The Faculty of Religious Studies
McGill University
1948-1978

by H. Keith Markell, B.A., Ph.D., D.D.

Preface
by
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PREFACE

The Thirtieth Anniversary celebrations of the Faculty of Religious Studies included an assignment for our resident historian, Professor Keith Markell and this booklet is the result of his labors. It includes a chapter on the beginning of cooperative Protestant theological education in Montreal, a continuing effort symbolized by the three affiliated theological colleges of McGill University – Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church of Canada.

Along with this history, we have devoted a special issue of our joint publication ARC (VI/1, Autumn 1978) to a more informal account of the past 30 years, largely supplied by Deans. It has been a lively scenario, full of change and necessary adjustment, from seminary style to University Faculty, from small beginnings to impressive size, from relatively simple theological education to the complex and multiple operation of religious studies in a modern University.

These are auspicious days for us in Québec, and our future is subject to those “independent variables” largely beyond our control. But if our history teaches us anything it is surely that our fathers were able to meet new circumstances with vision and with courage.

It is my pleasure to commend this volume to you and to express the sincere appreciation of Faculty and friends to Dr. Markell.

Joseph C. McLelland, Dean
CHAPTER I

THE AFFILIATED COLLEGES

In the space of a single decade four theological colleges, all of which were to become linked with McGill University, made their appearance in Montreal. The Congregationalists were first on the scene when their training school for ministers, which after several changes of name ended by being called the Congregational College of Canada, was in 1864 removed from Toronto to Montreal and in the following year became affiliated with McGill.

In 1865 the Synod of the Canada Presbyterian Church obtained a charter for a college. The first classes were held in 1867, and in 1868 the Presbyterian College, Montreal, was affiliated with McGill.

In 1872 the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada founded the Wesleyan College, Montreal, which was formally opened in 1873 and affiliated with McGill in 1879.

The Montreal Diocesan Theological College was the creation of Bishop Ashton Oxenden. It was established in 1873 and affiliated with McGill in 1880.

Following the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925 the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Colleges (exclusive of the non-concurring Presbyterians) were merged to form the United Theological College which was affiliated with McGill in 1929.

It is pertinent to ask what was meant by the term "affiliation". The question is difficult to answer; the term was never precisely defined and varied considerably in its practical import from one period to another. A summary of the University Statutes relating to affiliated colleges which was prepared in 1937 by the McGill Registrar disclosed that while they were fairly specific in a few areas, in the main they served only as rough guidelines. It appears to have been assumed, however, that affiliated institutions would maintain certain standards in regard to staff, students and curriculum, and that the University had the right at any time to demand an accounting from them.

From the standpoint of the theological colleges affiliation had obvious advantages. They were entitled to representation on the McGill Corporation, the precursor of the present Senate. Their students could take Arts
courses in the University even if they were not proceeding to a degree; this is evident from the fact that in at least some of the colleges students were pursuing programs in Arts and Theology simultaneously. In later years theological students working towards an Arts degree at McGill could claim exemption in one full course, a privilege that drew criticism from some members of the University on the ground that it was in effect granting credit for work in Theology over which the University exercised no control. Finally, on payment of the regular fee theological students were accorded access to the library, athletic programs, and other facilities of the University.

The advantages to the University of affiliation were less apparent, although at a time when the Churches were influential and McGill still a struggling institution there were sound reasons for entering into arrangements which could be mutually beneficial. Principal William Dawson considered that the colleges brought to the University "enhanced prestige, increased enrolment, and a wholesome religious influence" and that they took the place of the theological faculties to be found in most of the older universities. Pretheological students in Arts helped to swell the student population and to augment the revenues from fees; the goodwill of the denominations was a potential source of benefactions to the University; clergymen who had graduated from the affiliated colleges were in a position to direct prospective students to McGill.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF COOPERATION**

In 1912 the four affiliated colleges launched a scheme of cooperative theological education which thirty-six years later culminated in the establishment of the McGill Faculty of Divinity. It was manifestly a case of the idea whose time had come, and it probably owed something to the ecumenical atmosphere fostered by the union negotiations then in progress among Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The chief architect of the plan was the Montreal merchant, William Massey Birks, and the impetus was provided by a visit to the city as Birks' guest early in 1912 of A.G. Fraser, an Anglican priest and Principal of Trinity College, Kandy, Ceylon, an interdenominational institution produced by the fusion of seven mission schools. With Birks writing much of the scenario, events moved with a most uneclesiastical celerity. A series of meetings attended by both clerical and lay representatives of the four Churches and Colleges was held in March, that on March 20 being addressed by Principal Fraser of Ceylon as well as by the head of a noted nondenominational school, President Francis Brown of Union Theological Seminary, New York.

The four College Boards approved the cooperative project, subject in some cases to ratification by the governing bodies of their respective Churches, and the College Faculties were asked to prepare a syllabus so that the plan could be implemented for the academic session of 1912-1913. The opening ceremonies were held at the Royal Victoria College on October 1, 1912, the principal speakers being the recently retired Bishop of Ripon, the Right Reverend Boyd Carpenter, and an American Presbyterian layman, Dr. Robert E. Speer. A Board of Governors was elected in November, 1912, and an Act to incorporate "The Joint Board of the Theological Colleges Affiliated with McGill University" received the assent of the provincial legislature in February, 1914. In addition to the Joint Board it provided for a Joint Senate, which never really functioned as a separate body, and a Joint Faculty. The Principals of the Cooperating Colleges were to serve in rotation for a period of one year as Dean. The Act of Incorporation stipulated that, while each College would continue to appoint its own professors, no appointment would be made by any College without prior consultation with the Joint Board. It also decreed that teachers were carefully to "avoid anything that might justly be considered distinctive denominational teaching." In March 1914, the Joint Board adopted a Constitution which, among other things, contained the important provision, endorsed from the outset, that any College was free to withhold its students from a particular course without thereby reflecting on the lecturer or jeopardizing its position in the cooperative arrangement.

The framers of the plan had also agreed from the beginning that a "neutral" building with its own library and classrooms was a desideratum. It would give visibility and stability to their venture, and at the same time allay the scruples of those who were reluctant to attend, or see their students attend classes in a College operated by another denomination. In the spring of 1913, therefore, the Joint Board resolved to launch a campaign for half a million dollars, not more than $200,000 of which was to be used for a building. The balance was to be reserved for endowment, salary increases, lectureships, bursaries, library, and other equipment. The campaign was conducted from June 23-27, 1913. The amount subscribed was $526,250, with contributions of $100,000 each from the Birks family, Lord Strathcona and Dr. James Douglas, a Canadian-born American mining and railway magnate.

The purchase of a building was delayed temporarily by an unsuccessful bid to erect on campus a new building which would be shared jointly by the University and the affiliated Theological Colleges, with one wing being designated for the use of the Colleges. Principal Peterson of McGill evidently regarded this a subtle attempt to insinuate the Colleges into the University and let it be known unmistakably that such an offer could not
be accepted, whereupon the proposal was immediately dropped. As Birks wrote: "The Principal stated to me that he was in favor of keeping McGill as a non-religious institution; and therefore was not in sympathy with any plan of a Theological Faculty in the University or even a Divinity Hall on its grounds." In January, 1914, the Joint Board decided to purchase from Mr. C.H. Cahan for the sum of $67,500 his residence at 740 University Street, also known as the Coristine home, it being understood that the owner would vacate the premises by June 30, 1915. During the session of 1915-16 classes were held for the first time in what was now designated "Divinity Hall." 

VOICES OF DISSENT

Those who participated directly in the cooperative scheme hailed it as an almost unqualified success, and at the same time basked in the plaudits of the local and outside press. The Montreal experiment was widely lauded as a courageous departure from the confining fetters of sectarian theological education. It would be erroneous, however, to conclude that it encountered no opposition or experienced no crises. In its initial stages the chief opposition came from a section of the Anglican communion both within and beyond the confines of the Diocese of Montreal.

The stance of the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, the Right Reverend John Cragg Farthing, may be characterized as cautious. It was suggested by some, including W.M. Birks, that, regardless of his personal predilections, he was under pressure from certain of the wealthier laymen of the diocese who favored cooperation. The bishop defended the arrangement against its critics on more than one occasion, declaring that while he understood the apprehensions of those who considered it dangerous, yet he judged that the interests of the Diocesan College had been sufficiently safeguarded. At the same time, in an article which appeared in October, 1912, he adopted a "wait and see" attitude. Only time, he wrote, would tell whether candidates educated for the priesthood under the new system would be inspired with loyalty to their Church or would be influenced toward "the undenominational idea that each religious body is in possession of some part of the truth and that there is no Christian Church in which the whole truth is taught and believed." 

The strongest objector on the Diocesan College Board was Dr. J. Paterson-Smyth, Rector of St. George's Church, who insisted that he would never agree to Church History being taught to Anglican students by anyone other than an Anglican priest. In the end, however, he agreed that if he were overruled by the rest of the clergy he would not protest publicly, although he still considered that the College was embarking on a dangerous experiment and that genuine cooperation was precluded by differing views of the Sacraments. He was later quoted as saying that he saw it as "an opportunity for introducing religion into McGill by providing the means to pay the greatest experts on theology that could be got hold of to come to lecture." 

Meanwhile, a more strident brand of criticism was issuing from other quarters within the Anglican communion. In November, 1912, Canon J. M. Almond of Trinity Church, Montreal, in an address at Quebec city, was reported in the press as having stigmatized the Montreal arrangement as a "breach of trust." His understanding of the matter, which was patently defective, was that the procedure which had been adopted for making appointments to the Colleges deprived the Diocesan College of its autonomy and gave the other three Colleges a voice in certain appointments to the Diocesan College. This charge was repeated a few days later in a letter to the Montreal Star from Frederick George Scott, Rector of St. Matthew's Church, Quebec. That Anglicans condoned, as they allegedly had, the use of the expression "four Protestant denominations" was in itself a surrender of their Church's whole position, and when this was coupled with allowing other Christian bodies a voice in the appointment of men who would educate future priests, the Church was entering upon a course which must end in "the solidification of her Catholic inheritance." It was not difficult to refute this charge concerning methods of appointment to the Joint Faculty. An article in the Montreal Churchman pointed out that while the Colleges had agreed not to make new appointments without consultation with the Joint Board, the Board exercised no power of veto. While it was anticipated that consultation would lead to general accord, in the final analysis each College retained absolute control of appointments to its own staff. The possibility of an unsatisfactory appointment was recognized in the saving clause whereby any College was at liberty to withhold its students from a particular course.

The question of the cooperating Colleges was a contentious issue at the meeting of the Diocesan Synod in January, 1913. According to press reports, the most vocal critics of the scheme were the Reverend H.M. Little, Rector of the Church of the Advent; the Reverend Arthur French, Rector of the Church of St. John the Evangelist; and Rural Dean W.P.R. Lewis. Lewis asked whether anyone who had a son destined for the priesthood would "want him to get part of his training from a Methodist minister, from a Congregationalist minister who does not believe in dogma, or from a Presbyterian minister who is anti-episcopal." For his part he would select any other Anglican college in the world in preference to the Montreal Diocesan College. Mr. Little reportedly affirmed that the teaching of Anglican students by those not in sympathy with that
Church's principles was without parallel in the history of the Church and predicted that the experiment, if continued, would “cost the Church dear.”

One complaint was that since the College was a diocesan institution such a momentous step should not have been taken without synodical approval. Although the Diocesan Synod had been empowered in 1907 to appoint representatives to the College Board, it was argued, not without reason, that this did not justify bypassing the Synod in making a decision of this magnitude. The Chancellor of the Synod, Dr. Davidson, though agreeing that the Synod should have been consulted before the College Board took action, allegedly stated that he was supporting the cooperative scheme on the ground that he thought McGill was a “godless institution” and that he would welcome the restitution of a Divinity Faculty which would “spiritualize” the University. In the end the Synod approved a motion which refrained from taking any official stand on the matter. The plan was stoutly defended by such men as Principal Elson Rexford and others, although, according to the Gazette reporter, some of those who supported it deliberately gave the impression that it was only experimental and that it would be best to wait and see how it turned out.

Although the Diocesan College was to be a full-fledged partner in the cooperative scheme, a large proportion of the instruction of Anglican students continued to be entrusted to Anglican professors. In replying to critics of the plan in the autumn of 1912, Principal Rexford noted that in the current term of the first academic session of 1912-13 thirty of the forty-three weekly lectures being received by Anglican students were being given by members of their own Church. It seems unlikely that there was much alteration in this ratio through the years. The first Calendar of the Montreal Theological Colleges Affiliated with McGill University which was issued for the session 1912-13 listed two subjects reserved for all of the Colleges — Denominational History and Church Polity — and three additional areas reserved for the Diocesan College: New Testament Exegesis, Theology and History; that portion of Systematic Theology dealing with the Holy Spirit and His Work, Eschatology, and Christian Institutions; and Pastoral Theology. These reservations ceased to be listed in the Calendar after 1914, but they continued to be reserved in practice. In some areas they may even have been expanded. In the field of Church History, for example, duplicate courses in Ancient, Medieval and Reformation Church History were offered by an Anglican and a non-Anglican professor all through the period of cooperation. As Professor William Alva Gifford wrote in 1926: “By the actual interpretation of this reservation it eventuates that very much, perhaps most, of the instruction of Anglican students is necessarily given by the Anglican professors themselves.”

Had the proposal for cooperative theological education come a few years later, it would almost certainly have encountered greater resistance in Presbyterian circles. Although Presbyterian opposition to organic union with Methodists and Congregationalists had already surfaced by 1912, the main struggle and the organization of the anti-union forces came somewhat later. There may, however, have been an occasional hint of what was coming from this direction. Some time in the late spring of 1913, for example, Robert W. Dickie, minister of Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, in a letter to the Montreal Witness expressed misgivings concerning the cooperative arrangement and voiced his opposition to the purchase or erection of a neutral building. Since Dickie was to become a leading spokesman for the anti-union cause in the Montreal area, it is not unreasonable to assume that he saw cooperation in theological education as a stage on the road to union. Presbyterian attitudes may also have been reflected in the financial campaign of June, 1913. According to W.M. Birks, of the more than half million dollars raised seventy-seven and one half percent was contributed by Presbyterians, with approximately ninety-seven percent of this coming from “Unionists” and less than three percent from “Non-Concurrerents.” It might be imprudent to read too much into this, however, since according to the same source the Methodists contributed four percent or less to the campaign without, so far as can be determined, any suggestion being made that they were unsympathetic to the cooperative venture.

UNION AND DIVISION

If the Presbyterians did not create any very grave problems in the early stages, the deepening divisions within that communion provoked something of a crisis for the Cooperating Colleges in the mid-1920s. The decision of the non-concurring Presbyterians to continue the Presbyterian College, Montreal, meant that there was now a theological college still affiliated with McGill but no longer involved in the cooperative arrangement. W.M. Birks was of the opinion that, even if they wished to remain, the principles espoused by the nonconcurrerents precluded immediate participation on their part in the cooperative structure. At the same time, he considered that once they had a College “with a body of students, staff of good standing, and teaching measuring up to our standards, they will be in all likelihood and in due course invited to join our federation — forming a fifth in the group.” Such an invitation was extended to the Presbyterians by the Joint Board in 1937, but nothing came of it.

