians in these parts. Our Highlanders are staunch Catholics. But the scarcity of teachers is severely felt.⁴⁵

In a further letter from Halifax that fall, where he had gone to lay plans with Bishop Burke for the establishment of a long discussed seminary at Arisaig to supply "Clergymen especially for the Highlanders," he expressed regret that his charge had not been made a vicariate apostolic, instead of placed under the Bishop of Quebec, so that he "might act in concert with the Vicar Apostolic of Nova Scotia, in schools and the education of our youth. Our people being the same in these provinces, require a different management from the Canadians."⁴⁶ But Bishop Burke died the following year, and his successor was not named for seven years, so the proposed seminary was never established.

On his return journey after being consecrated in Quebec, Bishop MacEachern spent fifteen days at Miramichi, "confessing Scots and Irish from day light to night, every day There is no resident Priest on this River; and of course religious duties fall into oblivion, especially among the young people. The Canadian clergymen, unfortunately, are not masters of the English language, [and are] unacquainted with the habits of our people."⁴⁷ He proposed to obtain a priest for the people of this booming port, to which no less than 250 square-rigged ships had come that season for timber. In a letter written from St. Andrew's, P.E.I., in 1824, Bishop MacEachern expounded the need for Scots priests:

There are as many Highland Catholics on the opposite shore and rivers of Nova Scotia, living on King's lands, as would require three or four Priests. From the influx of emigrants to Cape Breton two High-

⁴⁵ Archives of the Scots College: Letters of Bishop Angus B. MacEachern and Bishop William Fraser to Abbé Paul Macperson and Rev. Angus MacDonald, Rectors of the Scots College, Rome, MacEachern-Macperson, Bay of Chaleurs, 20 August 1819.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Halifax, 9 November 1819.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Bay of Chaleurs, 5 July 1821.

landers besides the two already stationed there are wanting. I may say the same thing of this Island. No effort was ever made by any B[ishop] in Canada to raise clergymen for our Highlanders, who have been emigrating this way since the year 1771. Neither did they ever send any Canadian Clergyman to this Island since the Conquest until 1812.... There is nothing doing now in Canada for these missions Three more missionaries are absolutely necessary for Cape Breton (i.e., two Highlanders and one who speaks English). But where to get them I know not.⁴⁸

He opposed the Archbishop of Quebec's proposal to reunite Nova Scotia to the diocese of Quebec, and favored the appointment of Father William Fraser, "unquestionably the fittest man in these provinces," as Vicar Apostolic: "His being appointed independent of Quebec would much facilitate our establishing in concert together some school for raising youth for ourselves, independent of the feeble hope we can entertain from Quebec." He also mentioned that Governor Sir James Kempt of Nova Scotia had assured him that the British government would not interfere with the naming of a Catholic Bishop of Nova Scotia. He added: "We are on the best of terms with the Govt and as much respected as we deserve." He received an annual grant from the British government of only £50, compared to the Archbishop of Quebec's £1,500, but the Scottish governors of the day in the Maritimes were liberal in land grants to the Church. Lord Dalhousie, General Ainslie, Sir James Kempt, and Sir Howard Douglas were Scotsmen who "had Catholics under them in time of war, and they were not only friendly but also favorable to Catholics."⁴⁹ In a letter of 1826 to the new rector of the Scots College, the Rev. Angus MacDonald, Bishop MacEachern painted an interesting picture of conditions in his territory:

The greater part of the sea shores [of P.E.I.] is now occupied by our people and the Acadian French, who are very regular in their religious duties. There are Catholic settlements at both extremes of the colony. In many places we are mixed with those of as many professions as there are heads (fit to think for themselves) in a family. Yet we live in political union with them. And although we have no voice or vote in the Legislature, we find no inconvenience from that preclusion. Govt. is kind to us, and does not disturb us in our religious duties. We even wear the sutana publickly. We are getting chapels built off framework in different parts of the Island. But alas few pastors to serve them.⁵⁰

He mentioned the rapid increase of the settlements not only on the Island but in

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, St. Andrew's, P.E.I., 8 July 1824.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, MacEachern-Cardinal Caprano, 31 August 1825.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, MacEachern-MacDonald, 12 December 1826.

