

"A STRANGE AESTHETIC FERMENT"

Malcolm Ross

WHEN ONE LOOKS DOWN over Fredericton from the hills where Charles Roberts and Bliss Carman once took their long hikes with George Parkin, one still sees the spire of Bishop Medley's Cathedral rising above a city hidden in elms. Old Frederictonians, whether they be Anglican or Roman, Baptist or Marxist, think first of their Cathedral whenever they think of home.

George Goodridge Roberts, the father of Charles and Theodore (and Bliss Carman's uncle) was Canon of the Cathedral and Rector of the parish church of St. Anne's. George Parkin, headmaster of the Collegiate School in Fredericton, was an active Cathedral layman. Something should be said about the coincidence at just the right time of the Tractarian Bishop, his Gothic Cathedral, the great teacher whose classroom had no walls, "the new music, the new colours, the new raptures of Pre-Raphaelite poetry",¹ and the young and eager spirits ready to respond to the peculiar genius of this place and this time.

"The Fredericton of those days", Charles G. D. Roberts recalls, "was a good place for a poet to be." It was "stirring with a strange aesthetic ferment." Tiny as it was, with no more than six thousand inhabitants, Fredericton was nonetheless a capital city, a university city, a cathedral city:

She had little of the commercial spirit, and I fear was hardly as democratic as is nowadays considered the proper thing to be. But she was not stagnant, and she was not smug. Instead of expecting all the people to be cut of one pattern, she seemed to prefer them to be just a little queer. . . . Conformity, that tyrant god of small town life, got scant tribute from her. There was much good reading done, up-to-date reading, and if people wrote verse, they had no need to be apologetic about it. To Fredericton it did not seem impossible that some of them might turn out to be *good* verses.

Good verses, Roberts avers, were indeed being written not only in "the big red rectory" on George Street, and in the Carman house, but also in a house not far from the Cathedral where "a slim, dark-eyed and black-browed youth by the name of Francis Sherman . . . was dreaming with William Morris and Rossetti over old romances of Camelot and Lyonesse."

There is no easy explanation of this "strange aesthetic ferment" in the little city

of the Loyalists in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Both A. G. Bailey² and the late Desmond Pacey³ have drawn attention to the civilizing presence of the university. Bailey also points to "societal" influences, particularly the "lawless and speculative spirit of the lumber trade" which had made of Fredericton an island unto itself:

The expansion of the trade brought hordes of poverty-stricken Irish to New Brunswick, decimated the forests and bled the province of its wealth, but provided a modicum of revenue for the support of the little body of civil servants, lawyers, judges, clergymen and professors who made up the governing class of the capital. Those Anglicans and Tories survived the loss of their political dominance because the establishment of responsible government was delayed in New Brunswick, and did not, in any case, mean a sharp break when it did come. . . . Moreover, it was a closely knit company of experts and adepts in administration, education, and religion, and the Province continued to depend upon it for some of these services long after confederation. To this circle of professional people the Carman and Roberts families belonged.⁴

Bailey argues convincingly that whereas in Nova Scotia "Howe and Haliburton had met a political challenge",⁵ in New Brunswick "Carman and Roberts experienced a crisis of the spirit after the political battle was lost, and something of the world along with it." Howe and Haliburton had Man for their argument; Roberts and Carman, perforce, turned to the landscape.

I think this is so. Certainly "the little society of professional people" in Fredericton could not for ever nourish its brood of poets, and they were soon to be off to Toronto and Boston, New York and London, Cuba and Montreal, taking their landscape with them. However, the actual advent of the "creative moment" itself (and Bailey, of course, agrees) has its own inner urgency not to be understood solely in terms of the shape and stress of a society as such. Something happened that might not have happened. It happened in the context of a cultural phenomenon that could not have been predicted of a society of professional people already outliving their usefulness.