The changes produced or anticipated by the union movement of 1925 raised in at least some minds the question of whether the cooperative
scheme should be continued at all. In a letter to Birks in 1923, Professor W.A. Gifford of the Wesleyan Theological College advanced the opinion that it would be in the best interest of the future United Church College to be in a position to operate strictly on its own. There were bound to be difficulties in meshing the three strands which were being interwoven, and these could be dealt with more effectively if the faculty of the College was not obliged to meet with others. He did not wish to be narrow or ungenerous but would be glad if both the Presbyterian remnant and the Church of England should decide to carry on independently. He would not rule out every form of cooperation so long as it did not require a Joint Faculty. Gifford reiterated this opinion in a memorandum of 1926. The joint scheme had, in his judgment, attained the ends for which it had been formed and there was nothing to be gained by continuing it.25

The merger of Methodists, Congregationalists and unionist Presbyterians to form the United Theological College placed the Diocesan College in a somewhat awkward position. Where formerly it had been one of four equal partners, it now faced the prospect of being the lesser partner in a two-college tandem. Although Birks did not agree with Gifford that the cooperative scheme should be discontinued, he made it very clear in a letter of 1925 to Principal Ritchie of the Congregational College that, since the Anglicans represented less than twenty-five percent of the faculty and students, and had contributed less than twelve percent to the funds, they had no valid claim to parity with the United College.26 He hoped, however, that the Anglicans would not withdraw from the scheme and this hope was realized, thanks in large part to the fact that Principal Rexford remained committed to it, as did his successor, Principal Abbott-Smith. At the annual meeting of the Joint Board in May, 1926, the Constitution which had called for six representatives to the Board from each of the four Colleges was amended to provide for sixteen representatives of the United College and eight of the Diocesan College.

FRUITS OF COOPERATION

When the cooperative scheme had been instituted in 1912 the primary aim was an improvement in the quality of theological education through such practical measures as the elimination of wasteful duplication, better salaries and working conditions for members of the teaching staffs, the provision of funds for bursaries and for inviting to Montreal religious leaders of stature from other parts of the world. Most of these objectives were gradually and at least partially attained, and other projects were undertaken. Many renowned Christian leaders were guests of the Co-operating Colleges during the thirty-eight years the plan was in operation. In 1914 a Travelling Fellowship of eight hundred dollars annually for two years was established, potential recipients to be nominated to the Joint Board by the College Faculties. In the Annual Report of the Joint Board for 1925-26 it was reported that the Board had made “arrangements for a Sabbatical year for Professors, so that they might travel and pursue studies at other seats of learning.”27 In 1927 the Joint Board approved a retirement allowance of five hundred dollars per annum to professors who were at least sixty years of age and had served the Board for at least fifteen years, provided not more than five were in receipt of the pension at any one time.

In 1918 the Joint Board assumed the major responsibility for the holding of a summer school for rural clergy—described in the Calendar for 1923-24 as the “Summer School for Rural Improvement” — at Macdonald College, an enterprise which continued for the next thirty years. In 1918-19 the Cooperating Colleges received a good deal of favourable publicity when the Joint Board was invited to assume responsibility for theological instruction in the Khaki University which was being set up in England for the education of soldiers awaiting demobilization. The Board accepted the invitation with alacrity, agreed to release such professors as could be spared by their respective Colleges, and pledged the sum of one thousand dollars for organization and equipment and five thousand dollars per annum as long as the Khaki University might be maintained. Principal Rexford was named Dean of the theological department of the University which was located at Ripon in Yorkshire. He was joined by two other members of the Montreal Joint Faculty as well as by a professor from Victoria College, Toronto, and three other Canadians who were already overseas as chaplains or in some other capacity. Sixty-nine students, representing seven denominations, were enrolled for the course in Theology which ran from January to June 30, 1919.

In addition to those ties with McGill stemming from affiliation, there were two or three other ways in which closer links were forged with the University. Under the influence of the social gospel movement there was a growing conviction in the early part of the twentieth century that theological students should possess an awareness of contemporary social problems and the methods being employed for their amelioration. To meet this need the Joint Board for many years contributed $2,000 per annum to assist in the work of the Department of Sociology and the School for Social Workers at McGill on condition that theological students be admitted free to classes in these subjects. This annual subvention was discontinued in 1930 owing to increased expenditure on the part of the Board in connection with the erection of a new building.28
In the report of its annual meeting for the session 1921-22 the Joint Board stated that graduate courses were now being offered in five areas leading to the B.D. and S.T.D. degrees. The annual report of the Board for the session 1923-24 added that seven of the courses being offered by the Joint Faculty had been accepted by the McGill “Faculty of Research and Graduate Studies as Minor Courses for the degree of M.A.” This was expanded as follows in the annual report for the session 1927-28: “It may be noted here, as not generally realized, that two of our Faculty have for years been on the staff of the Arts Department in the University, that in the McGill Calendar there is a Department of Theological Studies with six members of our Faculty entered as ‘Associates of the Faculty of Graduate Studies,’ and that seven courses of study offered by them are accepted by the McGill Faculty of Graduate Studies as courses qualifying for the M.A. degree.”

Finally, it was noted in the Board’s annual report for 1923-24 that closer ties with the University were provided by the newly organized Faculty Club of McGill, in which professors of the affiliated colleges were eligible for membership; and by the formation of the Students’ Theological Society through which, it was expected, divinity students would become more involved in the student activities of the University.

NEW DIVINITY HALL

By the late 1920’s there were numerous complaints that the building which had been purchased in 1914 and named Divinity Hall was disintegrating to the point where it had ceased to be serviceable. In March, 1929, the Joint Board authorized the sale of the property to McGill, and in the fall of that year agreed to purchase a site further north on University Street for the erection of a new Divinity Hall. This impressive building was completed and opened in 1931. For a succinct, if incomplete, description one cannot do better than reproduce that which appeared in the Calendar of the Cooperating Colleges for the session of 1932-33:

In October, 1931, the new Divinity Hall, at 3520 University Street was opened ... Built of Stadacona limestone, it is of fireproof construction, is wainscoted in rich oak panelling, heated with steam and artificially ventilated with the most modern equipment. It contains well-equipped class-rooms and offices, Common Rooms for Faculty and Students, a very handsome Board Room, a Library with large reading room for students, and a beautiful Chapel, finished throughout in oak, and containing an excellent organ in memory of the late Charles Gurd — the gift of his family. Portraits in oil of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, Knox, Hooker, Bunyan, Fox, Watts, Wesley, Keble, and Booth, copies of originals in English galleries, presented by W.M. Birks, Esq., Chairman of the Joint Board, are hung in various parts of the building, and add much to its attractiveness.

It was originally proposed to have only four portraits representing the ecclesiastical traditions within the Cooperating Colleges: Richard Hooker, Isaac Watts, John Knox, and John Wesley. When it was discovered, however, that the walls of the new building required more in the way of portraiture, theological considerations yielded to aesthetic ones and it was decided to feature eleven British Christian notables — ten English and one Scottish. Birks declared in a personal memorandum that “My aim is to strengthen Canadian loyalty to British Christianity in contradiction to Latin or what Dean Inge calls Mediterranean Christianity — and American Christianity — whatever that may mean.” With characteristic thoroughness Birks solicited opinions from many sources as to which British worthies should be included in the selection. Not surprisingly, there were differences of opinion. The American Methodist missionary statesman, John R. Mott, thought there should be representatives of the modern missionary movement and proposed the names of David Livingston and/or Alexander Duff. Professor Howard of the Diocesan College suggested that consideration should be given to such names as William Carey and Thomas Chalmers. Some of those consulted, including Mott, were not convinced that Keble rated a place. It had been hoped at one point to go back to the early days of British Christianity and start with such figures as St. Aidan and the Venerable Bede, but when it was pointed out that no authentic portraits of them existed it was decided to begin with the fourteenth century Wycliffe. When the choice had been made, the English artist, George R. Rushton, was commissioned to do the portraits.

The new Divinity Hall was formally opened and dedicated on October 5, 1931. The dedication of the Chapel took place at 11:00 a.m., those participating in the service being Principal Sir Arthur Currie of McGill, Principal James Smyth of the United Theological College, Principal G. Abbott-Smith of the Diocesan Theological College, and Dr. D.L. Ritchie, Dean of the United Theological College. This was followed by a luncheon at the Windsor Hotel and at 5:00 p.m. an address was delivered in the Chapel by Sir Robert Falconer, President of the University of Toronto.

Divinity Hall, now the William and Henry Birks Building, continues to house the McGill Faculty of Religious Studies. The passage of nearly fifty years and many generations of students have left their marks on it,
as have also numerous interior renovations dictated by the need for expansion or the provision of more up-to-date facilities. The description which appeared in the Calendar for 1932-33 would now require some revision, but the spirit of pride in the edifice first felt by those who were responsible for its construction still animates those who work within its walls.

NOTES

1. W.M. Birks Papers, McGill Archives.


4. Ibid., p. 16.

5. Memorandum of W.M. Birks, Nov. 5, 1912, Birks Papers, McGill Archives.

6. Shortly before the building was vacated in favour of a new Divinity Hall it was renumbered: as 3460 University Street.


8. The Church, Oct. 10, 1912.


18. Ibid.


22. Letter of W.M. Birks to Principal Ritchie, Aug. 23, 1925; Letter of W.M. Birks to Principal Rexford, Mar. 23, 1926; Birks Papers, McGill Archives.

23. Letter of W.M. Birks to Principal Rexford, Mar. 23, 1926, Birks Papers, McGill Archives.


CHAPTER II
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE McgILL
FACULTY OF DIVINITY

THE ERA OF HOPES DEFERRED

The McGill Faculty of Divinity was born after an exceptionally long period of gestation. According to W.M. Birks, it had been advocated in a McGill Convocation address as early as 1865 by the prominent Montreal Congregationalist clergyman, Henry Wilkes. The decision of 1912 to embark on a cooperative program in theological education sparked widespread speculation that the formation of a Faculty of Theology at McGill was imminent. Whatever may have been in the minds of those who fashioned the cooperative scheme, and it is certain that some of them were more than receptive to the idea, others were confident that a University Theological Faculty was already in the making.

In reporting on the meeting held on March 29, 1912, in Strathcona Hall — one of a series of key meetings held in March of that year — the Montreal Star declared that "there is an idea rife that more weight and prestige would attach to degrees if they were conferred by McGill University direct, instead of by the respective Theological Colleges." A current periodical, the Biblical World, in its issue of October 1, 1912, commenting on the launching of the new Montreal experiment, observed: "... one naturally thinks that the ultimate step must be the formation of a Theological Faculty of McGill University with provision for denominational hostels. McGill holds a royal charter, which leaves it perfectly free for any such development, when in the judgement of the governors it is deemed advisable." Still more significant was the commentary in the McGill Daily of the same date:

Such a concentration of forces is sure to broaden and strengthen theological teaching, and there is quite a likelihood that in the near future we may have a Theological Faculty at McGill which for its scope and opportunity will be unrivalled upon this continent and form no small part in the future life of our Alma Mater ...  

The Daily writer went on to observe that hitherto students of the affiliated theological colleges had played little part in the life of the University generally, had been conspicuous by their absence in University activities, "and have been a drag rather than a help in fostering the Greater McGill spirit." A Theological Faculty, it was hoped, would help to bring them into the mainstream of University life.

Those who saw a Theological Faculty at McGill as already in embryo were not allowing sufficiently for the possibility that there might be influential figures within the University who thought otherwise. Reference has already been made to the rebuff suffered by the Joint Board of the Theological Colleges when their proposal to erect a new building which would be shared jointly by the University and the Cooperating Colleges was flatly rejected. In a letter to Dr. Frank Adams of McGill in February, 1913, Birks assured him that "The Board of the Federated Colleges has not moved and is not moving in favor of a Divinity Faculty of the University." He did not say, however, that he would not welcome a move in this direction if it were feasible. A month later the Montreal Herald claimed that Birks was advocating a Theological Faculty at McGill, a proposal which was heartily endorsed by spokesmen for the Colleges so long as College autonomy was not jeopardized.

In July, 1913, the Herald reported that McGill had made it quite clear that it would not have a Theological Faculty, or confer degrees upon graduates of the Cooperating Colleges. The promoters of the recent successful financial campaign were said to have interviewed Principal Peterson and Sir William Macdonald, both of whom were "adamant." An unnamed "learned professor" in the University was quoted as saying:

The University teaches pure science. It could not teach any 'ology' or any 'ism' and be true to its high ideal. It could not turn out denominational ministers ... in a theological faculty of a university you would need a degree of theological comprehensiveness which it is felt could not be guaranteed by the several theological faculties in Montreal.

In the estimation of the Herald reporter, while some members of the University Board of Governors favored a Faculty of Theology, a majority were probably against it. All of this appears to have laid the question of a McGill Faculty of Theology to rest for the time being, but it never remained dormant for more than a few years. Its next formal appearance was at a meeting of the Policy Committee of the Joint Board in January, 1920, when Dr. Frank D. Adams, then Acting Principal of McGill, was present by invitation of W.M. Birks. In the ensuing months meetings were held between Dr. Adams and the College Principals, as well as special meetings of the
THE YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS

What was required to get a concrete proposal for a Theological Faculty at McGill on the launching pad, though not yet into orbit, was a combination of the irrepressible W.M. Birks and a University Principal who was not merely politely sympathetic toward such a Faculty but enthusiastically in favor of it. The latter ingredient was supplied by the arrival at McGill as Principal of F. Cyril James. At the meeting of the McGill Senate on May 15, 1940,

Mr. Birks raised the question of the integration of the subject of Theology with the general academic work of the University, and proposed that a small committee should be set up to consider the question and to examine the contribution that this subject might make to the University's general educational scheme.12

Senate resolved that such a Committee should be formed and nominated by the Chair, whereupon the Chair named Professor R.D. MacLennan, head of the Department of Philosophy, as chairman, together with Dean Hendel (to be chairman during Professor MacLennan’s absence), Principal F.C. James, Mr. W.M. Birks, Professor W.F. Chipman and Professor Cyrus MacMillan.13

During the next two years this committee, which was designated “The Committee on Theological Studies,” held consultations with the governing bodies of the United, Diocesan and Presbyterian Theological Colleges; scrutinized various proposals for the structure of a Faculty of Divinity within the University; and requested the College Faculties to prepare a detailed curriculum. The Committee made its first report to Senate on April 22, 1942, in a ten page document more than half of which was devoted to the suggested curriculum.