Cape Breton and on the Nova Scotian mainland. The timber ships brought sickness as well as immigrants from Great Britain, and a scarlet fever epidemic increased the priests' burdens. He also reported: "Swarms of Irish resort every Fall from Newfoundland to this Island without money, return again the following spring to their fishing ports. We are not the better for them." Depression in Britain had put a stop to Maritime shipbuilding, "which was these years past carried on to a considerable extent."

Bishop MacEachern finally got a colleague to his taste with the arrival in 1822 of Father William Fraser, a graduate of the Royal Scots College at Valladolid, Spain, in the company of 300 Highland emigrants. Four of Fraser's brothers were already settled at Antigonish, and upon his arrival he went to visit them, receiving a warm welcome from the community, whose pastor was an Irish priest, Father James Grant:

Twice or thrice Mr. Fraser delivered Homilies on the appropriate Gospels at Antigonish He being an excellent preacher, and master of the Celtic language, the people, who had not heard three lines of the Gospel read, or explained to them in a language they could understand for above three years prior to his coming, flocked to hear him. Even the Highland Protestants attended, as attentively as our people, and declared they would contribute to our Church, and would become Catholics, if Mr. Fraser would stay among them....⁵¹

In the summer of 1823 Father Fraser accompanied Bishop MacEachern on a three months' visitation of the Cape Breton missions, and as a result of the bishop's intervention with the Nova Scotian administrator and the request of the Scots of Antigonish, he took charge of Antigonish in January 1824. Father Grant was transferred to Manchester (now Guysborough), which had been founded by Irish settlers from Newfoundland about 1812 or 1815. Power had been appointed the first pastor there in 1819. In July 1824 Bishop MacEachern wrote the secretary of the Propaganda in Rome, suggesting that Nova Scotia be kept separate from Quebec and erected into a diocese under Father William Fraser, "a learned priest and a very good preacher, both in English and in Gaelic." He argued that "all the missionaries in Canada are French, and they understand neither English nor Gaelic, nor are they conversant with the customs and institutions of the Scots and the Irish All the missionaries who have preached the Gospel to the Scots in these districts of Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, and this Island [P.E.I.] up to the present, have been sent out from the Highlands of Scotland. From the year 1772 to the year 1822, eight missionaries immigrated with colonists into these provinces."⁵² The Nova Scotian episcopal appointment having first been declined

⁵¹ AAQ, I.P.E., 85, MacEachern-Plessis, 25 mars 1823, cited Johnston, I, 433.

⁵² APF, Acta di 1824, ff 412-417v., MacEachern-Caprano, 8 July 1824; cited Johnston, I, 512-3.

by three Irish priests – one in Quebec and two in Ireland – Fraser was finally appointed in December 1824, though he did not receive his briefs until early in 1827, and was not consecrated until June of that year, at the hands of Bishop MacEachern at Antigonish. A throng of 2,000 attended the ceremony.

Bishop Fraser had become a popular member of the community, serving on the school board with the Presbyterian minister and the local doctor. Three other friends were Postmaster Robert N. Henry, a young lawyer, Alexander MacDougall, who later became Solicitor General of Nova Scotia, and Joseph Howe, who provides this account:

At the hospitable board of R. N. Henry, Esq., the then Postmaster of Antigonish, I met four men, each differing in his training, profession, and character, but each in his own time sufficiently remarkable to make his society very attractive. These were Dr. Fraser, who became Catholic Bishop of the Diocese, Dr. McDonald, then in the full enjoyment of a large county practice, the Rev. Thomas Trotter, Presbyterian pastor of the village congregation, and our old friend Sandy MacDougall. They were all Scotchmen or of Scotch descent, were fast friends and cronies. Each would stand up for his own Church or his own snuffbox, but they would all stand up for old Scotland, and fight to prove a thistle more fragrant than a rose. I would have given a trifle to have seen and heard our four old friends once more chaffing each other in Latin, English, Greek and Gaelic. With these four men I remained on terms of intimacy and friendship while they lived. Nothing impressed me so much as to hear questions of philosophy, of practical or abstract science, or of European politics, discussed in the county of Sidney with the keenest of logic and fullness of information scarcely met with in the capital.⁵³

Howe's neutral testimony is supported by Bishop MacEachern's report: "We have no religious disputes in these countries, where there are as many creeds as can be found in the *Dictionnaire des Hérésies*."⁵⁴ Doubtless one reason for this happy state of affairs was the fact the Catholic population of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Cape Breton was very considerable, and by now some of the leading men were of that communion.

