

ROBERT NICHOLAS BÉRARD

Moral Education in Nova Scotia, 1880-1920

THE PROMOTION OF MORALITY has always been regarded as a function of the school throughout the history of education in Nova Scotia. As had been the case in Europe earlier, the school shared with the family and the churches responsibility for moral formation. The majority of early school foundations owed their establishment to religious organizations whose interest in moral education was paramount. Even with the rise of the common school movement, against a backdrop of deep religious division in the province, pioneers like Alexander Forrester, first principal of Nova Scotia's Normal College, argued in 1867 for moral instruction on broadly but specifically Christian lines as the central aim of public education.¹

By the end of the 19th century, however, concern for the promotion of moral and ethical instruction began to intensify. As society became industrialized and urbanized, traditional guarantors of morality and social stability — family, church, and small community — saw their effectiveness in that role steadily eroded. The churches found it difficult to adjust to political and economic changes of the age. The Roman Catholic Church, stubbornly resisting compromise with modernism, formulated the clearest response to liberal democracy, industrial capitalism, and Darwinian science, a response which was largely negative: Most Protestant denominations were divided during this period between those who sought to reinterpret the Christian message in changed surroundings and those of a more fundamentalist stripe.² Throughout the Western world, men found themselves, in the words of Dutch historian Jan Romein, “before the dark gate of utter uncertainty”³ in a world in which scientific discovery and social change had put traditional verities under attack. It is not surprising, then, that conventionally religious persons should seek to reinforce the moral order through the schools. At the same time, even those who professed adherence to no creed were no less concerned about what appeared to be a decline in personal and public morality and were equally vocal in demanding that schools place renewed emphasis on the teaching of ethics and morality.⁴

There were no clear battle-lines between “secular” and “Christian” morality,

1 Alexander Forrester, *The Teacher's Textbook* (Halifax, 1867), pp. 585-90.

2 These divisions are discussed in Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches in Industrial America* (New York, 1949), pp. 163-203.

3 Jan Romein, *The Watershed of Two Eras: Europe in 1900* (Middletown, Connecticut, 1980), p. 586.

4 See, for example, the history of Britain's Moral Instructional League, a largely secular body, in Gustav Spiller, *The Ethical Movement in Great Britain* (London, 1934), pp. 124-55.

and the distinction grew more hazy as the 19th century drew to a close. The impact of science and idealist philosophy was gradually secularizing liberal Christianity in the West.⁵ Issuing ultimately in the proclamation of the so-called "social gospel", this process had, perhaps, a more profound impact upon the debate over moral education than any other single phenomenon, for it assisted educators in shifting emphasis away from an absolute, essentially personal, moral standard to one which was largely social and relativistic.

Nova Scotia provides an interesting illustration of the wider movement for moral education at the turn of the century. Her position as a society linked by geography to the United States and by law and tradition to the United Kingdom gave Nova Scotians access to the intellectual movements, especially neo-idealism, which influenced educators on both sides of the Atlantic. Although the province did not achieve the levels of industrial development and urban growth of some other parts of Canada, it experienced the social dislocation of rural depopulation and what many newspapers called "the exodus" of out-migration from Nova Scotia. Furthermore, Nova Scotia was a rather reluctant partner in a new country, born in a back-room without the fanfare which accompanied the establishment of other new states in the 19th century. Nova Scotians committed to the new national enterprise — and they were a powerful group among the province's educators if not the population at large — could realistically fear that Canada might collapse under the pressures of disunity and social change, especially after the economic devastation wrought in the region after the depression of 1883. Lacking the cultural and religious homogeneity of some societies, Nova Scotians and other Canadians looked to the school to create a common morality and a common nationality.⁶

A useful tool for investigating educational questions during this period is the *Educational Review*, published in Saint John, New Brunswick. Edited by G.U. Hay and A.H. MacKay, later the influential Superintendent of Education in Nova Scotia, the *Review* represented editorially progressive opinion in education in the Maritime Provinces. While it is unlikely that the relatively sophisticated educational views of the editors were mirrored in the majority of classrooms in the Maritimes, the *Review* did reflect the region's educational

5 For a Canadian perspective on this process, see A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal, 1979), pp. 171-228, and B. Anne Wood, "Hegelian Resolutions in the New Education Movement: the 1925 Putman-Weir Report", *Dalhousie Review*, 62 (1982-83), pp. 254-77.