It recommended the establishment of a University Faculty of Divinity subject to the following main conditions: the Faculty would normally consist of eight chairs, at least six of which would be held by members of the three communions concerned; the Colleges would make their preferences regarding all eight appointments known through a pre-Selection Committee composed of six representatives from each of the Churches (or the Colleges as representing the Churches) while the final power of appointment would rest with the Board of Governors of the University; the Colleges would relinquish their right to grant degrees and would agree not to offer courses which would duplicate those being given in the Faculty of Divinity; Divinity Hall together with its endowments would be conveyed to McGill, while annual subventions of $12,000
would be made to the University by the United and Presbyterian Colleges and of $7,500 by the Diocesan College; the course of study would be for three years leading to a Bachelor of Divinity degree, with a B.A. degree as a prerequisite for entrance, but Church candidates lacking an Arts degree would be admitted to the Faculty as partial students; the University was to provide instruction in Homiletics, Oral English, Religious Education, Church Art and Architecture, and Church Music, but not in the conduct of Worship or Church polity; the statutory provisions were to come into effect five years after the institution of the Faculty, provided none of the contracting parties had intimated its intention to withdraw.

The Report received criticism at the hands of several members of Senate. Professor Corbett stated that he would favor a University chair of comparative religion but had less enthusiasm for a scheme under which at least three-quarters of the faculty were restricted to adherents of three particular “Christian faiths”. Professor Hatcher objected that the proposed pre-theological course gave insufficient attention to Science. Professor D.L. Thomson raised the question of priorities and wondered whether, if the University was in a position to establish new chairs, preference should be given to Divinity. Dean C.S. LeMesurier of the Faculty of Law protested that adoption of the Report would introduce for the first time doctrinal tests for University chairs and would restrict the University’s liberty of choice in making appointments to these chairs. He voiced the fear that creation of a Faculty of Divinity might weaken McGill’s position in Quebec as a completely undenominational institution. Finally, he submitted what would appear to have been the very valid criticism that the Committee had not fulfilled its mandate by examining the contribution which Theology might make to the University’s general educational scheme. At the conclusion of the debate it was resolved that:

- The report should be tabled and that the Committee should be asked to prepare before the next meeting of Senate a further report upon the contribution the proposed Faculty might make to the general educational work of the University and upon any other matters which it considered would assist Senate in reaching a decision.¹⁴

The Committee made a further report to Senate on May 22, 1942. Time had not permitted a thorough study of the major item which had been referred to it by the meeting of April 22, and the Committee had been content to explore certain of the implications of “affiliation” for both the Colleges and the University. The Report also attempted to reply to some of the objections raised at the previous meeting, especially to the charge that doctrinal tests were for the first time being introduced for University chairs. The Committee’s response was that “There are actually no tests at all. The only tests, if these can be called tests, are denominational and these operate only in the sense that a candidate for a chair in one of the Colleges must be a member of the denomination which maintains that College.” The movement in all of the three Churches, it was alleged, was away from denominationalism.¹⁵ The Committee affirmed that it had been assured by the College Faculties that “where Theology is regarded as a subject of University education it must be studied and taught in an atmosphere of freedom and with a thoroughly objective and scientific approach.”

At the close of the debate on the Report two motions were approved. “By a vote of 9-8 Senate was of the opinion that the establishment of a Faculty of Divinity would contribute directly to the educational work of the University”; “By a vote of 9-8 Senate decided that the method of appointment of staff laid down in the Committee’s report was not acceptable.”¹⁶ Meanwhile, the Committee was to continue its work and was expanded by the addition of two of its most trenchant critics: Dean C.S. LeMesurier and Dean-Elect D.L. Thomson of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

The Committee did not report to Senate again until April 21, 1943, at which time it submitted a statement on “The Place of Theology in University Studies,” an “Amended Report,” and a “Minority Report.” In the first of these three documents it was contended that there was a growing conviction that the cleavage between liberal arts studies and religious knowledge had been prejudicial to both, tending towards an over-secularization of the former and a contraction of the scope and influence of the latter. It was at least arguable that the University was remiss in neglecting to inform the minds of its students in areas which were commonly recognized as being of great concern to our society. As for Theology itself, it had now become too large and important a subject to be handled by individual church colleges or even by limited cooperative schemes. In the judgement of the Committee there were two dominant considerations. First, there was the potential influence upon the student body as a whole of the recognition of Theology as a subject of University status, and the availability to them of courses in the nature of religion. Second, there was the opportunity for the University to improve the intellectual quality of the theological students themselves. The average student was apt to form impressions of the validity of religious knowledge from the intellectual quality of the theological students he encountered in the classroom and, correctly or otherwise, this was not rated highly. Furthermore, Theology could make specific and concrete contributions in such fields as Sociology, Philosophy, His-
The "Amended Report" of the Committee proposed two changes in principles and procedures for making appointments to a Faculty of Divinity. First, whereas the original report had recommended that each of the three Colleges should have a minimum of two members on the Faculty, it was now suggested that this principle should be honored only so far as was consistent with the best available candidates for the six chairs. Second, whereas the earlier report had proposed that the pre-Selection Committee should consist of six representatives from each of the Churches, or the Colleges as representing the Churches, it was now recommended that the Committee be comprised of two representatives from each College, one of whom would normally be the Principal and the other a member of the teaching staff who would also be a member of the Faculty of Divinity. It was hoped that this would meet the objection that appointments to University chairs were subject to undue influence by an outside body. Furthermore, the pre-Selection Committee was now to have no say in appointments to the remaining two chairs.

The "Minority Report", submitted under the signatures of Dean LeMesurier and Dean-Elect Thomson, took exception to almost all claims on behalf of a Faculty of Divinity which had been advanced by the majority of the Committee. In spite of all disclaimers to the contrary, the proposed Faculty could not avoid being sectarian in character, not even being truly representative of Christianity, to say nothing of other religions. It was now being suggested that two of the eight chairs should be strictly University appointments, but it would be idle to pretend that the Faculty as a whole, which would inevitably be dominated by appointees acceptable to the three Churches, would not exercise a strong voice in appointments to these "free chairs", or that the University could easily force upon the Faculty an unacceptable candidate. On the surface the proposed gifts in money and equipment from the Colleges to the University appeared generous, but there was no assurance that they would cover either immediate needs or future contingencies. The dissenters feared that the Faculty would prove a financial drain on the resources of the University and siphon off funds badly needed by other Departments. In their judgement, the majority had not made a convincing case for the contribution which Theology might make to the University's general educational scheme, and it remained to be shown that a Faculty of Divinity offered advantages which could not be derived from affiliation or the offering of one or two courses in religion within the Faculty of Arts and Science. They professed to be convinced that a largely denominational Faculty would be viewed unfavourably by "many of our English Catholic, French-Canadian, and Jewish students and their parents and coreligionists." They doubted whether the proposed Faculty could be closely integrated with other Faculties in the University, since existing professional Faculties tended to make little impact upon one another. They were not moved by the argument that a Faculty of Divinity would automatically exert a beneficent moral and religious influence among undergraduates elsewhere in the University, and they were sceptical of the claim that such a Faculty would elevate the academic standards of theological students. The theological student was required to "praise the Lord and pass the examination," and in view of the Colleges' needs for candidates there would always be a tendency to accept proficiency in the former as compensating for mediocrity in the latter. In conclusion, they urged that it was not a propitious time for the establishment of a Faculty of Divinity and recommended that the Committee be dissolved.

Confronted with these conflicting views, the Senate was in no position to make hasty decisions. Some sort of temporizing tactic seemed to be in order, and a debate ensued as to whether the next step should be up to the University or the Churches. It was finally resolved that:

"Senate should postpone further consideration of the report until the question had been referred to the three churches concerned and until these churches had reported all their opinions of all the details of the proposed scheme and had expressed their willingness to finance the new faculty along the lines suggested in the report."

It was not to be expected that the substance of the Minority Report would go unchallenged by those who favoured the establishment of a Faculty of Divinity. In a letter to the Chairman of the Committee in October, 1943, Acting-Principal W.A. Gifford of the United Theological College wrote:

"The logic of the Minority Report is that no Faculty of Divinity can suitably be included in any University. For members of a Divinity Faculty are likely, on general grounds, to be religious men; they will probably, therefore, be members of one Denomination or another; they will therefore become 'sectarian' and incapable of dispassionate approach to truth . . . To exclude them would be as rational as to
require that no instructor in philosophy or law or medicine shall belong to any particular school of philosophy or law or medicine.  

Meanwhile, officials of the three Churches had been approached by letter and replies received prior to the next meeting of Senate on May 21, 1943. Bishop Dixon of Montreal replied that the Diocesan College welcomed the proposal for a Faculty of Divinity "subject to clarification of certain implied restrictions which would seriously affect the autonomy of the . . . College." The College Board had appointed a committee to consider the matter of autonomy as well as the financial recommendations of the majority report. The Clerk of the Presbyterian General Assembly stated that the proposal would be presented to the forthcoming meeting of the Assembly, and that in all likelihood it would be referred to a special committee. The Secretary of the United Church of Canada pointed out that the General Council of that Church had already approved the formation of a Faculty of Divinity at its meeting in September, 1942, provided the rights and liberties of the Church had been secured. In September Senate received another communication from Bishop Dixon, suggesting a few minor amendments in the arrangement between the University and the Colleges but indicating general agreement with the proposal. It still had to be ratified by the Corporation of the Diocesan College, but no difficulty was anticipated on this score.

If the United and Anglican Churches were positive in their responses, the Presbyterians were proving to be recalcitrant. The General Assembly of 1943 declined by a narrow majority to permit its College in Montreal to enter the proposed Faculty. There remained the possibility that the matter could be reopened at a future Assembly, but for the moment the prospects for Presbyterian participation in the scheme were not promising. This was a source of embarrassment to the Chairman of the Committee on Theological Studies who was a member of this communion, and it also meant that certain of the proposals pertaining to the structure of the Faculty would have to be revamped. The Committee continued its activities, however, and in November, 1943, was enlarged by the addition of Professor Tyndale, Professor Hughes, and Senator Hugessen.

In the ensuing months, partly it was said for fiscal reasons, the Committee began to think in terms of a Faculty of Divinity on a considerably diminished scale. In a letter to W.A. Gifford in April, 1944, Professor MacLennan intimated that the Committee now proposed to recommend to Senate that the number of chairs in the Faculty be reduced to five. Three of these — Old Testament, New Testament, and Systematic Theology — would be processed through the pre-Selection Committee, while the remaining two — Comparative Religion and Church History — would be made directly by the University. Professor Gifford replied promptly that this was unacceptable to the Senate of the United Theological College. They might be prepared to leave the appointment to the chair of Comparative Religion exclusively in the hands of the University, but could not do so in the case of the chair of Church History. The officials of the Diocesan College were in complete accord with their United Church colleagues on this point. As a result of this exchange of correspondence Professor MacLennan informed the meeting of the University Senate on April 19 that the Committee had prepared a report, but since it was now known that sections of it were unacceptable to the Colleges it had been decided not to present it.

In May, 1944, the Board of Governors of the University, acting on a recommendation from the Executive and Finance Committee, appointed a special committee composed of the Chancellor, Mr. Morris Wilson, and Mr. G.W. Spinney to discuss with representatives of the Diocesan and United Theological Colleges the financial and legal implications of the proposal for a Faculty of Divinity. This committee later reported back to the Board that such a Faculty was desirable and practicable provided it could be financed without any drain on general University funds which, in their opinion, meant that the contributions from the Theological Colleges would need to be supplemented by other endowments from outside sources.

By the spring of 1945, Professor MacLennan had largely abandoned hope of further progress in the immediate future. Writing to Principal James in April of that year, on his own and not officially as Chairman of the Committee on Theological Studies, he deplored the refusal of the Presbyterian Church to endorse the scheme which had been presented to Senate in 1943. Had they approved it, his opinion was that Senate might well have accepted it at that time. He had now reached the conclusion that the introduction of the historical and philosophical study of religion within the Faculty of Arts and Science would be the best means of preparing the ground for a Faculty of Theology at some future date.

THE FINAL LAP

Meanwhile, however, another avenue had opened up, and while it did not immediately lead very far, it was ultimately the means by which the quest for a Faculty of Divinity was brought to a successful culmination. The Faculty of Arts and Science was not indifferent to the possible creation of a new Faculty with which it was likely to have some relationship. At the meeting of the University Senate on April 19, 1944, a petition
signed by thirty-three members of the teaching staff in the Faculty of Arts and Science requested that Senate invite this Faculty to study the question of a Faculty of Divinity, consider its relationship with the proposed Faculty, and aid Senate in its deliberations by an expression of opinion on the matter. The Committee on Theological Studies was requested to consult with the signatories of the petition and discuss any matters in the Committee's report which directly affected the Faculty of Arts and Science. 

It is not known what transpired at these discussions, and nothing more of an official nature was heard from this source for almost four years. In his "Reminiscences" W.M. Birks claimed that in 1947 Principal James deliberately entrusted the whole matter to the Council of the Faculty of Arts and Science under the chairmanship of Dean Gillson. In any case, the Executive and Finance Committee of the Board of Governors, meeting on January 13, 1948, had before it a unanimous recommendation from the Arts and Science Council that a Faculty of Divinity be created. The Committee unanimously agreed that, subject to the approval of Senate, the recommendation "be adopted and put into effect at the earliest possible date." 

The recommendation from the Council of the Faculty of Arts and Science came before Senate on January 21, 1948. Questions were raised concerning the competence of the Arts and Science Council to make such a recommendation, but the principal objection at this meeting was that newer members of Senate were not familiar with previous reports concerning this matter and could not be expected to support a scheme about which they knew so little. It was moved in amendment that decision be deferred until the February meeting, and that in the meantime the relevant portions of the majority and minority reports of 1943 be circulated to all members of Senate. The amendment was adopted by a vote of 12 to 11. 

The meeting of Senate on February 18 precipitated another full-scale debate. Former critics of a Faculty of Divinity, such as Deans LeMesurier and Thomson, were now joined by Professor F.R. Scott of the Faculty of Law and Professor E.G.D. Murray of the Faculty of Medicine. But while some of the adversaries were new, the same cannot be said of the arguments. If the account of the proceedings which was recorded in the Minutes is an accurate description of what occurred, the criticisms were virtually indistinguishable from those which had been raised five years earlier. At the conclusion of the debate, Senate resolved by a vote of 19 to 5 to adopt the recommendation of the Council of the Faculty of Arts and Science, and to recommend to the Board of Governors the establishment of a Faculty of Divinity, a special committee being appointed to implement the resolution.