Roberts⁶ attributes the advent of "the creative moment" to "the vitalizing influence of George R. Parkin, falling upon soil peculiarly fitted to receive it." Much has been made of Parkin's influence — and who can doubt it? But nothing has been made of Parkin's Anglicanism, his devotion to Bishop Medley, his friendship with Canon Roberts — a friendship which had much to do with those long hikes over the hills with Charles Roberts and Bliss Carman, and those rapt recitations of "The Blessed Damozel", a poem which Parkin "loved so passionately that Bliss sometimes suspected him of saying instead of his prayers."⁷

One wonders what would have happened in this "little society of professional people" if an evangelical had been sent as first Bishop of Fredericton, if there had been no Gothic Cathedral on the river, if between the teacher and his "favourite two" there had been no band of friendship in the faith?

What was the soil "peculiarly fitted" to receive Parkin's influence? In part, at least, it was New England soil. A. G. Bailey puts it thus:

The poetry of Fredericton represented the flowering of a tradition that had been four generations in the making on the banks of the St. John; and behind that, across the divide of the Revolution, lay the colonial centuries.⁸

This is not to say that Roberts and the others were conscious of belonging to and fulfilling a native tradition in poetry. Bailey makes this clear:

Charles G. D. Roberts, who perhaps more than any other fathered the national movement in Canadian poetry, considered that he was writing on a tablet that no one had written on before. He showed little awareness of the work of Sangster and Heavysege, nor that of Jonathan Odell, the Tory poet of the Revolution, who had been among the founders of his own city of Fredericton.⁹

Nevertheless, the influence on taste and manners of men like Odell — and other founding fathers like Ward Chipman and Edward Winslow — made Fredericton, from the start, heir to the culture of colonial America. The well-stocked private libraries, the university itself, the urbane and cultivated air of this remote frontier town, owed as much to the American tradition as it did to college professors from Oxford and transplanted British officials.

The place took something of its actual look from the older colonies. Just across the way from Medley's Gothic Cathedral stands Jonathan Odell's handsome colonial house. In the shadow of the Cathedral spire was the house where Benedict Arnold once lived. The mark of New England craftsmen was evident on houses throughout the city, on the white pine churches and farmhouses along the river, on the chairs and tables, dressers, and clocks and highboys of even the simplest Fredericton homes.

Roberts and Carman grew up in mind of their ancestor, the Reverend Daniel Bliss, pastor of Concord at the time of the Revolution. A. G. Bailey, in a tape recording of his literary reminiscences prepared for the Harriet Irving Library of the University of New Brunswick, shows how vividly the New England memory lived on in Fredericton. He traces the ancestry of Carman and Roberts to one Peter Bulkeley, "The founder of Concord in the Massachusettes Bay Colony":

It was Peter's granddaughter, Elizabeth Bulkley, who married Joseph Emerson, and two descendants, thus necessarily cousins, Hannah Emerson and the Rev. Daniel Emerson, became espoused in the year 1744. Both were ancestors of the Baileys of the University of New Brunswick and Hannah was a great aunt of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and sister-in-law of Phoebe Bliss, who was, in turn, sister of Daniel Bliss, forbearer of Bliss Carman and Charles G. D. Roberts. These families, Baileys and Bliss's, so early connected, were to meet again and mingle in ways that had, in the fulness of time, a significance for the development of a Fredericton literary tradition.¹⁰

In 1861, Loring Woart Bailey, the grandfather of A. G. Bailey, came from the

United States as Professor of Chemistry at the University of New Brunswick. “His friendship with the Carman and Roberts families in Fredericton brought together once again two families that had been connected away back in Revolutionary days in Concord.”

Then, too, there was something “native to the blood” of these Loyalist New Englanders in the Maritime terrain itself. Roberts, writing of canoe trips with Carman, captures the feeling they both had of being three hundred years in the wilderness:

I have never seen Carman so happy, so utterly at home, as in those wilderness expeditions. He was essentially native to the woods and the lovely inland waters. He paddled and handled his canoe like an Indian. He trod the forest trails like an Indian, noiseless, watchful, taciturn, moving with long, loose-kneed slouch, flat-footed, with toes almost turned in rather than out — an Indian’s gait, not a white man’s! That love of the sea that was later to show itself in so much of Carman’s poetry was perhaps atavistic — an inheritance from some of our New England and approximately “Mayflower” ancestry.¹¹