6 See Nancy M. Sheehan, "Indoctrination: Moral Education in the Early Prairie Schoolhouse", in David Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan, and Robert M. Stamp, *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West* (Calgary, 1979), pp. 222-35. Acting to some extent in opposition to the views of a majority of Nova Scotians and those of the anti-confederate government of Liberal W.S. Fielding, a number of educational leaders in the province sought throughout the 1880s and 1890s to promote a distinctly Canadian identity in the schools. This process was ably described by Richard Henley in "The Canadianization of Nova Scotians, 1878-1896", a paper delivered to the annual conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, Halifax, June 1981.

agenda and reported extensively on classroom practice. Its columns included contributions from academics and public figures interested in education, and summaries of teachers' meetings, inspectors' reports, and other news of educational import in the region. From its first issue in 1887, the *Review* mirrored a steadily growing interest in moral education.⁷ Nearly every number thereafter carried some item relevant to the debate over the nature, purpose, and methodology of moral instruction.

Reports from the Superintendent of Education and school inspectors, curriculum guides, and textbooks for the province reflected a comparable preoccupation with the subject. The following message was printed in every school register in Nova Scotia at the beginning of this century:

The schoolroom and grounds is [sic] an elementary miniature world in which the pupil has an opportunity of developing all the moral points of character required for useful living in the great world of mature human activity. The crown and sum total of all the other parts of the teacher's work is the development of the best possible character in each pupil, so that in every lesson and in every exercise the ultimate purpose should preside over and direct the course of instruction.⁸

The fact that such exhortations needed iteration suggests that teachers were not always sufficiently attentive to the principles which they embodied. J.W. Longley, Nova Scotia's long-serving attorney-general, complained to teachers in Annapolis of "the one thing lacking" in a school system with which he was generally pleased. While young Nova Scotians were demonstrating their proficiency as scholars, "all this perfect scholarship is entirely consistent with an absence of moral sense, and...with an absence of any regard to...the immortal destiny of the race". Science, since Darwin, continued to captivate the Victorian age, but its more sinister aspects were now more clearly recognized. "To be a mental automaton", Longley continued, "capable of parsing sentences, mastering the power of numbers, and perfectly versed in history and science is not necessarily to be a useful or good citizen".⁹

Many educators were disappointed in their hopes for public education. Universal education had been an undoubted intellectual success. "But", asked a contributor to the *Review*, "how about the great moral elevation which was so confidently looked for by the early promoters of the movement for universal education?" While some of the coarser vices may have been checked by the socialization which accompanied schooling, increased training "is just as

7 *Educational Review* [ER], 1 (1887-88), p. 1.

8 A.H. MacKay, "Moral Instruction and Training in the Public Schools of Canada", in Michael E. Sadler, ed., *Moral Instruction and Training in Schools: Report of an International Inquiry*, (London, 1910), II, p. 289.

9 J.W. Longley, "The One Thing Lacking", *ER*, 12 (1898-99), pp. 34-5.

available in making one cleverer as a forger or burglar, as in an honest commercial or professional pursuit".¹⁰ Longley complained to the members of the Dominion Educational Association in Halifax in 1898 that the result of 40 years of public education in the country was that "materialism is more complete and universal...and that an appreciation of purely spiritual things is in less regard" than among the previous generation.¹¹ John Ruskin once suggested that education should be concerned less with teaching people to know what they don't than with teaching them to behave as they don't, but many observers feared that the nation's schools were "teaching the youth the shapes of letters and the tricks of numbers, and then leaving them to turn their arithmetic to roguery, and their literature to lust".¹²