## NOTES

5. Supra., pp. 3-4.
13. There is no further mention of Dean Hendel who resigned from McGill as of September 1, 1940, to accept an appointment at Yale University.
15. This whole statement was somewhat disingenuous. In at least some of the Churches denominationalism was not as defunct and tests were not quite as inconsequential as it is implied.
17. Minutes of McGill Senate, April 21, 1943, James Papers, McGill Archives.
CHAPTER III

THE MCGILL FACULTY: FIRST DECADE, 1948-58

The agreement of 1948 by which the Faculty of Divinity became a formal entity was signed by four contracting parties: McGill University, the Joint Board of Theological Colleges Affiliated with McGill University, the United Theological College, and the Diocesan Theological College. It still bore a recognizable resemblance to the initial report of the Committee on Theological Studies which had been presented to the University Senate in April, 1942, but certain changes had been necessitated both by the abstention of the Presbyterians and by criticisms of some suggested procedures.

STAFFING OF THE FACULTY

The Faculty was to start with six chairs: Old Testament Language and Literature, New Testament Language and Literature, History of the Christian Church, Systematic Theology, Philosophy and Psychology of Religion, and Comparative Religion. All appointments were to be made by the Board of Governors of McGill, but in the cases of the first four of the above-named chairs the University undertook to appoint only individuals whose names had been submitted by a Nominating Committee composed of three representatives from each of the participating Colleges and convened, though not necessarily chaired, by the Dean of the Faculty of Divinity. The Nominating Committee was to confer with the University Selection Committee before submitting names for appointment, and the Selection Committee could suggest names to the Nominating Committee for consideration. This was regarded as the most acceptable solution to the problem which had perplexed Principal Currie in 1923, that of a Faculty which in some sense would be under the joint control of the University and the denominational Colleges. So far as possible, appointments to the Faculty were to be made from among members of the existing College staffs.

The Joint Board transferred Divinity Hall to McGill together with its endowments, the latter to be administered by the University for the benefit of the Faculty of Divinity.
agreed to make an annual subvention to McGill of $10,500, the Diocesan Theological College of $6,500. In return, McGill was not to charge tuition fees to students in the Faculty of Divinity who were regular candidates for ordination in either of the participating Colleges, although the University reserved the right to review this matter of fees in the future. Any of the contracting parties was free to notify the others of its intention to withdraw from the arrangement provided notice was given at least six months prior to the last day of February, 1953. The Faculty of Divinity commenced operations as a component part of the University on September 1, 1948, but the articles of agreement were not actually signed until December 9, 1948.

A service to mark the inauguration of the Faculty was held in the Chapel of Divinity Hall on October 5, 1948. Brief addresses were delivered by Principal F. Cyril James of McGill and Dean R.B.Y. Scott, while the Anglican Bishop of Montreal, the Right Reverend John Dixon, pronounced the Benediction. Principal James enunciated what he considered to be the dual function of the Faculty when he declared: “I think that the creation of this Faculty of Divinity signifies not only the contribution that it can make to higher education in McGill University, but the contribution that McGill can make to the training of those who in the future will be Ministers of the Gospel.”

In June, 1948, Professor R.B.Y. Scott was appointed Dean of the Faculty for its first year of operation. A native of Toronto, Robert B.Y. Scott was educated in that city at Knox College and the University of Toronto. In 1928 he was appointed Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature at Union College, Vancouver, and in 1931 Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis at the United Theological College, Montreal. June, 1948 also saw the first three appointments to the teaching staff of the Faculty, to be effective September 1, in the persons of R.B.Y. Scott as Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature, W.A. Ferguson as Professor of New Testament Language and Literature but only in a post-retirement capacity, and H.H. Walsh as Associate Professor of Church History. Lately Rector of Christ Church, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Walsh had recently been appointed to the Diocesan Theological College as Professor of Pastoral Theology and Christian Sociology.

Although it had been agreed that appointments to the Faculty would, wherever possible, be made from among existing members of the College staffs, some of the latter were excluded by differences between the University and the Colleges in retirement regulations. Whereas the University had statutory rules governing the age of retirement, the practice in the Colleges had been for men to teach to a more advanced age, and in more than one instance a senescent professor had been wedged to his chair until death did them part. Some members of the College staffs were already past the age when they could be considered for University appointments. Only three appointments were made from this source, and it was understood that one of these would be for a short period. For the opening session and until permanent appointments could be made the Faculty functioned with an interim staff. In addition to Scott, Ferguson and Walsh, it included Professor W.A. Gifford in Comparative Religion, Dr. D.J. Wilson in Psychology of Religion, Professor R. Klibansky of the McGill Department of Philosophy in Philosophy of Religion, and the Reverend Gerald R. Cragg in Systematic Theology.

Between 1948 and 1950, the various chairs were gradually filled. In October, 1948, the Board of Governors announced the appointment, effective June 1, 1949, of James Sutherland Thomson as Dean of the Faculty and J.W. McConnell Professor of the Philosophy and Psychology of Religion. Born in Stirling, Scotland, Dr. Thomson was a graduate of Glasgow University and the United Free Church College, Glasgow. Following a ministry of ten years in Scotland, he came to Canada in 1930 to accept an appointment as Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy of Religion at Pine Hill Divinity Hall, Halifax. In 1937, he was elected President of the University of Saskatchewan where he remained until his removal to McGill in 1949.

The appointment was announced in February, 1949, effective September 1, 1949, of Wilfred Cantwell Smith as the first W.M. Birks Professor of Comparative Religion. A native of Toronto, Dr. Smith was educated at the University of Toronto; Westminster College, Cambridge, where he received his theological education; and Princeton University, as well as attending universities in Grenoble, Madrid and Cairo. From 1941 to 1945 he taught Islamic and Indian history at Forman Christian College, Lahore, and the University of the Punjab.

In March 1949, the appointment was announced of Robert H.L. Slater as Professor of Systematic Theology, also effective September 1, 1949. Born in England, Dr. Slater received his higher education at Emmanuel College, Cambridge and Columbia University, New York. After some years of church service in England he was appointed Lecturer in Logic and in the Philosophy of Religion, Rangoon, Burma. During the year preceding his appointment to McGill he was Professor of Apologetics and Church History at Huron College, London, Ontario.

The original faculty was completed in 1950 with the appointment of George B. Caird as Professor of New Testament Language and Literature. Dr. Caird was educated at Cambridge; Mansfield College, Oxford, where he studied Theology; and Oxford University. After serving a few years as minister of a Congregational Church in England, in 1946 he accepted an
appointment as Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, where he remained until coming to McGill.

The first appointees to the new chairs in the Faculty of Divinity, at the rank of full professor, followed the traditional custom of delivering inaugural Lectures. Dean Thomson led off in November, 1949, with a lecture on “Knowledge of God,” followed in December of that year by R.H.L. Slater whose subject was “Reason, Revelation and Paradox,” and W.C. Smith who spoke on “The Comparative Study of Religion.” The series was continued in February, 1950, by R.B.Y. Scott whose theme was “The Living Interest of the Old Testament,” and concluded in the fall of that year with G.B. Caird’s lecture on “The New Testament View of Life.” In the light of certain later trends within the Faculty in the direction of intellectualizing religious studies, some of Caird’s remarks reflect a more traditionalist stance which was probably characteristic of the Faculty in its formative years. Without misprizing sound scholarship, he nevertheless affirmed that:

The New Testament does not leave us in any doubt as to the nature of the equipment required for the appreciation of its testimony. To the humbling of all University professors, let it be admitted that it is not intellectual; there are things hidden from the wise and learned which are revealed to babes. The equipment is moral... whatever be the relation in other faculties between pure and applied science, we in the Faculty of Divinity are ever conscious that the science of theology must be subervient to the practice of Christian living. However meticulously we may prosecute our studies in the disinterested love of truth, we must recognize that religion is ultimately not an object of study but a life to be lived.

The five Year Trial Period

The first formal meeting of the faculty took place on September 16, 1948, launching a session during which no fewer than thirty-four such meetings were held. It was no simple task to transform a Faculty which had hitherto existed only on paper into a working reality, although it is indicative of small beginnings that at this maiden meeting on September 16 it was agreed that the whole faculty must approve the purchase of each book for the Library. Academically speaking, this first session of 1948-49 was less than auspicious. It was a transitional year in the sense that third or final year students in Theology were not eligible for registration in the Faculty of Divinity, with admission to the Bachelor of Divinity program being restricted to first and second year students. There were nineteen students in B.D.1 and B.D.2, five of whom were partial students. Seven of the nineteen were either dropped or failed to complete the work of the session. It is mathematically impossible to ascribe this unimpressive record solely to the presence of partial students who lacked the normal entrance requirements and experienced difficulty in coping with the B.D. curriculum, but this problem was regarded as being sufficiently serious to warrant special mention in the Dean’s annual report. The practice of inviting distinguished visitors to lecture to the students, which has continued to the present, was begun during this opening session. The first visiting lecturers were Professor K.S. Latourette, Bishop Stephen Neill, President John MacKay of Princeton, and Canon Bernard Iddings Bell.

The session of 1949-50 witnessed several developments which were to have a significant bearing on the future history of the Faculty. It began with a special service in the Chapel on October 4, 1949, at which time a sacred Ikon which had been presented to the University by the late Archbishop Damaskinos of Athens was unveiled by the Ambassador of Greece to Canada. The Ikon, which depicted the incident of St. Paul preaching to the philosophers at Athens, was presented to Canada by Archbishop Damaskinos in the name of the Greek people in recognition of assistance rendered during the troubled period immediately following the Second World War. It came to McGill and the Divinity Hall Chapel through the good offices of Mr. W.M. Birks who had served as Joint-Chairman of the Inter-Allied Relief Commission.

It was recognized from the start that more was expected from a university Faculty of Divinity than the education of theological undergraduates. During the opening session, at the meeting of faculty on January 11, 1949, it was agreed to recommend to the University Senate that certain courses in religion be made available in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Senate granted approval and agreed to the introduction as electives of two half courses in “The Literature of the Bible,” two half courses in “Comparative Religion,” and one full course in “The History and Meaning of Christianity.” These courses were offered for the first time in the session of 1950-51.

In September, 1949, consideration was given to the offering of courses leading to a graduate degree, although it was agreed that such action would have to be deferred for at least another session. Dean J.S. Thomson reported to faculty on September 9 that he had discussed this matter with Dean D.L. Thomson of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, and had been advised that the Faculty of Divinity should formulate specific
proposals which could then be examined. It was decided to begin with a Master's degree, the S.T.M. — Sanctorum Theologicae Magister — and the meeting of faculty on February 8, 1950, was informed that Senate had approved the proposal with control of the degree being vested in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. There was only one candidate for the S.T.M. in the session of 1950-51, but by 1951-52 registration had increased to eight, two of these being connected with the newly formed Institute of Islamic Studies, and the first Ph.D. candidate had appeared on the scene. The prospect of graduate work becoming the most rapidly growing phase of the Faculty's activity had already raised the question of how adequately this could be handled with the existing staff.7

During the session of 1949-50 Mr. W.M. Birks, to whom the Faculty was already indebted beyond measure, placed it even more deeply in his debt by making a gift of $50,000 to be set up as a Special Fund, the interest to be applied for purposes designated by the Dean of the Faculty. It was decided that a portion of the income should be used for an annual public lectureship to be held each year just before the beginning of session in connection with the alumni reunions of the associated Colleges and of the Faculty. The balance of the income was to be used for a fellowship in the S.T.M. program and scholarships in the B.D. program: an entrance scholarship, scholarships at the close of the first and second years, and a prize for the best B.D. candidate.8 The Birks Lectures, now held after rather than before the beginning of each session, are still a treasured tradition of the Faculty, and the Birks Fund remains a source of assistance to deserving students.

The Bachelor of Divinity long remained the only undergraduate degree, and with the passage of time it underwent certain modifications. A proposal for an Honours B.D. was approved by Senate in the fall of 1949, and in the spring of 1950 the faculty endorsed regulations governing the B.D. thesis. It was easier to make provision for the gifted student than for the one whose preparation was deficient, and complaints continued to be voiced periodically concerning the partial or non-degree student whom the Faculty was obligated to accept as a service to the associated Colleges but who in some cases was not properly equipped to handle B.D. work. At the same time, Dean Thomson and his colleagues were surprised to discover that possession of an Arts degree, which had long been regarded as the most desirable prerequisite for the study of Theology, was in itself no guarantee of superior performance in the B.D. program. Students with degrees in other fields — such as science, engineering, or commerce — sometimes had better records. All of which prompted the Dean to speculate that the thing of primary importance might be the intellectual discipline acquired in a university program rather than the actual subjects studied.9 It was noted early that a need existed to reconcile the claims of the Colleges upon the time and energy of the students in the area of practical training with the demands of the University for more academic work. Dean Thomson expressed confidence that this would not present any insuperable difficulties,10 which may have been correct insofar as it was always possible in an atmosphere of goodwill to negotiate acceptable compromises, but the problem is a perennial one for which no church-related educational institution has discovered any ideal solution.

One of the more significant changes in the B.D. program during this decade was in the realm of teaching methods. It was, or in retrospect coming to fruition. At a meeting of the faculty in May, 1952, it was suggested that where three class periods a week had been assigned for a course one of these periods might be devoted to discussion rather than a lecture, and that with a view to fostering greater participation in discussion the class be divided into smaller groups.11 For some unaccountable reason this seemingly innocuous innovation was not presented to and approved by Senate until the session of 1957-58, although there are indications that it was being employed experimentally without any official imprimatur. The rationale, as explained by Dean Frost who had by then succeeded Dean Thomson, was that since B.D. candidates already had an undergraduate degree there was justification for giving the B.D. more of a postgraduate character by reducing lectures and substituting more prescribed reading and discussion.12 Thus was introduced what continues in the Faculty of Religious Studies to be called the system of "Tutorials". The principle remains essentially unchanged, but across the years this third weekly hour in a course has been used in sundry ways and great latitude has been exercised by individual instructors. A further change made at this time in the B.D. syllabus was that one Biblical language, either Hebrew or Greek, was made mandatory in the first year, and the elective principle was introduced to a limited degree during the last term of the final year.

By the early 1950's Professor Wilfred Smith was searching for some means whereby the study of Comparative Religion could find a larger niche within the University curriculum, and particularly for some structure through which his own expertise and experience in the field of Islamics could be utilized more effectively. Pursuant to conversations with various interested parties, he proposed in a letter to Principal James in May, 1951, that an Institute of Islamic Studies be established in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. The hope was expressed that such an Institute would help to create a better understanding between the Islamic world and the West, and to this end it was suggested that it be
staffed by both Muslim and Western students of Islam. The aim of the Institute would be to study Islam in both its past and contemporary expressions. “The emphasis throughout would be on Islam as a contemporary and living force.” During the session of 1951-52 approval was given to the establishment of such an Institute and Dr. Smith was named Director.