ONE NEED NOT SUBSCRIBE to notions of “atavism” to recognize a congeniality of place that wells out of time past but still present. The political break with the American past was only in part a cultural break. Even the Anglican parsons who fled to New Brunswick from the Revolution brought with them ways that smacked of American congregationalism. Until quite recently in New Brunswick the rector answered a “call”, the Bishop appointing only after the congregation had chosen their “minister”. And, in the main, Anglican churches were built in the style of the New England meeting-house. Bishop Medley, in horror at what he saw of New Brunswick church architecture, said to one of his laymen: “Mr. R.—, when you build a church, build a church but when you build a barn, build a barn!”¹² And Ketchum tells us that in the days before Medley

the Church buildings and church services were alike of a dull and dreary sort. New churches were built but more after the plan of the meeting house. In the public services there were no responses — that all-important part of divine service fell to the lot of the clerk. The parish church of Fredericton — the pro-Cathedral — had its galleries and square pews. The altar stood in a narrow space between the reading desk and the pulpit. . . . church music was little understood or attended to.¹³

The Loyalists had brought with them their books and their crafts and a deep-down instinct for forest, river and sea. But they had also brought a Puritan distrust of the senses. For even among the Anglican Loyalists there was evident and active what A.S.P. Woodhouse once called the Puritan “principle of segregation”

which put apart, and far apart, the order of nature and the order of grace. The austerity of the sacred was to be preserved from any taint of the profane. Skills that went to the shaping of fan-windows and Chippendale chairs were not to be employed on altar-pieces and lecterns. To stain a window was perhaps to stain a soul.

This is not to say that learning was not valued, and for its own sake. (The college on the hill could not be hid.) There was pride, too, in the houses and public buildings of mid-century Fredericton. The red-coated garrison gave sparkle to the streets and the convivialities of Government House. There was a love of fine horses, and parades, there was canoeing or iceboating on the Saint John, the hunting party deep in the forest. But there was also the prim white church with square pews, galleries and blank windows — a place apart from the life of town and river.

In 1845, into this mixed society of Loyalist New Englanders, British bureaucrats and soldiers, lumber kings and small merchants came John Medley, first Bishop of Fredericton. It was the year of Newman's secession to Rome — not an auspicious moment to proclaim Tractarian doctrine and to build Gothic churches!¹⁴

Medley, an Oxford man, was not only a friend of Pusey, and Keble. He was also an ecclesiologist, the author of an influential book *Elementary Remarks on Church Architecture* (1841). He was a musician, the composer of choral settings for the *Te Deum* and the *Benedictus* as well as a number of hymns. It was his great (if not his greatest) achievement to give to Fredericton, to the diocese and, in no small measure the whole ecclesiastical province of Canada, a sense of the kinship of beauty and holiness. His strenuous effort to reclaim for the sacred all of the outcast glory of the profane was begun in Fredericton almost a generation before the birth of Charles G. D. Roberts and Bliss Carman, who were to come of age in Medley's city, reared and taught by men who were Medley's friends, his allies, his disciples. The Bishop in what he built, in what he said, in what he did, altered a climate of the mind.

One need not here say much about the pastoral and doctrinal concerns of Bishop Medley. One must note, however, his Catholic insistence on the apostolic sanction for his high office, his Catholic sacramentalism, and his affirmation of the classical Anglican doctrine of the *via media*, an affirmation made persuasively enough to win him, in the end, the support of both High Churchmen and Evangelicals. Then, too, there was his solicitous care for the poor (he abolished pew-rents on arrival in Fredericton), and his astonishing travel by ship, canoe and horse to the farthest outposts of his diocese. No Yankee circuit rider rode farther than this intrepid Englishman who was to become the most ardent of New Brunswickers and, after 1867, without forsaking his Englishness, became a committed Canadian pleading for full self-government in the Canadian Church, while

advancing the spiritual claims of the universal Church beyond any possible reach of the secular arm.