Most educators, indeed most citizens, in Nova Scotia professed Christianity, associated the development of moral virtue with religion, and linked their society's perceived moral dangers with want of sufficient religious knowledge and piety. Many were dismayed over an apparent decline in their students' familiarity with the Scriptures, and frequent calls were made to establish the Bible as a required text. But the province's politicians resisted such pressure, for the most part. The government of Charles Tupper in the 1860s had rejected legislative guarantees for confessional schools in favour of a single public education system in which religion could be taught, if at all, only after school hours.¹³ Premier W.S. Fielding, furthermore, contended that teachers were not capable of instructing all denominations in the Scriptures.¹⁴ Dr. David Soloan, another principal of the Normal College in Truro, while acknowledging that schools should "express in word and deed the highest principles of religion" and "inculcate and encourage fidelity to the faith received of God", defended local authorities who had abandoned prayer and Bible-teaching, "for history and living witness show the impossibility of people of diverse faiths joining in acts of public worship".¹⁵ The *Educational Review* held that only those who had made up their minds on controversial points in Scripture were truly qualified to teach it, and such persons would likely have arrived at sectarian positions. "Even reading the Bible without comment is sectarian teaching"; if the Bible used was the Revised Standard Version, it was anti-Catholic; if the Douai Version, it was

10 J.E. Wells, "Moral Training in Schools", *ER*, 12 (1898-99), pp. 54-7.

11 J.W. Longley, "The Spiritual Element in Education", in Dominion Educational Association, *The Minutes of Proceedings with Addresses and Papers of the Third Convention of the Association* (Halifax, 1900), p. lxiv.

12 W.E.P. Stockley, "The Real in Education", *ER*, 11 (1897-98), pp. 156-61.

13 For the unique locally developed compromise which allowed the incorporation of some Roman Catholic schools into the public system in Nova Scotia, see J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp, and Louis-Philippe Audet, *Canadian Education: A History* (Scarborough, 1970), pp. 104-5.

14 *ER*, 3 (1889-90), pp. 129.

15 *ER*, 17 (1903-04), p. 65.

anti-Protestant. Concentration on the Old Testament discriminated against the Christian, and on the New Testament against the Jew. In the end, the *Review* concluded, "You cannot read the Bible in school without teaching certain opinions about the Bible as held by different sects".¹⁶

On the other hand, any open criticism of religious teaching other than on grounds of inconvenience would not be countenanced. In 1904 the prominent writer and historian, R.R. McLeod of Brookfield, Queen's County told the annual meeting of the Provincial Education Association that "respect for Christian virtues" could be no more secured by reading the Bible and saying prayers than could the appetite be satisfied by reading a bill of fare. "Christian virtue", he maintained, "is taught in school through Christian acts". Typically, no one chose to argue with McLeod after his address, but after he had left the meeting Dr. John Forrest of Dalhousie University and several other delegates moved to have his remarks stricken from the record of the convention.¹⁷

Most 19th-century Nova Scotian educators were determined that, if religion could not be mentioned during school hours, a religious and moral atmosphere should permeate the institution and the teaching conducted there. In 1887 the *Educational Review* complained that "it is most unjust to brand all schools as godless in which religion is not taught as a subject of instruction",¹⁸ and in 1895 the *Review* assured critics that "principles of sound Christian morality are inculcated" in the region's schools.¹⁹ J.W. Longley told the meeting of the Provincial Education Association in 1896 that education which failed to place "the destiny of the immortal soul" above pursuit of material gain was "a travesty". "In the name of God and humanity", he demanded, "let us teach religion in our schools and everywhere else".²⁰ The attorney-general was not unaware of the difficulties with such an approach. In his view religion had come to mean in the popular mind "well established creeds endeavoring to impose particular tenets of belief upon the plastic minds of youth". Religious education on this basis would be unworkable in Nova Scotia, where "the Roman Catholic is not willing that his children should be taught the Westminster Confession, neither is the Presbyterian or Methodist willing that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception be instilled in his children: the Baptist will protest against infant baptism, and the Episcopalian will object to Church Democracy".²¹ But neither was a purely secular solution satisfactory.

Instead, Longley frequently recommended that schools teach a "composite

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁷ Notes and Clippings for the Provincial Education Association Annual Meeting, Truro, N.S., 26-28 August 1903, RG 14, v. 157, no. 2, p. 65, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS].

¹⁸ "Education in the Antipodes", *ER*, 1 (1887-88), p. 90.

¹⁹ "Religion in the Schools", *ER*, 9 (1895-96), p. 82.