Although the Institute was a constituent part of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research rather than the Faculty of Divinity, Professor Smith served in the dual capacity of Director of the Institute and Professor of Comparative Religion in the Faculty of Divinity, and for several years the Institute functioned in Divinity Hall. The ambiguous nature of the arrangement appeared in 1956 when Professor Smith, pleading an onerous work load, requested that consideration be given to the appointment of an assistant in the field of Comparative Religion. While agreeing that assistance was needed, Dean Thomson demurred that, since Dr. Smith’s additional duties were concerned with the Institute rather than the Faculty of Divinity, it was questionable whether the cost of an assistant should be borne “strictly by the Faculty”. The expansion of graduate work also made it likely that in the near future assistants would be required in other fields. By 1957, the combined activities of the Institute and the Faculty were taxing the facilities of Divinity Hall and in the fall of that year the Institute moved to separate quarters.

In 1953, the agreement between the Colleges and the University, which had been for a five year trial period, was ratified by the contracting parties and the Faculty established on a permanent basis. Several amendments to the original agreement were approved, of which the following may be noted: (1) Principals of the associated Colleges who were not members of the Faculty of Divinity were to be ex officio members with the right to attend meetings and participate in proceedings but without voting privileges; (2) When appointments of more than one academic year’s duration were to be made in the fields of Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology, or Church History, the Nominating Committee representing the Colleges was to be convoked by the Dean of the Faculty of Divinity and only the names of persons agreed upon by the Nominating Committee were to be recommended to the Board of Governors of the University for appointment; (3) The Dean of the Faculty could on his own initiative recommend persons for appointment in the four abovenamed fields for a period of not more than one academic year, but such persons could not be recommended for reappointment without the authorization of the Nominating Committee; (4) Candidates for the ministry and ordained ministers taking courses in the Faculty of Divinity who were members of any denomination represented by the participating Colleges
were to register both in the Faculty of Divinity and in the College of the denomination to which they belonged.\footnote{5}

The death occurred in 1930 of William Massey Birks who by his vision, pertinacity and munificence contributed more than any other individual to cooperative theological education and the formation of the Faculty of Divinity. Since the Joint Board did not meet between 1948 and 1953, it took no official cognizance of his demise at the time, but at its meeting on March 10, 1953, it was agreed that a suitable memorial be placed in Divinity Hall. At a subsequent meeting of the Board on December 15, 1953, it was resolved that a Bronze Tablet be placed on the wall of the main ground floor of Divinity Hall to commemorate the work and influence of Mr. Birks, and that Dean J.S. Thomson be requested to assume responsibility for the erection of the memorial with an appropriate inscription. The Tablet was unveiled in the foyer of Divinity Hall on October 4, 1956. Only one who knew Mr. Birks, a distinction to which the writer cannot lay claim, could properly appraise his personality, but on the basis of extant letters and other documents, the critique of A. Robert George, a former member of the teaching staff of the Cooperating Colleges, would appear to have some foundation: “He did not suffer fools gladly, but he was sometimes mistaken about the fools, being inclined to include in that category those who were not running the appointed way. Too often in asserting the truth as he saw it he was impatient with other views.”\footnote{6} To suggest that he had human flaws, however, does not detract from his stature or obscure the fact that he gave unstintingly of his time, energy and means to a multiplicity of public services.

ATTEMPT TO PURCHASE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In March, 1955, Professor R.B.Y. Scott tendered his resignation from the Faculty to accept an appointment in the Department of Religion at Princeton University. During the preceding year he had become involved in what proved to be an abortive attempt by McGill University to purchase a part of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first discoveries of these scroll fragments, which contained portions of almost all the books of the Old Testament along with other materials, were made in 1947 with subsequent finds in 1951 and 1952. McGill hoped to obtain some of the latter through funds made available by the John Henry Birks Foundation, and it was proposed that the collection be preserved in the Faculty of Divinity as the “John Henry Birks Collection”. The initial purchase was made in 1954 after prolonged negotiations conducted by Professor Scott with the Department of Antiquities of the Government of Jordan. The Montreal Gazette reported in May, 1954, that purchases to the value of $15,000 had
been made with the understanding that the fragments were to remain at the Palestine Museum in Jerusalem for about two years before being shipped to McGill so that they could be classified and correlated with other finds.17

Professor Scott spent a month in Jerusalem in the spring of 1955, from April 27 to May 28, in order to examine the McGill acquisition at first hand. In a lengthy letter to Principal James, dated May 15, he stated that he had then listed 414 fragments of the McGill collection. In 1956, McGill made an additional purchase with a further grant of $5,000 from the Birks Foundation; in all the sum of $19,563 was expended. By this time, however, there were signs that the political situation in the Middle East might impede delivery of the materials. In a letter from Princeton to Principal James in September, 1956, Professor Scott reported that the Director of Antiquities at the Palestine Museum had been dismissed "due partly to the wave of Arab nationalism and partly to intrigue by a former subordinate." He expressed, as he had on previous occasions, pride in the fact that McGill was the first university to offer to purchase some of the fragments, something which was being mentioned with increasing frequency in the growing literature on the subject, and he remained convinced that the purchases would eventually be delivered.18 These hopes were dashed later in the year, however, when the Jordanian government decreed that none of the materials were to be removed from that country, and the transaction was never consummated.

It was not until the early part of 1963 that the purchase price was finally recovered. At that time Mr. Henry Birks, son of the late W.M. Birks, directed that $5,000 be left in the account, which was to be renamed the Birks Dead Sea Scrolls Library Fund. It was to be used to buy items to build up the special collection of books, photographs, microfilms, etc., relating to the Dead Sea Scrolls. The balance was to be donated to the United Theological College Building Fund.19

STAFF CHANGES AND OBSEWANCE OF DECENTNIAL

In addition to the appointment of sessional lecturers, there were several staff changes during this first decade of the Faculty’s operations. In 1953, the Reverend Kenneth H. Rogers was appointed Lecturer in the Psychology of Religion and remained in this post until his untimely death in 1958. From 1954-57 R. Kenneth Naylor was Lecturer in Christian Ethics. In 1956 Professor Scott was succeeded in the Chair of Old Testament Language and Literature by Professor Stanley Brice Frost of Didsbury College, Bristol, a graduate of the Universities of London and Marburg. In 1956 the Reverend John C. Kirby, a graduate of General Theological Seminary, New York, and a graduate student in the McGill Faculty, was appointed as part-time Lecturer in New Testament. At the end of the session of 1956-57 Dr. Thomson retired both as Dean of the Faculty and Professor of the Philosophy and Psychology of Religion, but continued in a part-time post-retirement capacity. He did not leave the Faculty until May, 1960, and after this still taught part-time in the Institute of Education. At the McGill Convocation on May 30, 1966, he was named Emeritus Professor. His death occurred in November, 1972. He was succeeded as Dean of the Faculty by Professor Stanley B. Frost.

In 1957, J. Arthur Boorman, a graduate of the University of Alberta and Columbia University, New York, was appointed as part-time Lecturer in Christian Ethics; and Charles J. Adams, a graduate of Baylor University and the University of Chicago, was appointed Lecturer in Comparative Religion. In the spring of 1958, Professor R.H.L. Slater resigned from the Chair of Systematic Theology to become Professor of World Religions in Harvard University. He was succeeded in the fall of 1958 by Eric G. Jay, Dean of Nassau in the Bahamas from 1948 to 1951 and Senior Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1951-58; a graduate of the Universities of Leeds and London, and a former Lecturer in Theology at King's College, London.

As the first decade approached its terminus there were reports and ruminations concerning what had or had not been accomplished. In a report to the Joint Board in December, 1957, Dean Frost listed enrolment statistics for the years from 1948 to 1957. Undergraduate enrolment had fluctuated from a low of 19 in the opening session to a high of 55 in the session of 1954-55 and had decreased to 49 by the session of 1957-58. By 1957-58 there were also 21 graduate students.20 As has always been the case, enrolment in the undergraduate program was heavily dependent on the supply of candidates for the ministry in the associated Colleges, and in the Diocesan College in particular this had fallen below expectations. Principal R.H.L. Slater opined that this was attributable to the waning of ecumenical sentiment and the resurgence of denominationalism, as well as to the fact that Anglicans were not as strongly represented in the Faculty as they might be.21 In his annual report for 1957-58 Dean Frost indulged in some general reflections on the interrelationships of Colleges, Churches and the University. He had reached the conclusion that McGill could best serve the Canadian Church by developing post-graduate studies "alongside and heavily rooted in the undergraduate work of the Colleges." As for the standing of the Faculty at this time his overall assessment was that "At the moment our general reputation is, I think, very good, but more as individuals than as a Faculty."22
anniversary of the founding of the Faculty. On October 23 a lecture was delivered in McGill's Moyse Hall by Dean Douglas Horton of Harvard Divinity School on "The Place of a Faculty of Divinity Within a University of Today." The central thrust of his address was the distinction between a university department of religion and a faculty of divinity. "So far as I know," he asserted, "the one differencia of a divinity school... is the school's sense of obligation to the church... The teaching in every classroom takes it for granted that a gospel without the social body which the church provides is the merest ghost." It was this, in his opinion, which made the relation of the divinity school to the university "the source of endless discussion." It was the area where the university and the ecumenical church overlapped. On October 26 a service was held in Christ Church Cathedral which was attended by members of the Board of Governors, Senate and Faculty of McGill, and with music provided by the McGill Choral Society. The Right Reverend John Dixon spoke on "The University and the Church". As he saw it, the Faculty of Divinity, in addition to educating candidates for the ministry, served a twofold purpose. It bore witness in the name of a great university to the place of the Christian religion in the life of man, and it provided the opportunity for integrating Christian faith and scholarship with the intellectual life of other academic disciplines. Few who attended these functions could long have remained in doubt that the Faculty of Divinity in 1958 was strongly conscious of itself as both Christian and Church-centred.

NOTES

1. Supra, p. 16.

2. In March, 1948, the Joint Board estimated the total value of its assets to be $830,612.81 (Financial Statement of Joint Board, March 31, 1948). A year later W.M. Birks claimed that as a result of gifts to the endowment fund from J.W. McConnell and himself the total amount of the assets was approximately $1,450,000.


15. Minutes of the Joint Board, March 10, 1953.


21. Memorandum of Principal Slater to Principal James, 1956, James Papers, McGill Archives.

CHAPTER IV
HISTORY OF THE FACULTY: SECOND DECADE, 1958-68

The second decade in the history of the Faculty was less eventful than the first, partly no doubt because the essential framework for an ongoing institution had been constructed during the earlier period, although shortly after the midway point in its thirty-year span the Faculty did experience something approximating a crisis. The Faculty also underwent two evaluations on the part of outsiders which gave its members some conception of how their work appeared to others who were engaged in similar activities.

PERSONNEL AND PROGRAMS

To begin with the dramatis personae, this decade witnessed numerous staff changes and the departure from the scene of the last members of the original faculty. Professor George B. Caird resigned in 1959, returning to England to accept an appointment at Oxford. He was succeeded in the Chair of New Testament Language and Literature by Professor George Johnston, a native of Scotland and a graduate of Cambridge University, who from 1947 to 1959 taught first at Hartford Theological Seminary and later at Emmanuel College, Toronto. Professor Joseph C. McLelland, a graduate of McMaster University, Knox College, Toronto, and Edinburgh University, and incumbent since 1957 of the Robert Chair of the History and Philosophy of Religion and Christian Ethics at the Presbyterian College, Montreal, was in 1959 appointed Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Religion in the Faculty of Divinity, with promotion to the rank of full professor in 1964. In the fall of 1959, John C. Kirby was appointed full-time Lecturer in the field of New Testament, becoming Assistant Professor in 1962 and Associate Professor in 1967.

In 1960, Donald D. Evans was appointed Assistant Professor in the Philosophy of Religion, and Willard G. Oxtoby was appointed Lecturer in Semitic languages, advancing to the rank of Assistant Professor in 1963. Both men resigned as of August 31, 1964; Evans to accept an appointment as Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto, Oxtoby to pursue his studies by taking up a Fellow-

ship he had been awarded by the American Council of Learned Societies. During the session of 1961-62, G.A.B. Watson was appointed Assistant Professor of the Psychology of Religion, relinquishing the post in 1964 to accept an appointment as Associate Professor and Director of the Department of Religious Knowledge at Trinity College, Toronto. In 1963, Professor Wilfred C. Smith resigned to become Director of the Centre for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University. The year 1963 also saw the retirement of Professor Stanley Frost as Dean of the Faculty and the appointment of Professor Eric Jay as his successor. Although he remained Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature, Dr. Frost was in 1963 appointed Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, a post he retained until 1969. From 1969-74 he was Vice-Principal of McGill (Administration and Professional Faculties), and at the time of writing he is Director of the History of McGill Project.

Several additions to the faculty were made in 1964. Monroe Peeston, a graduate of Oxford and London Universities and of Union Theological Seminary, New York, who from 1959-64 had been Vice-Principal of Christchurch College, New Zealand, was appointed Assistant Professor of Pastoral Psychology, becoming an Associate Professor in 1967. Robert C. Culley, a graduate of the University of Toronto and Knox College, Toronto, who had also attended the University of Bonn was appointed Lecturer in the field of Old Testament, being raised to the rank of Assistant Professor in 1965. John T. Hatfield was appointed Lecturer in Comparative Religion, leaving McGill in 1966 to become an Assistant Professor at the University of Northern Arizona. Mr. David Rome was appointed part-time Lecturer in Judaic Studies.

In 1966, Robert W. Stevenson, a graduate of the Faculty, was appointed Lecturer in Comparative Religion. In 1968 J. Arthur Boorman received a full-time appointment as Associate Professor of Theological Ethics. The year 1968 also saw the retirement of the only remaining member of the original faculty, Professor H.H. Walsh, whose death occurred in the year following. In the later stages of his career, Professor Walsh gained recognition for his pioneer work in the field of Canadian Church History and his labours on behalf of the Canadian Society of Church History.

The Faculty continued to reach out in efforts to extend its influence and enhance its usefulness. In 1959, it was instrumental in the formation of the Montreal Theological Society in order to provide, as Dean Frost put it, "the kind of intellectual stimulus and encouragement which the local clergy might reasonably expect from the Faculty and its members." At about the same time there was instituted what was designated the "Dean's Hour", periods when students in the Faculty were given an opportunity to hear members of other Faculties within the University
speak about their areas of expertise. In this fashion the Faculty became at least a little more closely integrated with the University of which it was a part, and students could benefit directly from their connection with a University which boasted many distinguished scholars. In 1965, the annual summer school at Macdonald College, at one time a popular project of the Cooperating Colleges, was revived. An arrangement was entered into with Emmanuel College, Toronto, whereby the school would be held in alternate years at Macdonald College and in Toronto. Questions could still be raised, however, and were raised by Professor Frost in his final report as Dean in 1967, concerning the role of a Faculty of Divinity within the structure of the university. As he perceived it, the basic question still confronting the Faculty was: "By what reasoning can the Faculty justify itself as a constituent part of McGill?" Part of his own answer was that "the values of liberal Protestantism and the values of the academic ideal are basically the same, and do not conflict. Truth is for both the pearl of great price, and neither dogmatism nor sectarianism can do anything but obscure it.1

The B.D. program remained comparatively stable throughout this decade, although there were a few relatively minor modifications and as the period drew toward its close the entire degree structure of the Faculty was undergoing re-examination. In 1962, two of the fields of study were renamed. "Systematic Theology" became "Historical Theology" and "Christian Ethics" was changed to "Theological Ethics." Such changes reflected a conviction that the revised titles were better suited to a university context, or more consistent with what was actually being taught. At the same time, a proposal to change "Philosophy of Religion" to "Philosophical Theology" was not adopted.2 Certain changes in the B.D. curriculum were endorsed by the University Senate early in 1963. Starting in September, 1964, Greek was to be a prerequisite for admission to the Faculty. Some knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet, vocabulary and thought-forms was to be made available to all students in B.D.1, but the Hebrew language as such was to be an elective.