One of them, Laurence Kavanagh, Jr., of St. Peter's, Cape Breton, took his seat in the House of Assembly in 1823, without taking the previously compulsory oaths against "Popery and Transubstantiation." His father had come out from Waterford in Ireland to Louisbourg in 1760, and there become a successful fisheries entrepreneur. Because of the danger from American privateers the business had been moved in 1777 to St. Peter's, where the younger Kavanagh became a leading figure marketing the fish caught by the Acadians of the Richmond shore. He was famous for his impartial hospitality to such distinguished travellers as Dr.

⁵³ Quoted in Johnston, I, 465-6.

⁵⁴ ASC, XII, MacEachern-MacDonald, 10 August 1830.

James MacGregor and Bishop Plessis and the itinerant missionaries of Cape Breton. When the region was reannexed to Nova Scotia in 1820, he was elected as one of its two representatives, along with Richard J. Uniacke, Jr. He refused to take the required anti-Catholic oaths and thus did not take his seat for over two years, while Lieutenant-Governor Sir James Kempt made representations to London in his favor. Finally the House of Assembly voted 21-15 to permit him to take his seat, resolving that it will in future permit Roman Catholics, who may be duly elected, and shall be qualified to hold a seat in this House, without making a Declaration against “Popery and Transubstantiation.” Nova Scotia thus anticipated the Reform Bill of 1832 in Britain. If advanced in this respect, the province certainly was not so in education, for Kavanagh’s report on educational conditions in 1824 opened with the observation: “There is no regular school in the County of Cape Breton that I know of, except one at Sidney and one at Arichat”⁵⁵ Aside from John Walsh at Arichat there were only occasional itinerant teachers, occasionally employed and badly paid. Kavanagh’s survey was part of the basis for the Nova Scotia School Act of 1826, which provided that Cape Breton was to receive an annual grant of £220 – £40 more than the standard grant for the other counties and districts.

The drastic social changes brought to the Atlantic provinces by the massive immigration from the British Isles in the first half of the nineteenth century were responsible for the revision and expansion of the limited elitist educational system which the Loyalists and officials had attempted to establish in 1785 in both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Large numbers of Catholic Irish, Scots, and Acadians, and increasing numbers of Protestant Dissenters, could not be fitted into an eighteenth-century system of training for the learned professions solely under Anglican auspices. This was the basis of a plan for a “Religious and Literary Institution in Nova Scotia,” proposed in New York in 1783 before the departure of the Loyalists by a committee including the Rev. Charles Inglis, future Bishop of Nova Scotia, and the Rev. Jonathan Odell, future provincial secretary of New Brunswick. After the division of Nova Scotia in 1784, an academy was begun at Windsor in 1787 and two years later it was given the status of a college under the name of King’s. Its exclusive bias is evident in the statement in its regulations “that in exact proportion to the influence of the established religion will be the immovable loyalty of the inhabitants of the province.”⁵⁶ Its failure to abolish religious tests and its reluctance to move from Windsor to Halifax led Lord Dalhousie in 1818 to found the non-sectarian institution which bears his name. A charming picture of this Anglican stronghold was provided by a writer in *The Acadian Recorder* in 1825:

⁵⁵ Laurence KAVANAGH, “Report on Educational Conditions in Cape Breton, 1824,” in *Journal of Education, Nova Scotia* (September 1935), 527; cited Johnston, 1, 470.

⁵⁶ A. W. EATON, *The Church in Nova Scotia* (New York, 1892), 205; quoted by K. F. C. MACNAUGHTON, *The Development of the Theory and Practice of Education in New Brunswick, 1784-1900* (Fredericton, 1947), 51.