With generous financial aid from England, the practical help of Frank Wills, a young English architect, and the advice and collaboration of William Butterfield, the noted English Gothicist, the Bishop, on arrival, began to build his Cathedral. The spire soon rose above the town, giving high point and focus to what had been a jumbled prospect of Georgian houses, British barracks and lumbermen's palaces. At the other end of town he built his Chapel of Ease — St. Anne's, consecrated in 1846, six years before the Cathedral. Also designed by Frank Wills, it is, says Phoebe Stanton, “the finest small North American parish church of its date in the English Gothic style.”¹⁵

Even before the completion of his Cathedral, Medley was on the move about the diocese, exhorting his people to build churches, not barns. Soon new churches, of wood, but built under the guidance of the Gothic ecclesiologists, were consecrated at Newcastle, Burton and Maugerville. Later, the Bishop's son Edward, who had studied with Butterfield, designed several wooden Gothic churches, the most notable of which are at St. Stephen and Sussex.

In making possible through architecture a renewal of Catholic practice in Anglican worship, the Bishop had also effected a revolution in sensibility and taste. After the blank meeting house with the pulpit rising like a mountainous idol above the speck of a “communion table”, St. Anne's, with its rood-screen, stained glass, and tiled reredos, and Christ Church Cathedral, cruciform, in dim religious light, pulsing with the music of the Bishop's own *Te Deum*, struck the mind and imagination of the Loyalist town like an apocalypse.

It is not surprising that the Bishop's sermon in stone and painted glass and lighted altar was not at first, and by everyone, happily heard. There were those among the meeting-house men of Fredericton who saw idolatry as well as extravagance in these “Romish” structures. The Bishop met the charge of extravagance by paying for St. Anne's out of his own pocket and by raising large sums in England for the construction of the Cathedral. Rebutting the charge of idolatry, in sermons, in addresses to lay audiences, in admonitions to his clergy, he argued with Ruskinian fervour and Tractarian point against that inherited Loyalist, Puritan bias which would allow splendid dwellings for governor, merchant and soldier, but which refused to the church all delight of eye and ear.

“Are they who despise the Church of God, and lay out all their substance in the decoration of their houses, of necessity the most holy?” He was fully conscious of that “principle of segregation” which had kept the order of grace wholly aloof from the order of nature: “. . . if there be no necessary connexion between external beauty and spiritual religion, is there any close connexion between spiritual and external deformity?”¹⁶

From this sermon, preached at the consecration of St. Anne's in 1847, to the

very end of his days (in 1892), it was among the Bishop's chief tasks to baptize beauty, to give beauty back to the Giver of it. In so doing he proclaimed not only the beauty and, for the Christian, the *congeniality* of the natural order. He was to affirm, as well, the integrity of the natural order and the full and proper dignity of the life of the senses.

The consecration sermon in itself was intended as a defense of beauty in worship. Alarmed at the puritanical bigotry of the evangelicals and the “high and dry” Churchmen alike, Medley was at great pains to protect the imagery of traditional Christian worship from the rigours of these latter-day iconoclasts. But he does not stop with a defense of beauty in worship. He calls upon his people to venerate and to enjoy as Christians the sensuous beauty of all creation:

For let us consider to what did God vouchsafe us *form, colour, number and harmony?* . . . why does the Book of God answer to the work of God, and dwell so often and so vividly on external nature? . . . Did God make all these works for nought? Or are we intended to suppose them only for sensual enjoyment, that the animal man may be gratified, while the spiritual man is neglected?¹⁷

It follows that, in worship, “if the tongue praise him, why not the heart, the feet and the hands? What difference is there in principle between reading or singing the praises of God with the lips, and engraving those praises on wood, or stone, or glass?”¹⁸

The senses which respond to the beauty of creation are validly employed in praise of the Creator. But if art is indeed a suitable handmaiden of religion, it has its own province too. The lecture on “Good Taste,” delivered in 1857 to a lay audience of churchmen in Saint John, is a nice distillation of Medley's thought on the secular implications of his aesthetic principles. Here, in little, a doctrine of beauty, art and nature which the Bishop propounded almost daily in private discourse as well as public, with consequences not only for the life and look of the church and the city, but also for that “strange aesthetic ferment” of which Roberts speaks.