In 1964, preliminary consideration was given to a matter which was to occupy the faculty intermittently from then until 1970, viz., the name and nature of the undergraduate degree. Specifically, should it be a B.D. or a B.Th.? The discussion was sparked by the publication that year of the Report of the Parent Commission. This Report recommended, inter alia, "that the faculties which now require the baccalaureat or the Bachelor's degree for the admission of students revise their standards in such a way that students will henceforth be admitted after the thirteenth year diploma, and that no university or faculty be authorized to demand special preparatory or qualifying courses." It was not immediately clear what

steps, if any, the Government of Quebec would take to implement this recommendation, or what the timetable for decision and action might be. The initial reaction of the Faculty of Divinity was to reaffirm its commitment to the B.D. as a post-baccalaureate degree, but with the passage of time the untenability of this position became increasingly apparent. Meanwhile, some further minor adjustments were made. In 1965, Pastoral Psychology was for the first time made a requirement in the B.D. program. During the session of 1968-69 the Academic Policy Committee of the Senate approved certain modifications for an experimental period. These included a decrease in the number of required courses with a corresponding increase of electives, and the making optional of the B.D. thesis.3

FIRST A.A.T.S. VISITATION

In January, 1962, the Faculty received an official visitation, followed by a report of more than twenty-five pages, from Professors Seward Hiltner and Richard Niebuhr representing the American Association of Theological Schools, the accrediting body for North American theological institutions. It would doubtless be unrealistic to accept everything in their report at face value. This is not to suggest that such visitations are perfunctory, or that the visitors do not make a serious effort in the limited time at their disposal to learn as much as possible. Finding themselves in an unfamiliar situation, however, they must rely to no slight degree on information and perspectives furnished by their hosts. Furthermore, it is the tendency of such reports to accentuate the positive and, where criticisms are offered, to dulcify them with an almost apologetic civility. Making allowance for the operation of such factors, it is still of some interest to note how the faculty appeared at this time to two prominent American theological educationalists.

In the preface to their report they observed that in choosing their theological schools Canadian students appeared to be strongly influenced by "provincial loyalties", and that this prevented many of them from obtaining the best theological education available. It is fairly evident that the visitors had not arrived at this conclusion without some prompting from their hosts and that it represented at least in part an attempt to account for the relatively small enrolment in the Faculty, located as it was in a predominantly Francophone and Roman Catholic province. They professed to be favourably impressed by the teaching staff, commenting particularly on the monthly faculty seminar as a source of intellectual stimulation, and on the responsibility assumed by faculty members in the editing of the Christian Outlook and the Canadian Journal of Theology.
As for contacts with cognate intellectual interests in other departments of the University they considered that the McGill Faculty was about on a par with other divinity faculties, which was a considerate way of saying that such contacts were restricted.

As Americans they were surprised to discover that there were virtually no students in the Faculty who were vocationally uncommitted, a situation they had not expected to find in a university context and which they ascribed in large measure to the fact that recruitment was mainly the responsibility of the associated Colleges. They considered that the Faculty should assume greater responsibility in this area, especially in the recruitment of students “from outside the normal channels of the church,” a certain number of whom would provide a wholesome leaven for the entire student body. Although they unearthed few evidences of student dissatisfaction, they noticed a “lack of excitement” among the students which they attributed chiefly to three causes. The first was that many of the students felt a closer bond to their respective Colleges than to the Faculty of Divinity. The second was the almost total absence of vocationally uncommitted students. The third, on which they dwelt at greater length, was a disposition on the part of the students to exaggerate the degree of homogeneity which obtained within the Faculty. They were unaware of broad theological differences between faculty members, or, insofar as they were aware of them, regarded them as stemming solely from denominational distinctions. This prompted the visitors to inquire:

Do the members of the Faculty not only teach their subject matter but also disclose or impart their own personal involvement in it and the development of their own thinking in relationship to their subject matter and their differences with one another on common theological issues?

PONDERING THE FACULTY’S FUTURE

In touching, albeit obliquely, on the problems of recruitment and enrolment, Professors Hiltner and Niebuhr were referring to an issue which was to be of mounting concern to the Faculty during the 1960’s. In presenting their annual reports successive Deans of the Faculty frequently stressed the need for an enlarged enrolment and sometimes attempted to account for its static or declining character. In his report for the session of 1959-60 Dean Frost affirmed that the Faculty needed to recruit more and better students, and in his report for 1960-61 he not only repeated that one of the great needs of the Faculty was for an increased enrolment but also listed some of the obstacles. As he saw it, these were a general decrease in theological enrolment in North America since 1956; the difficulty of recruiting students for an essentially Protestant Faculty in a predominantly Roman Catholic province; the fact that many ordination candidates were less attracted by academic excellence than by practical offerings; and the growing tendency for married men of more mature years to turn to the ministry, which commonly meant that they required greater financial assistance while in course than was currently available. In his final report in 1963 Dean Frost reiterated that: the comparatively small number of students entering Divinity remained the greatest practical problem facing the Faculty, but by this time he had reached the conclusion that the emphasis in the Faculty on the quality of education offered was attracting students of a higher calibre. The problem did not disappear and in his report for 1966-67 Dean Jay reiterated that “The Faculty’s major concern is still the small number of our B.D. students,” the explanation for which he found in the difficulties being experienced by churches of all denominations in recruiting ordination candidates. The Faculty, he continued, was encouraged by the expansion of its post-graduate work, “but is strongly of the opinion that its main function is to provide a training for Christian ministry which will be both academically sound and on the practical side relevant to the needs of the churches in the world of today.”

By the mid-1960’s it was strikingly evident that, while there had been no arresting decline in the total number of students taking courses within the Faculty, a drastic shift had occurred in the ratio of post-graduate to undergraduate students. There were 81 students in the session of 1962-63 as compared with 77 students in the session of 1966-67, but over the course of this five year period there had been a marked change in distribution. Whereas at the earlier date there had been 19 post-graduate students and 62 in the B.D. program, by the later date there were 51 post-graduate students and only 26 in the B.D. program. By 1966-67 there had also been a modest increase in the number of students taking Religion courses which were offered in the Faculty of Arts and Science. The problem was that while most, if not all, of these students were being taught by members of the Faculty of Divinity, only the B.D. students were registered in that Faculty. The rest were registered either in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research or in one of the other undergraduate Faculties. With a steadily diminishing enrolment in the B.D. program the question of the continuing need for a separate Faculty of Divinity was almost bound to be raised.

This was one of the major coefficients contributing to the protracted debate during the latter half of the 1960s concerning “The Future of the
Faculty." Although members of the Faculty could not be and clearly were not unaware of the problems with which they were confronted, matters were brought to a head by the report of a team of consultants who had been engaged by the University. During the session of 1965-66 the University invited a study of its total operation by Dr. Earl J. McGrath and Dr. Paul Anderson. In the course of their report, which was commonly referred to as the McGrath-Anderson Report, they made the following recommendation:

That the place and function of the Faculty of Divinity in the University be more clearly defined. While this unit at present creates no serious financial problems for the University its enrolment is exceedingly small. This limited clientele raises the question as to what major purpose it is serving and whether or not it could be strengthened by introducing a graduate program in religion.

Although members of the Faculty were puzzled by the last clause of the McGrath-Anderson recommendation, since they already had a graduate program which was currently the most flourishing feature of their entire operation, they resolved to respond to this section of the Report by taking the initiative. At a meeting of the faculty on September 2, 1966, it was agreed that the University Senate be requested to look into the matter and make recommendations concerning the future of the Faculty. When Senate met, the faculty resolution was amended, and in its amended form it requested Senate "to ask its Academic Policy Committee to meet with representatives of the Associated Theological Colleges, and the Joint Board of the Theological Colleges, and to make recommendations about the future of the Faculty of Divinity." In speaking to the resolution at the meeting of Senate on October 4, 1966, Dean Jay acknowledged that the Faculty was concerned about its own future, partly because of the changing pattern of enrolment, and he cited the comparative statistics for the sessions of 1962-63 and 1966-67 which have been noted above. He informed Senate that, in his opinion, enrolment in the B.D. program had been adversely affected by the "alarming shortage" of candidates for the ministry in the Anglican and United Churches, especially candidates who possessed the basic prerequisite (B.A. or equivalent) for the B.D. program, observing further that "this has been especially true of the Anglican Church."

While awaiting Senate action the Faculty proceeded to take certain steps on its own. At an all-day meeting to discuss the future of the Faculty which was held on September 22, 1967, it was agreed to recommend the institution of a two year Master's Degree in Religion. A special committee consisting of Professor Peaston as chairman, Dean Frost, Professor Johnston and Professor Boorman was appointed to formulate a detailed proposal for such a degree. This committee submitted a preliminary report in the fall of 1967 and a more developed report in January, 1968. In the latter it was proposed "that no major changes take place in the structure and administration of the Faculty in the meantime, but that we institute as soon as possible a program of graduate degrees: M.A. and Ph.D. in Religion."

Meanwhile the University Senate responded to the Faculty's request by appointing a sub-committee of the Academic Policy Committee under the chairmanship of Vice-Principal Michael Oliver and including as members Dean Jay, Dean Frost, Dean Woods and Professor A. Malloch. The sub-committee held its first meeting on February 13, 1968. In reporting to the Faculty on the outcome of this meeting Dean Jay stated:

I think it is true to say that nobody on this sub-committee wants to see the disappearance of the Faculty. I think also that they are very sympathetic towards our endeavours to discover a structure of curricula by which we can provide both for ordination candidates, and for those approaching the study of Religion for reasons other than ordination.

At this meeting of the sub-committee on February 13 Dean Frost and Dean Jay were requested to bring to the next meeting a model curriculum for (1) a B.Th. program, entrance to which for Quebec students could be by way of the CEGEPs, and (2) a B.A. Honours in Religion, which would also provide a Major in Religion for Arts and Science students.

In their proposed submission to the sub-committee Deans Frost and Jay recommended that the Faculty should continue to fulfill its three major functions — the training of candidates for "the profession of Christian Minister of Religion," the contribution to an unbiased, uncommitted program of religious studies in the Faculty of Arts, and the offering of graduate studies in Religion — but that it should redesign its curricula to do this more adequately. The proposal went on to say that "an unbiased, uncommitted stance is today as proper within Divinity studies as in secular studies. Divinity staff should express their own sense of commitment in their extracurricular activities, not in the class room."

In the summer of 1968 Dean Jay suggested that the sub-committee postpone further meetings for a few months. Some of the reasons advanced for this suggestion were discussions concerning the most suitable context for theological education which were currently under way in both
the United States and Canada; the fact that both the Anglican Church and the United Church of Canada then had in being Commissions which were "studying the efficiency of the theological education of the two churches"; and the likelihood of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, becoming part of the Faculty of Divinity. The sub-committee met on September 6, 1968, at which time its members agreed to submit only an Interim Report and to recommend to Senate that its final report be deferred until at least some time in 1969. This was accepted by the Academic Policy Committee of Senate subject to three alterations. These had to do with the structure of the Faculty and its relationship to the denominational Colleges; the number of publications by members of the Faculty; and the number of graduate degrees conferred upon students of the Faculty in the past five years. Dean Jay provided this information in a letter to Vice-Principal Oliver dated October 21, 1968. There the question of the future of the Faculty rested at the end of 1968. Developments were in progress, however, which would shortly result in a considerable revamping of its curricula and degree programs, and which would largely shape its future in the period immediately ahead.

PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE JOINS FACULTY

By this time too there were promising prospects that the divisions which had fragmented the McGill theological community since 1925 would soon be healed. In their report on the Faculty to the American Association of Theological Schools in 1962 Professors Hiltner and Niebuhr had claimed that the continuing division between the Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Canada was an impediment to the most efficient development of theological education in Canada, and that this was particularly noticeable in Montreal where an independent Presbyterian Faculty existed alongside but unrelated to the Faculty of Divinity. There had been some earlier attempts at reconciliation. In 1947, on the eve of the formation of the McGill Faculty, a last-ditch effort had been made to include the Presbyterians but with little hope of success. Their College had just been reopened in Montreal after a sojourn of several years in Toronto, and W.M. Birks recalled in his "Reminiscences" how he had insisted Principal James that the College's affairs were in such a state of disarray that "they are not in a strong position for taking active or imaginative steps in any direction."

Nothing more of even a semi-official nature was heard along this line until late in 1956 when overtures were made from the Presbyterian College for some form of cooperation with the McGill Faculty. Dean J.S. Thompson was authorized to reply that:

(a) The Faculty of Divinity cordially welcome overtures from the Presbyterian College towards a closer relationship. (b) They invite discussion of ways and means of co-operation on the distinct understanding that the objective should be the ultimate association with the Faculty on the same terms as the Diocesan and United Colleges and, therefore, the interim period of co-operation should be for a limited period (say two years), at the end of which time the Presbyterian College could decide on its future relationship to the Faculty.

The College was not yet prepared to take this step and there was no further progress at that time. Unanimity was lacking within the College administration and there was still the fear that an approach to the Church's General Assembly would only be to invite another setback.

Relations between the Presbyterian College and the McGill Faculty continued to improve but it was not until 1967 that the wheels of formal association were again set in motion. The initiative was taken by the College Faculty which prepared and presented a brief to a joint meeting of the College Board and Senate where it was agreed that the possibility of the College's full participation in the Faculty of Divinity be explored. The McGill Faculty was informed of this in November, 1967, and agreed that the following statement be recorded in the Minutes and a copy forwarded to the authorities of Presbyterian College:

The Faculty of Divinity heard with great pleasure the news that the possibility of full participation in the Faculty of Divinity is being explored by the Senate and Board of Presbyterian College. The members look forward eagerly to [the] possibility of a new arrangement within which all may work together more closely and from which all may benefit richly.

Negotiations were conducted through a committee representing the University, the Faculty of Divinity, the Joint Board, and the Presbyterian College. When the details had been settled the proposal was presented to the Presbyterian General Assembly in June, 1968, where it was approved by an overwhelming majority. By the end of 1968 all that remained was approval by the McGill Board of Governors.