Windsor is the Athens of Nova Scotia, the abode of elegant hospitality and polished society. The gardens of literature are cultivated with care and ability. The academy conducted by the Rev. Francis Salt has acquired unrivalled reputation. It has a college respectable for its liberal endowments and the acquirements of its professors. Its students are good scholars and they are regarded as the rising hopes of our country. The institution is episcopal and designed to uphold the English church. Its restrictions have retarded its prosperity and given birth to a respectable seminary at Pictou, where the light of science like the light of heaven is free to all denominations of christians; the influence of literature is confined within narrow limits. It is readily admitted that the rays of science adorn the summit of Windsor society; but dark intellectual gloom surrounds its base. Its learned men have little intercourse with society and they appear like remote luminaries in a distant sky... It is a gay fashionable place where distinctions of rank are kept up with great exactness, and it would be no little matter to tell how many degrees or grades in society are to be found in this little village. It has four dissenting places of worship and the church of England exerting a motherly protection over the rest; but neither the zeal and activity of the dissenters, nor the dignity of an established church can allure the people in great numbers to attend public worship. It is more famed for its politeness than for its piety.⁵⁷

In New Brunswick the “Provincial Academy of Arts and Sciences,” for which Dr. William Paine and others petitioned in 1785 and which was established as a college in 1800, met similar opposition from the popular party in the Assembly. In neither province was the Church of England successful in maintaining its pretensions to be the sole established church. Sheer numbers were against it, as well as the rising tide of democracy. In 1793 the New Brunswick Council, all of whose members were Anglican until 1817, rejected a measure providing £10 to each parish for educational purposes, although it had granted £100 to the Provincial Academy the previous year. Not until 1802 was a parish school act passed. In 1811 a further measure provided for grammar schools in seven counties and three districts. The teachers in these schools, as well as in the fourteen S.P.G. schools, were all Anglicans and in the latter institutions not infrequently clergymen. The grammar schools provided for by the Act of 1805 were to be visited annually by the rectors or missionaries of the parishes in which they were located. Not until 1829 were clergymen of any denomination prohibited from teaching in these schools.⁵⁸

In both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick the trend towards common schools, which was to produce bitter sectarian strife later in the century, began with the

⁵⁷ Report of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia (1937), 32.

⁵⁸ Kathleen MACNAUGHTON, *Education in New Brunswick, 1784-1900* (Fredericton, 1947).

introduction of the Madras or Lancastrian school system in 1814 through the shipment of 500 sets of books used in the National Schools of Britain. The following year two promoters of the system, the Rev. James Milne and a Mr. West, were sent out to Nova Scotia. The original purpose of the schools in England was the education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church, but with few schools available in the Maritimes, children "of the first respectability" applied for admission, as did those of Dissenters. The younger Bishop Inglis waged a losing battle for keeping the original Anglican character of the Madras schools. Their success did much to broaden the base of education, and along with other influences helped to break down eighteenth-century class barriers and favor democracy.

But this is another story, which there is no space to tell here. Briefly, the Catholics in all the Maritime provinces were left largely to their own educational devices until the rise of the non-denominational school movement in the mid-nineteenth century. The Madawaska Acadians, like those of Baie Sainte-Marie, established parochial schools in the 1820s and 1830s. In the 1850s the Abbé Lafrance founded a secondary school at Memramcook and the Abbé Girouard an academy at Arichat. Within ten years the Memramcook school became St. Joseph's College, the forerunner of the Université de Moncton and the center of the Acadian renaissance. The P.E.I. Scots founded St. Andrew's College, later St. Dunstan's, in 1831. The New Brunswick Irish established schools in Saint John in the 1840s and St. Thomas' College at Chatham in the 1860s, while those of Nova Scotia founded St. Mary's College in 1840. Despite being united by a common faith, Maritime Catholics largely persisted in keeping themselves in separate regional, linguistic, and ethnic compartments, and thus contributed a complicated subdivision to the overall denominational separatism which gave the Maritimes too many institutions of higher learning for its human and economic resources. The clerical author of the stormy history of one of the oldest Franco-American parishes in New England concludes: "It must be the intention of the Good Lord to provide separate heavens for the French and Irish, for it has been demonstrated on earth that they cannot easily live together." There appears to be no need for a separate heaven for the Scots, for in the Maritimes as elsewhere they have perhaps shown a great talent for accommodation to others than the French or the Irish. But then I am not without prejudice in the matter, having two Scottish grandparents myself