FREDERICTON AS IT IS TODAY OWES much to the man who had talked like this about city streets and houses:

In laying out a town, it is common in North America to avoid the crooked lanes and devious ways of our ancestors, and to provide wide and spacious streets. So far so good, but it is not breadth or length only which gives a street a fine commanding appearance. The houses, if not of uniform height, should certainly not present an astonishing difference, one mansion towering to the skies, and the next a shanty of eight feet from the ground. The colouring and ornamentation of a house require great consideration. It is a safe as well as an ancient rule that nothing should form part of the decoration of a building, which is also not part of its

construction. . . . Then as to colour. It is either as if men had no eyes, or lived in a colourless world. Their houses glare with white paint, and the same idea is repeated again and again, without variation, while there is not a hill, nor a lake, nor a flower which is not without its variety.¹⁹

Even now, the Cathedral with its varied and lovely architectural brood, defies the government "planner" who so often proposes, but still in vain, to erect around this priceless place his ugly monotonous of steel and glass.

While I am not sure that the Bishop had read the Second Book of *Modern Painters* (although I suspect he had) he seems, like Ruskin, to discern in nature's teeming variety what Ruskin called "divine attributes", the mark of the Maker on things. The order of nature is given its own governance, its own integrity. It lives by laws unto itself, is lovable in itself and by itself, even as it gives witness to Other than itself.

Medley lifts the imagination to the restless, kaleidoscopic configuration of clouds in language that suggests the art of Constable.

What exquisite beauty lies in *water* and *light*, and in their mutual relation to each other. The clouds present an endless variety of form and colour, sometimes in streaks like the finest pencilling of the artist . . . sometimes like balls of snow or crystals, sometimes piled up like the everlasting hills, disclosing huge cavernous recesses, lighted up with a bronze colour, like the interior of a volcano, sometimes resembling cities whose top reached up to heaven, then melting into spacious plains, sometimes so transparent that we would seem to pierce them through with the hand, then gathering suddenly into a thick, fierce and angry mass, bursting into forked flames and threatening destruction.²⁰

But in this "wide awe" of cloud and storm there is hidden wisdom to be pondered. For this infinitely unpredictable conduct of the natural order is still lawful conduct, and wonder at it is the beginning of human wisdom and the fountain-source of art. One must also observe that Medley takes no terror from those angry masses of clouds "bursting into forked flames and threatening destruction." There is in him, it must be insisted, "no terror of the soul at something these things manifest."²¹ Quite the contrary. The Bishop "accepts the universe." He was, of course, not unaware of the "wrath of God". He never forgot that men were too often prone to bask under the sun of Satan. In his sermons he had much to say of original sin, of the Fall, and of the deep wound left by the Fall in the heart of things. But he had much more to say about the redemptive sacrifice of the Cross. It was Medley's Tractarian orthodoxy which protected him from all dark notions of the "total depravity" of the natural order and the natural man. Freed from fear by faith, he opened his church door and let beauty in — and nature.

Little wonder that there can be found in the Bishop's flock no trace of what Frye calls the "garrison mentality". Nor is there evident, in young churchmen like Roberts and Carman and the others who gathered at the parish Rectory on George Street, anything like the working of that old puritan "principle of segre-

gation” which had isolated the sacred from the profane. Through Medley’s Gothic door there entered, as it had not entered the door of the old Loyalist meeting-house, all of the New Englander’s active love of woods and sea and river.

The Rector of the parish, George Goodridge Roberts (a Bliss of Loyalist lineage on his mother’s side), had come to Fredericton in 1874 to serve close to his Bishop. He was a man after Medley’s own heart and had, before coming to Fredericton, rearranged his little church at Westcock in accordance with Medley’s liturgical principles. In his new charge at St. Anne’s he was equally faithful to Medley and had to contend manfully with nervous parishioners who saw in lighted candles on the altar the dire threat of “popery”.