It was during this period of flux, in the fall of 1968, that the Faculty received another visitation from two representatives of the American Association of Theological Schools: Professor Harvey H. Guthrie of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Professor Robert T. Handy of Union Theological Seminary, New York. Their re-
port contained few criticisms and most of these concerned matters which the Faculty already had under advisement. The B.D. curriculum impressed them as being unduly inflexible with a heavy course load, an exceptionally high proportion of required courses, and very little room for electives. They also sensed some lack of coordination between the academic subjects taught in the Faculty and the “practical and professional” subjects provided by the associated Colleges. Consultation with the Principal of McGill and others convinced them that the Faculty was held in high regard by the administration of the University and that there was no reason for it to be diffident in “articulately pushing its needs and plans in the University picture.” At the same time they could not fail to be aware that changes were in the offing and that the contours of the future could as yet be but dimly perceived. They were confident, however, that the Faculty could meet the challenge of that future and concluded on the sober but sanguine note that “The Faculty faces uncertainties in many areas: the future of the church, of forms of ministry, of its role in the University, of its place in the provincial educational picture. It faces these uncertainties with strength.”

NOTES

7. Supra. p. 45.
9. The Collèges d’enseignement général et professionnel, popularly abridged to CEGEPs, were the junior colleges offering two years instruction beyond the former Quebec Grade XI which were being established by the Government of Quebec in accordance with the recommendations of the Parent Report.
10. Memorandum of Dean Jay of Faculty, Feb. 17, 1968.
12. Letter of Dean Jay to Vice-Principal Oliver, July 11, 1968.
CHAPTER V
HISTORY OF THE FACULTY: THIRD DECADE, 1969-78

The association of the Presbyterian College with the Faculty of Divinity was formalized by action of the Board of Governors of McGill on May 26, 1969, to take effect as of September 1, 1969. The College was included in the Faculty for an initial period of five years, at the conclusion of which the College or the University Board of Governors could review the situation and either terminate or ratify the terms of agreement. After December 31, 1973, the agreement would be automatically renewed for periods of ten years unless either party signified its intention to withdraw from the arrangement not later than December 31 of the year preceding the year of termination. The College was to make an annual subvention to McGill of $6,500 plus an additional $2,500 to the book funds of the Divinity Hall Library. A special service to mark the admission of the College into the Faculty was held in the Chapel of Divinity Hall on Tuesday evening, September 16.

CHANGES IN STAFF AND NOMENCLATURE

Three staff changes resulted from the accord with the Presbyterian College. Charles H.H. Scobie, a native of Scotland and a graduate of Glasgow University, was appointed Associate Professor of New Testament; he resigned in 1972 to become Professor and Head of the Department of Religion at Mount Allison University. H. Keith Markell, a graduate of McGill and of the Presbyterian College, Montreal, was appointed Assistant Professor of Church History, being promoted to the rank of Associate Professor 1972. Donald N. MacMillan, a graduate of McGill, the Presbyterian College, Montreal and Edinburgh University, was named Associate Professor of Theology with the College remaining responsible for payment of his salary.

From 1969 to 1971 Samuel M. McDowell and Bryan W. Pearce were Chaplain Associates in Clinical Pastoral Education; Mr. McDowell had previously been a Lecturer in Pastoral Psychology. Robert W. Stevenson was promoted to the rank of Assistant Professor of Comparative Religion in 1969, and to that of Associate Professor in 1973. At the present time he is also Assistant Dean of the Faculty. In 1970 Dr. Eric G. Jay retired as Dean of the Faculty and was succeeded in this office by Professor George Johnston. In 1971 Dr. Donna Runnalls, a graduate of the Universities of British Columbia, McGill and Toronto, and a former student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was appointed Lecturer in Old Testament and Hebrew Language. In 1972 she became Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Judaism, advancing to the rank of Associate Professor in 1975. In addition to her work in the Faculty of Religious Studies Dr. Runnalls has since 1972 been Warden of McGill's historic women's residence, the Royal Victoria College. In 1974, Dr. Erin Malloy, an American graduate of the Faculty, was appointed Associate Dean of Students at McGill and half-time Assistant Professor of Theology in the Faculty of Religious Studies. She resigned and returned to the United States in 1977.

In 1975, Professor Eric G. Jay retired after having served three years in a post-retirement capacity. At the McGill Convocation on June 7, 1977, his contributions as a scholar, teacher and administrator were recognized when he was named Emeritus Professor. He was succeeded by Douglas J. Hall who was appointed Associate Professor of Christian Theology in 1975 and raised to the rank of full professor in 1978. A graduate of the University of Western Ontario and Union Theological Seminary, New York, Dr. Hall had been Principal of St. Paul's United College, University of Waterloo, from 1962-65, and Professor of Systematic Theology at St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon, from 1965-75. In 1975, Professor George Johnston retired as Dean of the Faculty and was succeeded by Professor Joseph C. McLelland. In 1976 Miss Katherine Young, a graduate of the Universities of Vermont and Chicago, and a doctoral candidate at McGill, was appointed Assistant Professor of Comparative Religion. In 1977 Miss Alaka Hejib, a graduate of the University of Poona, India, was appointed Instructor in Sanskrit, and in 1978 became Lecturer in Comparative Religion with special responsibilities in the teaching of Sanskrit and Pali. There were other promotions within the Faculty. In 1974, Dr. J.C. Kirby was raised to the rank of full professor, and Dr. R.C. Culley attained the same status in 1978. An increasing enrolment and a correspondingly enlarged budget, especially after about 1975, also paved the way for a number of distinguished Visiting Professors. In the fall term of 1976, for example, Dr. Geddes MacGregor was Visiting Professor in Philosophy of Religion, and Dr. Gregory Baum of St. Michael's College, Toronto, was Visiting Professor in the first term of the 1977-78 academic year.

Several changes in nomenclature were effected during the 1970s. In June, 1969, it was proposed that in keeping with the new degree programs which were then in process of being introduced, and as indicative of the
broaden interests these represented, the name of the Faculty should be
changed from the Faculty of Divinity to the Faculty of Religious Studies.
This was approved by the Academic Policy Committee of the Senate in
December, 1969, and by the Senate and Board of Governors of the Uni-
versity early in 1970. In his annual report for 1970-71, Dean Johnston
offered his version of the significance of this change. "From 1948 to
1970," he wrote, "there was inevitably a closer contact with the affiliated
seminaries . . . While this relationship remains important, our new defini-
tion requires greater emphasis on the study of all the major faiths of
mankind and a turning quite deliberately into the mainstream of Uni-
versity affairs," although with reference to the last named objective he
acknowledged that the Faculty still remained something of a tributary.
His report continued: "It is now almost the exception for a student to
be committed to a full-time religious vocation in one of the Churches,
more common to find him headed for religious education or social ser-
vice."1 This characterization of the student body was more apposite
at the beginning of the decade than at its end, by which time vocational
commitment, at least on the part of undergraduates, could less readily
be described as exceptional. Nevertheless, the change in the Faculty's
name was something more than a symbolic gesture. From this point on
there was an increase in the number of students who were studying Re-
ligion for purposes other than that of ordination, and a more structured
recognition of the fact that Theology included within its purview both
the broader culture of the University itself and the concerns of a world
which was at one and the same time secular and religiously pluralistic.

The change in the name of the Faculty was followed shortly by two
further name changes. The first concerned the building in which the
Faculty was domiciled. It was common practice within the University to
turn to buildings in honour of generous benefactors, or individuals who
had made outstanding contributions to the life of the University, and it
was decided in 1972 that Divinity Hall should be renamed the William
and Henry Birks Building. At the same time it was agreed that the Divin-
ity Hall Chapel should henceforth be designated "The McGill Univer-
sity Chapel." In connection with the rechristening of the building, on October
4, 1972, concurrently with the holding of the Birks Lectures and the
alumni reunions for that year, a plaque was unveiled commemorating
the part played by William and Henry Birks in the genesis and ongoing
work of the Faculty. The unveiling was performed by Chancellor Hebb
of McGill in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Birks and family, with
members of the Faculty, Joint Board, alumni and students in attendance.
The only field of study to undergo a change in nomenclature during
this decade was that of Theology. Having earlier been changed from

"Systematic Theology" to "Historical Theology", it was resolved in 1974
that it be renamed "Christian Theology". The adoption of this more
comprehensive label was not intended to imply disregard for the sys-
tematic or historical aspects of the subject, but at a time when Theology
was in flux, when its range and scope were constantly expanding, the new
terminology was regarded as being more appropriate than either of its
more traditional predecessors. For purposes of graduate work several
attempts were made during this period to organize the fields of study
within the curriculum into orderly and more or less cognate clusters. They
were ultimately grouped in four basic areas: Biblical, History and The-
ology, Religion and Culture, and Comparative Study. Area committees
were set up to exercise general supervision in each of these areas, although
in some graduate programs it was still found necessary to subdivide the
areas into lesser components.

CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES AND
DEGREE PROGRAMS

There were some alterations in the structure of the Faculty in the
course of this decade. Although a few committees had been formed as
soon as the faculty began to meet regularly in the fall of 1948, for many
years most business continued to be transacted by the faculty as a whole.
Hiltner and Niebuhr in their report to the American Association of Theo-
logical Schools in 1962 commented on this and suggested that the Faculty
had reached a point in its history when it could function more effectively
if greater responsibility were delegated to committees for the purpose of
assembling data and preparing preliminary reports. By 1970 a more
elaborate committee structure was in operation. Dean Johnston re-
ported to a meeting of faculty in September of that year that in future the
"Faculty Council" would deal with major policy decisions and matters of
interest to the whole faculty. The day by day work of the Faculty would
be done in the various committees, some of which emerged out of the new
degree programs to be noted below. He listed the following committees:
Executive, B.A. Religion Courses, B.Th. Degree, Graduate Degrees, Per-
sonnel and Promotion, Library, Publicity and Recruitment, Summer
School, Chapel and Religious Services. The roster of committees has
since then undergone some revision, but the principle of conducting much
of the routine work of the Faculty through committees persists and is not
likely to be abandoned in the foreseeable future. With the advent of
"participatory democracy" in the late 1960s and early 1970s student
representatives were appointed by their peers to most of the committees.

In the course of 1973-74 the decision was reached that for adminis-
trative purposes the Institute of Islamic Studies should be considered part of the Faculty of Religious Studies. The Institute has always operated as a graduate department offering the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. Having its own Director, it has continued to function as a virtually autonomous organization but since technically the Dean of the Faculty is Dean of the Institute as well, he is the channel through which certain administrative procedures flow. The teaching staff, the Library staff, and the course offerings of the Institute are now included in the Faculty of Religious Studies Calendar. Informal and semi-formal contacts between the "Religious Studies" and "Islamic Studies" branches of the Faculty have increased in recent years, but neither presumes to trespass on the jurisdiction of the other. In 1974-75 a cooperative agreement was arranged between the Institute and the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations of the Hartford Seminary Foundation. The program, which went into effect in September, 1975, is conducted at McGill. With the Institute forming part of the total Faculty the term "Faculty Council" was now seen to be misleading and the title "Religious Studies Council" was substituted for it.

The long discussion of the 1960s concerning the future of the Faculty culminated in 1970 in the introduction of new degree programs. In October, 1969, the Faculty submitted to Vice-Principal Oliver its own suggestions regarding its future. These included proposals for a new B.D. program, a Master's degree in Religious Studies — either a M.A. or a M.Th. — and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies. It was further proposed, after careful and cautious balancing of both the advantages and disadvantages, that the practice which had hitherto obtained of offering academic and vocational training concurrently be discontinued, and that ordination candidates should receive their practical or professional training in the associated Colleges only after they had completed their academic program in the McGill Faculty. Certain sections of this proposal were already becoming passé, however, and by February, 1970, these had been amended. It was now suggested that the B.D., S.T.M., and M.A. in Comparative Religion all be phased out to be replaced by a B.Th. degree (three years post-CEGEP or equivalent) and a M.A. in Religion. Requirements for the M.A. could be fulfilled in two years with or without a thesis.

The new degree programs were approved by Senate in March, 1970. The B.Th. was designed in part to meet the desire of the Quebec Ministry of Education for a first professional degree which could be completed within three years of graduation from the CEGEPs, and the first year was to consist of courses taken in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Whether this satisfied Church requirements for ordination was another matter. Those Churches which normally required the B.A. degree or equivalent as a prerequisite to the study of Theology continued to do so. Since the B.Th. program was introduced in 1970, while a number of students with the CEGEP diploma or its equivalent have been admitted, the majority of entrants have been students with a first degree who were therefore admitted to the second year of the program. The program was to be open to students of any religious persuasion, or none. The distinction, which had been included in the proposal of October, 1969, between "academic" subjects to be given in the Faculty and "practical" or "professional" subjects to be given in the Colleges on completion of the academic program was now formalized. In order to make the professional year as worthwhile as possible the Colleges pooled their resources. A program was evolved under the aegis of the Joint Board which led in 1973 to the establishment of the Montreal Institute for Ministry. Distinctively denominational subjects are reserved for the separate Colleges, but the bulk of the training offered in the professional or "in-ministry" year is taken in the Institute which is controlled by the Joint Board through an Executive Director along with Directors of Studies and other personnel from the College staffs.

Dean Jay also reported during the session of 1969-70 that the Council of the Faculty of Arts and Science, and the Academic Policy Committee acting on behalf of the Senate, had approved a proposal whereby, starting in September, 1970, the Religion courses offered in that Faculty would be accepted as a Major in Religion. Beginning with the session of 1971-72 the Faculty, in harmony with other undergraduate Faculties in the University, adopted the credit system. Students in a particular degree program were required to accumulate a stipulated number of credits, so many credits being allowed for each full or half course, with a student's overall standing being determined by the credit values assigned to certain grades. Also beginning with the 1971-72 session Greek language ceased to be a requirement in the B.Th. program, although it continued to be offered and in certain of the Colleges associated with the Faculty the study of at least one Biblical language was either obligatory or strongly recommended.

Experience soon disclosed that, whatever merits it possessed, the two year M.A. in Religious Studies was not best calculated to meet the needs of ordinands, many of whom required additional course work in the fundamental disciplines of their religious tradition. Accordingly, it was discontinued at the end of the 1972-73 session. Beginning in the fall of 1973, the S.T.M. was reinstated as a postgraduate degree for ordinands, consisting primarily of course work and without a thesis. The M.A. in Religious Studies was redesigned as a research degree with thesis. In 1973-74 a proposal for an Honours B.A. in Religious Studies was gradually
making its way along the academic trail. By the end of 1973 it had been endorsed by the Faculty of Arts Curriculum Committee and Council. Early in 1974 it had received the green light from the Academic Policy Committee and was approved by Senate in March of that year in time for implementation in the 1974-75 session.