It was in Canon Roberts’ rectory that Charles and Bliss Carman, the Stratons and, later, Francis Sherman, gathered after the canoe trip and after family prayers or evensong to read their verses to each other and to talk of Rossetti and Tennyson and Swinburne. Parkin was often among them, and Canon Roberts himself. The young poets were, in those days, active churchmen. Charles sang in his father’s choir at St. Anne’s. Carman served at Medley’s cathedral altar and assisted Parkin in the Cathedral Sunday School. Francis Sherman was to become the fast friend of Tully Kingdon, the coadjutor Bishop and his next-door neighbour.

It might be said, then, that “the soil” which Roberts tells us was “peculiarly fitted” to receive “the vitalizing influence of Parkin”, was New England soil which had been “Gothicized”. It was from this soil that Parkin himself drew his own first strength. Born in Salisbury, New Brunswick, of Anglican parents, he received his early religious training from the Baptist Church because there was no Anglican Church within miles. According to his biographer, Sir John Willison,²² Parkin, when he came to Fredericton, was soon drawn to the Cathedral, and “his family tradition, his instinctive love of seemliness and dignity in worship, and above all the character and influence of the Bishop brought him back to the Church of England.” When he went to Oxford on leave from the Collegiate school, he bore from the Bishop “letters of introduction to several prominent men in the church”. Parkin went to Oxford ready for Ruskin (whose first Slade Lecture he heard), ready for Pusey (whom he visited as well as heard), ready for Gothic England and for a past made present in the bright colours of Pre-Raphaelite poetry. It was as though he had come upon the very source of what he had already loved most. When he returned to his own country as a prophet he was a prophet honoured. For his country had been made ready for his prophecy.

THE SOIL HAD INDEED BEEN PREPARED. Here was “the fair beginning of a time”. But the “strange aesthetic ferment” that began in Rectory

and Cathedral with Parkin's return from Oxford to this Gothicized colonial soil was to have unpredictable issue. Carman and Roberts soon went their own and very different ways. There are traces of Pre-Raphaelite colours and images in some of their earlier work but other influences were soon to gain ascendancy. Neither, of course, was to be a "Christian" poet. Carman's early "Easter Hymn" was never published and, by the time he wrote "Low Tide on the Grand Pré", he was closer to New England transcendentalism than to any force or fashion coming out of England. The mark of the Gothic and the Christian was to be stronger and more enduring on the work of the younger poets of the group, Francis Sherman and Theodore Goodridge Roberts.

The directions eventually taken in the poetry of Charles Roberts and Bliss Carman can be explained in part, at least, by the loss of that faith in which the ferment of the first creative moment had begun. The actual drift away from the faith — Parkin's faith, Medley's faith — is another story and not to be attempted here. Even in his college days Charles Roberts had admitted religious doubts and reservations to his father (who was disturbed but tolerant). Dorothy Roberts once told me that her uncle, for all his scepticism, had clung for years to a faint hope, at least, in "the permanence of human identity", and he seems always to have been nagged by "the religious question". In at least one remarkable poem, "When Mary the Mother Kissed the Child", he seems magically for a moment to be back at Christmas time in his father's choir at St. Anne's.

I remember having dinner with him once in Fredericton in the late Thirties. Rather mischievously, I asked him if he intended to go to the Cathedral in the morning — or perhaps to St. Anne's. "No", he said, "No, I'm afraid not." There was a twinkle in his eye and, I fancied, a rather wistful smile on his lips as he added, "Nowadays, I carry my church within me." I remembered that I had once seen him in the cathedral, not many years before, at the state funeral for Bliss Carman.

Theodore Goodridge Roberts, younger than Charles by almost eighteen years, was no church-goer either, but, much more than his brother or his cousin Carman, he retained a fascination for the chivalric Christian tradition, for Saint Joan and her "banner of snow",²³ and for the Love who tells the Young Knight²⁴

I am the spirit of Christ
High and white as a star.
I am the crown of Mary
Outlasting the helmet and war.

It was not so much to the pageantry of Pre-Raphaelitism that Theodore Roberts was drawn. His daughter, Dorothy, has spoken to me of his veneration of the suffering Christ and of his symbolic use of the sacrificial Indian hero Gluskap as a kind of Christ-figure in some of the tales and poems.

Francis Sherman, eleven years younger than Charles Roberts, wrote poetry which is often thoroughly Pre-Raphaelite in style and specifically Christian in theme. The titles of not a few of the poems in his volume *Matins* are quite liturgical — "Nunc Dimitis", "Te Deum Laudamus". (He had first thought of calling his book *Lauds and Orisons* and then *The Book of the Little Hours*.²⁵) His best work seeks to reveal a Christian dimension in the order of nature and in the love of man for woman.

Carman himself, after his Fredericton years, was to be close for awhile in Boston to Phillips Brooks, the eminent Rector of Trinity Church. Among his other Boston friends were Ralph Adams Cram and Bertram Goodhue, the Gothic architects, and Louise Guiney, the devout Roman Catholic poet. But the drift which had begun in his college days with an enthusiasm for Emerson and Thoreau (and soon for Josiah Royce) carried him irreversibly towards transcendentalism in its late New England twilight, and very far from the Tractarian teaching of his boyhood. By 1903 he could write like this:

Surely the soul of man is the only tabernacle of the veritable God. The sense of living humanity as to what is true, what is good, what is beautiful to see, is the only sanction for belief. You and I, standing outside the reach of an obsolete authority, believe and cherish the words of the Sermon on the Mount not because Christ uttered them but because we cannot help assenting to their lofty truth.²⁶

The truths of Christianity, he goes on, need "only to be separated from superstition to appeal to us in all their charm and power." (Emerson might well have written this!).

But if Carman was to leave the church through Medley's open door and find his way back to New England (the New England not of his puritan ancestor, the Reverend Daniel Bliss, but of Ralph Waldo Emerson) he was never to become one of Frye's "garrison" men. If he was one day, as Frye puts it (unfairly, I think) to utter "prayers of a stentorian vagueness to some kind of scholar-gypsy God",²⁷ the prayers were not to be uttered "in stark terror". D. G. Jones is one of the few critics since the Thirties to be perceptive enough to recognize in Carman's poetry a loving acceptance and a celebration of the natural world:

More than any other Canadian writer he has the kind of faith in the goodness or justice of life that is implied in Christ's parable of the lilies of the field which neither toil nor spire, and yet are clothed in a glory greater than Solomon's. . . . Throughout his career he was able to write poems in which we glimpse an authentic sense of the joy and poignancy of being alive — of what it means to love a woman or the world.²⁸

If Mary Perry King was to replace Medley as Carman's mentor, and if Carman was to put aside Christian dogma in favour of a kind of transcendentalism, he was never to lose the slouching Indian gait, or the sense of kinship with all created things that Medley's door had opened to him. He had known early the awful

presence "swift and huge / of One who strode and looked not back." When his cousin, and close friend of Cathedral days, Andy Straton, died suddenly and young, Carman turned for solace, however, not to the hopes of Christianity but to Josiah Royce's *Religious Aspects of Philosophy*. In Royce's thoughts, as J. R. Sorfleet so aptly summarizes it, "evil is no more than a momentary dissonance in the organic unity of God's good act, and is soon resolved into God's goodness."²⁹ From Royce, from Mary Perry King and from George Santayana, Carman sought to build a system of ideas which could sustain and justify his faith, early and everlasting, in the holiness of beauty and the integrity of nature, a faith which he had first come to hold, with such different Christian sanction, in Medley's Cathedral city.

Fredericton, for awhile, had been "a good place for a poet to be", but not for ever a good place for a poet to stay. Charles Roberts soon found that not even Toronto could support a writer. Carman could not resist the New England of his forbears (after a few months in Boston, like many a Maritimer since, he could not imagine himself living anywhere else). Only Theodore Roberts returned later in life and after much wandering, to live in Fredericton and the Maritimes.

John Medley would have been grieved to know of the "unchurching" of his young churchmen. He would at least have been perplexed by Carman's curious New England heterodoxies. But in Theodore's *Young Knight*, and "The Maid", and in all that he had loved and known "on that far river" of the early years, in Charles' uncommon songs of the common day as well as in "Mary the Mother", in much of Sherman's *Matins* he might have recognized something of gifts which he had himself once given. With Carman's proclamation, early and late, of the holiness of beauty and the sense that his poetry imparts "of the joy and poignancy of being alive", the first Bishop of Fredericton would have had no quarrel. He would, one is sure, have been gratified rather than dismayed.