By the mid-1970s the Faculty was conscious of the fact that it had been placed at some disadvantage vis-à-vis other theological schools. In most North American seminaries and theological schools the old B.D. degree had been replaced, usually without any substantial alteration in content, by the Master of Divinity Degree. It was recognized that for students who already possessed a bachelor’s degree, and for whom a Master’s degree looked more impressive than a Bachelor’s, a M.Div. might be a more attractive option than a B.Th., with potentially adverse effects on the Faculty’s enrolment. In 1975 a Task Force was created to explore the possibility of offering a M.Div. degree and to bring in appropriate recommendations. The gist of their proposal was that the most desirable combination for a M.Div. degree would be the existing B.Th.2 and B.Th.3 years plus the Professional Year, but with some enrichment of the program. There were hurdles, however. The M.Div. had to be regarded as a postgraduate degree, which in the McGill context meant that the program would have to be approved by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, and it was by no means certain that this would be forthcoming. One suggested alternative was that the M.Div. be offered by the associated Colleges rather than the University, but this too raised problems. Not only had the Colleges surrendered their degree granting rights, honorary degrees alone excepted, when they entered the McGill Faculty, but there was the further question of whether some of the Colleges could grant a Master’s degree without having their provincial charters amended. It would be premature to say that the issue has been shelved but for the moment it remains unresolved.

INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING METHODS

The 1970s saw the introduction of some new methods of teaching and learning. During the session of 1972-73 the Doktorklub was formed to enable Ph.D. candidates to discuss their theses and related matters. With a small number of doctoral candidates working in several different fields there were often few personal contacts, and by bringing them together at regular intervals the Doktorklub helped to foster a sense of group solidarity. By the early 1970s the modular method of instruction was being tried in some departments of the University, and at a meeting of the Faculty Council in January, 1973, Professor Runnalls proposed that the technique be introduced to the Faculty by preparing a module on “Methods of Biblical Studies” in readiness for use in the 1973-74 session. The proposal was adopted and under Dr. Runnall’s direction, and with a grant from the University, three modules in the Biblical field were ready and available by the fall of 1973. During the course of the next year these were evaluated and revised, and three further modules prepared. Nine persons were involved in the work of preparation, including instructors in the Biblical field as well as both undergraduate and graduate students. In the original modules the emphasis was on critical methods in Biblical studies. The aim was to acquaint the student by successive and sequential stages with certain critical methods and how they had been used by representative scholars in understanding the Biblical text so that the student could then proceed on his own to analyze prescribed passages according to the critical criteria he had been learning. Although the method encouraged self-learning with the aid of instruction booklets and audio-visual materials, the student was not left to his own resources. Not only was there general supervision throughout, but self-learning was supplemented by peer group exchange and tutorial sessions. The McGill modules were demonstrated and discussed in a workshop at the joint Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature in Chicago in November, 1975.

Another innovation was the inception of a faculty-student seminar during the session of 1974-75. The theme for this first seminar was “Theology of Liberation,” and the organization was entrusted mainly to Professor Erin Malloy-Hanley. One of the primary objectives was an attempt to bridge the gap between academic and practical by encouraging staff and students to bring their academic insights to bear upon contemporary issues. Partly for this reason the seminars, which were repeated in subsequent years, embraced staff members and students of both the Faculty and the Montreal Institute for Ministry.

During the session of 1976-77 Professor Malloy-Hanley was also instrumental in helping to launch the “Values Project” which has been described as “one of the few ongoing interdisciplinary dialogues in Canada.” Impelled by interests arising out of her own theological studies, she assembled a team of sixteen professors, representing as many different disciplines, twelve from McGill and four from outside the University. The intent was that they should meet on a regular basis for what, it was hoped, would be a long-term fourfold study: what were conceived to be the major phenomena in the various disciplines; the values and value patterns which appeared to underpin these phenomena; a historical examination of these values and patterns; and a projection of the possible consequences of these values and value patterns for the future development of our society. The
Faculty of Religious Studies took the lead in getting the project underway, and when Professor Malloy-Hanley left McGill she was replaced as Values Project Co-ordinator by Professor Douglas Hall. At the present time the Project is being co-ordinated by two professors from outside the Faculty, but the Faculty continues to be represented and involved.

In 1976 the Faculty, along with other Faculties and Departments in the University, was invited to offer an experimental Tutorial Course with funding provided by the Educational Development Fund. As it turned out, the Faculty of Religious Studies was the only one to accept the invitation. Professor George Johnston agreed to serve as Tutor and a course of study was drafted which received the approval of the Academic Policy Committee in March, 1977. The course, which was offered in the second term of the 1977-78 session, was on “The Doctrine of the Church: Biblical, Patristic, Reformation Periods.” It was a highly successful venture and is being repeated in the 1978-79 academic year.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Two publications made their appearance within the Faculty during the 1970s. In the session of 1972-73 a small group of students took the initiative in publishing a journal called Theoscope. Although it provided an opportunity for self-expression, the work of several students and some faculty members, it suffered the fate of many efforts of this kind. Enthusiasm ebbed and the enterprise was dropped. In September, 1976, the Religious Studies Council agreed to the publication jointly by the Faculty, the Montreal Institute for Ministry, and the associated Colleges of a journal called Arc. This had been conceived some years earlier by a small group of Montreal Presbyterians but it was now proposed that it be directed toward a much broader constituency. As Dean McLellan explained in his annual report for 1976-77:

Our Faculty began during the past year a publication named Arc designed to maintain more positive contact with our Alumni, particularly those of our affiliated colleges. It will provide a forum for discussion of current issues in religious studies, supply information on materials for continuing education, and report on the life and work of the Faculty.

The Faculty sponsored several noteworthy special events in the course of this decade. In February, 1973, there was a Karl Barth Exhibition and Lecture. Books, articles, and other data, pertinent to the life and work of the late Swiss theologian, were displayed, and Professor McLellan del-

ivered a lecture on “Theology and Protest” to a large and appreciative audience. In the autumn of 1977 a conference was organized by Dean McLellan on “The Cultural Impact of Italian Reformers.” Some twenty highly competent specialists from Europe and North America met to hear papers and discuss the impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation in Italy, their deliberations being focused on the figure of Peter Martyr Vermigli. The papers delivered at the conference are to be published in 1980 under the title “Vermigli and Italian Reform.” In the spring of 1978 the Institute of Islamic Studies sponsored a larger conference on “Islam in South Asia,” which featured papers on literature, art and architecture.

Although this may not fall within the category of special events, reference should be made to honorary degrees conferred by McGill upon distinguished churchmen and theological educators on recommendation of the Faculty of Religious Studies. Since the formation of the Faculty there have been five recipients of honorary Doctor of Divinity Degrees at McGill Convocations: Canon Charles Raven on May 28, 1952; the Reverend George Pidgeon on October 6, 1955; Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith on November 6, 1973; Professor R.B.Y. Scott on June 7, 1977; and the Reverend Arthur B.B. Moore on November 8, 1978. Two of these men, Professors Smith and Scott, were former members of the Faculty. Two others, Pidgeon and Moore, were graduates of McGill and one or other of their affiliated theological colleges. In addition to receiving honorary degrees, Dr. Scott and Dr. Moore delivered Convocation Addresses.

EVIDENCES OF GROWTH

Student enrolment was more stable through the 1970s than in some earlier periods in the history of the Faculty. The general trend was upward although there were fluctuations in individual degree programs. Technically, only B.Th. students were registered in the Faculty but in effect the Faculty administered and offered instruction in five programs: B.A. Honours and Major, B.Th., S.T.M., M.A., and Ph.D. In addition, between 150 and 200 students from other Faculties were enrolled in one or more Religion courses from year to year. In so far as statistics tell the story, and for various reasons they need to be used with some caution, the increase from 1973 to 1978 was as follows: B.A. Honours and Major rose from 21 to 35; B.Th. from 35 to 70; Graduate, including both resident and non-resident students, from 72 to 85. The total increase over the five year period was from 128 to 190. Two factors in particular help to account for the growth in the size of the student body during these years.
The first has been a significant increase in the number of women students, many of them candidates for ordination in their respective Churches. The second has been a larger proportion of part-time students, not a few of whom belonged to an older age group but some of whom came with outstanding academic credentials.

The Religious Studies Library has expanded and continues to expand to the point where space is at a premium. As of August, 1978, it contained approximately 60,629 volumes, 912 pamphlets, 206 currently published periodicals, 178 microtexts, and 83 audio-visuals including 779 slides. Since it is part of the McGill Library System, and owing to the continuing escalation of book costs, the policy in recent years has been to avoid unnecessary duplication, and many of the works which students require for research and papers are available in other University Libraries. The relationship of the Religious Studies Library to the libraries of the associated Colleges has varied somewhat. As early as 1941 the United Theological College Library was moved to Divinity Hall and began to be integrated with the Divinity Hall Library, but it was only in 1974 that the College transferred ownership of the books to McGill. The Diocesan Theological College has transferred ownership in its Library to McGill, except for a collection of about one thousand volumes which by the terms of the donor's will must remain the property of the College. The Presbyterian College Library is still operating independently, although the books purchased by that College's annual subvention to the Religious Studies Library become the property of McGill. Since there is insufficient space in the Birks Building to house the Presbyterian collection, no change is likely in the immediate future. The other branch of the Faculty of Religious Studies, the Institute of Islamic Studies, has a Library of some 85,000 volumes and is one of the largest libraries of its kind in North America.

NOTES

3. Letter of Dean Jay to Vice-Principal Oliver, with attached copy of Faculty proposals, Oct. 16, 1969.
CONCLUSION

Thirty years is not a long time in the life of an educational institution even when, as in the case of the Faculty of Religious Studies, its antecedents stretch back another thirty years and more. It is scarcely conceivable that there could ever have been such a Faculty, certainly not in its existing form, apart from the long tradition of cooperation among the affiliated Colleges. It was this which created the necessary climate, kept alive hope and, not least important, supplied the indispensable material resources.

Although the structure of the Faculty is largely taken for granted by those who work within it, the attempt to unravel its reticulated relationships — to the University, other Faculties, the Churches, the associated Colleges, and more recently the Montreal Institute for Ministry — has sometimes mystified the uninitiated. In their often perceptive Report of 1962 Hiltner and Niebuhr noted that “The striking thing, to an outsider, is the extent to which the administrative relation between the Faculty of Divinity and the two colleges is founded upon personal equations rather than upon explicit administrative structures.” This is no less true today than it was sixteen years ago. If in spite of normal vicissitudes the Faculty has functioned for three decades with a minimum of friction, this may be ascribed in no small measure to the unfailing presence of two basic but not always commonplace virtues — good sense and good will.

The Faculty remains numerically small, a pygmy alongside some of the giant Faculties, but nowadays it is rarely regarded as an alien intruder on the University’s terrain. Occasionally the objection is raised that it is too narrowly associated with one particular religious tradition. In 1972, for example, a professor of anthropology in the University addressed a letter to the Faculty which implied that its interests were too much confined to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It could hardly be denied that this was true of those in the ordination stream, but it was considered that the objector had done less than justice to the variety of course offerings in other programs. Critics of this kind have, however, been infrequent in recent years. It is generally recognized that academic standards and quality of instruction within the Faculty compare favourably with those in other departments of the University. The Faculty has been fortunate too in its succession of Deans. Not only have they been able administrators, but each of them has in his own way commended the Faculty he represented to his administrative colleagues throughout the University.

Youthful though it be, the Faculty already has many solid achievements to its credit. In at least one respect, however, it has never quite measured up to the roseate expectations of its founders who hoped that as the only university faculty of theology in Canada it would attract large numbers of students from many parts of the world. The student body has become increasingly cosmopolitan but has never been as large in size as appears to have been anticipated. No doubt there are several reasons for this. To the extent that the Faculty is dependent upon local students, its location in a predominantly francophone and at least nominally Roman Catholic province has to be counted something of a liability. Compared with their Ontario counterparts, the theological colleges in Montreal have never boasted large enrolments, although in earlier days they could expect to receive some recruits from Anglican and Protestant enclaves scattered throughout the province, many of which have now either vanished or been greatly reduced in size by a long process of attrition. Moreover, the McGill Faculty is not as unique in Canada as it was thirty years ago. It has no exact counterpart, but at several centres in Canada cooperative theological education of some description has supplemented the older strictly sectarian variety. The multiplication of university departments of religion has made the teaching of Religion courses in a university context a familiar phenomenon. Finally, on the part of some ordination candidates there is a lingering distrust of theological education in a university setting as being excessively cerebral, with a corresponding lack of affective content.

The present Dean of the Faculty, Professor McLelland, has written that “The stimulus of interaction between the two ‘streams’ of ordinands and those of less professional bent committed to the academic study of religion underlies the dialogical nature of our faculty’s enterprise.” This is the way the Faculty prefers to see itself, and the vision is not altogether visionary. The mingling of students from the associated Colleges with those of other Christian traditions and those who claim no denominational affiliation makes for a healthy heterogeneity. It also makes for certain tensions between those for whom the study of religion is purely academic, involving no personal commitment, and those who see themselves as the trustees of a tradition which demands some such commitment.

Since this is a history and not a horoscope, we shall not attempt to forecast the future. One of the many virtues of the Faculty has been its openness; the willingness to blaze new trails, to experiment with new methods, to accept new challenges. Apart from a host of other unknowns,
this very flexibility would render suspect all attempts to chart its future course. Only one thing can be predicted with some assurance. So long as
the Faculty retains its present posture, having one foot in the University
and the other in the Church, it will continue to foster scholarship and
respect faith, and will strive to bind them in fruitful wedlock.

NOTES


APPENDIX

The Teaching Staff of the Faculty of Religious Studies
1948-1978

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. 1949-1963
Robert Henry Lawson Slater, M.A., Ph.D. 1949-1958
George Bradford Caird, M.A., D.Phil. 1950-1959
Kenneth Herbert Rogers, L.Th., M.A., Ph.D. 1953-1958
Stanley Brice Frost, B.D., M.Th., D.Phil., D.D., D.Litt. 1956-
John Charles Kirby, S.T.B., B.A., S.T.M., Ph.D. 1956-
John Arthur Boorman, B.A., M.A., Ph.D., D.D. 1957-
Charles Joseph Adams, A.B., Ph.D. 1957-
George Johnston, M.A., B.D., D.D., Ph.D., LL.D. 1959-
Joseph Cumming McLelland, B.A., M.A., B.D., Ph.D., D.D. 1959-
Donald Dwight Evans, B.A., B.D., Ph.D. 1960-1964
Willard Gurdon Oxoby, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. 1960-1964
Monroe Peaston, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., D.D. 1964-
Robert Charles Culley, M.A., B.D., Ph.D. 1964-
David Rome, B.A., B.L.S., M.A. 1964-1972
Robert Walter Stevenson, B.A., B.D., A.M., Ph.D. 1966-
Harold Keith Markell, B.A., Ph.D., D.D. 1969-
Donna Ruth Runnalls, B.A., B.D., Ph.D. 1971-
Katherine Kidd Young, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. 1976-
Alaka Hejib, B.A., M.A. 1977-