NOTES

¹ This quotation and the quoted passages which follow immediately are from "Bliss Carman". By Charles G. D. Roberts, *Dalhousie Review*, Vol. IX, March 1930. Pp. 409-417.

² "Sir Charles G. D. Roberts", in *Essays in Canadian Criticism*. Toronto, 1969. Pp. 180-187.

³ "Creative Moments in the Culture of the Maritime Provinces", in *Culture and Nationality*. Toronto, 1972. Pp. 54-55.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶ Roberts, p. 417.

⁷ Roberts, p. 413.

⁸ Bailey, p. 56.

- ⁹ "Evidences of Culture Considered as Colonial", in *Culture and Nationality*, p. 184.
- ¹⁰ This and the brief passage which follows quoted with permission of the author and the library from a manuscript revised from typescript "Literary Memories of Alfred Godsworthy Bailey: Part I, pp. 2-3, and p. 5.
- ¹¹ Roberts, p. 415.
- ¹² "John Medley". By W. O. Raymond, in *Leaders of the Canadian Church*. First series. Ed. W. B. Heeney. Toronto, 1918. p. 121.
- ¹³ W. Q. Ketchum, *The Life and Work of the Most Reverend John Medley*. Saint John, 1893. Pp. 26 and 64. Still the only full account of Medley's career. A fine chapter on Medley is included in Christopher Headon's unpublished doctoral thesis *The Influence of the Oxford Movement Upon the Church of England in Eastern and Central Canada, 1840-1900*. (McGill University, 1974).
- ¹⁴ The point was made by Eugene Fairweather in "A Tractarian Patriot: John Medley of Fredericton", *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. VI (1960), No. 1, p. 17. This is the best approach to Medley in print.
- ¹⁵ *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture*. Baltimore, 1968, p. 130. Professor Stanton devotes a full chapter to Christ Church Cathedral and St. Anne's and I am indebted to her for information about Medley's Gothic churches in wood. The most thorough architectural study of the Cathedral is to be found in Douglas Richardson's unpublished master's thesis *Christ Church Cathedral*, Fredericton, New Brunswick (Yale University, 1966).
- ¹⁶ *The Staff of Beauty and the Staff of Bands*. Saint John, 1847. P. 14.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- ¹⁹ *A Lecture . . . Subject "Good Taste"*. Saint John, 1857. P. 21.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
- ²¹ Northrop Frye, Conclusion to *The Literary History of Canada*. Toronto, 1965. P. 830.
- ²² *Sir George Parkin*. London, 1929. Pp. 26-27.
- ²³ "The Maid", *The Leather Bottle*, Toronto, 1934. P. 71. Theodore Goodridge Roberts was lost for a while in the shadow of his brother's fame and in the reaction against the romantic tradition which began with "McGill Movement". He is a fine poet with his own very distinctive voice.
- ²⁴ "Love and the Young Knight", *The Leather Bottle*, p. 65.
- ²⁵ See *The Complete Poems of Francis Sherman*, ed. Lorne Pierce. Toronto, 1935. Information about Sherman's search for the title of his volume of poems was derived from his letters in the Hathaway Collection of the Harriet Irving Library, the University of New Brunswick.
- ²⁶ *The Friendship of Art*. Boston, 1903. P. 265.
- ²⁷ "Canada and its Poetry", *The Bush Garden*. Toronto, 1971. P. 134.
- ²⁸ *Butterfly on Rock*. Toronto, 1970. Pp. 95-96.
- ²⁹ "Transcendentalist, Mystic, Evolutionary Idealist: Bliss Carman, 1886-1894," *Colony and Confederation: Canadian Poets and Their Background*. Vancouver, 1974. P. 205. The most persuasive study we have yet had of Carman as a serious and consistent thinker. The discussion of "evolutionary idealism" and the comment on Santayana's influence I found particularly helpful.