²⁰ *ER*, 10 (1896-97), p. 125.

²¹ Longley, "The Spiritual Element", pp. lxii-lxiii.

religion” based upon the “abstract ideas of soul-life”, common to all mankind, which “could be taught in all schools and under conditions that would be eminently satisfactory and uplifting to all”.²² Education based on a common religious ideal would contribute to building the spiritual life vital to the development of national stability. Longley foresaw a programme that would not limit itself to purely ethical teaching. “It is quite possible that we have secured an ethical standard which implants in the minds of the coming generation an almost universal recognition of the fact that honesty is the best policy”. But an education that left “spiritual possibilities undeveloped and unregarded” was one “unworthy of a Christian country”.²³

Religion for most Nova Scotians implied sectarianism, and representatives of a number of religious groups denied that moral formation could properly take place without the religious foundation offered by denominational instruction. Art, ethics, and literature could serve the cause of moral instruction, but they were insufficient, for morality would be separate from its base. In 1904, with nonsectarian schools well-established in Nova Scotia, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Halifax, C.C. O’Brien, still maintained:

Secular education is not helpful to morality. Such is the conclusion educationists are compelled to admit....If moral training must be religious and if denominations alone can give that, then let us have denominational schools. Scholarship is not the first end of education....Let our Council of Public Instruction banish from its curriculum books on pedagogy that undermine [religious] authority, and let reading books be used that mention the name of God....Let the highest causes be first recognized, and character will have a foundation to rest upon. Secular education offers none.²⁴

Those who sought the middle ground of a religion that dared not speak its name relied increasingly upon the school environment itself, and especially upon classroom teachers, to provide indirectly that moral instruction which could not be taken from the Bible or the Catechism. The influential American moral educator, Dr. Felix Adler, had argued in his book, *The Moral Instruction of Children*, that “the very atmosphere of the classroom should be such as to encourage moral refinement; it should possess a sunny climate...in which meanness and vulgarity cannot live”.²⁵ Sometimes this atmosphere depended upon the actual physical environment. A Nova Scotian inspector claimed in 1895 that “handsome school rooms and well-kept school grounds” were keys to improving politeness and good behaviour.²⁶ J.B. Calkin of the Normal College warned

22 See also *ER*, 10 (1896-97), p. 125.

23 Longley, “The Spiritual Element”, pp. lxi.

24 *ER*, 17 (1903-04), p. 65.

25 Felix Adler, *The Moral Instruction of Children* (New York, 1896), cited in *ER*, 8 (1894-95), p. 107.

26 *ER*, 9 (1895-96), p. 115.

teachers in his *Notes on Education* to remove all carving and graffiti from school premises as they were “a means of moral defilement and moral degradation”,²⁷ while advocates of Arbor Days and the planting of school gardens frequently pointed to the moral benefits which accompanied such nature-related projects.²⁸

The primary responsibility for creating a moral atmosphere in the school lay with the teacher. Teachers were repeatedly reminded of their power to mould human character and their duty to exercise that power wisely, for those who could “influence for good” were far more precious to the schools than mere purveyors of information.²⁹ The Education Act of the period specified among the duties of teachers: “To inculcate by precept and example a respect for religion and the principles of Christian morality, and for truth, justice, love of country, loyalty, humanity, sobriety, industry, frugality, chastity, temperance, and all other virtues.”³⁰ One writer to the *Educational Review* even urged that teachers were responsible to “inculcate their pupils with correct ideas of public morality” — in this case to shun the time-honoured Maritime practice of selling one’s vote — not only for the sake of the pupils themselves, but also as a means to influencing and reforming parents.³¹

Indeed, as teachers became more self-conscious as a professional group, they came to regard themselves as having a more important role in the moral formation of children than parents. To illustrate: in 1903 Principal E.J. Ross of Joseph Howe School in Halifax wrote the Board of School Commissioners complaining that his had become known as “the ‘Darky’ school” and asking that all black children be gathered into a separate school. “Their morals being very low causes there to exist a baneful influence upon our children. Indeed, many of their parents are themselves almost devoid of honour, uprightness, and integrity”.³² Leave aside the racial element, and the same sentiments were frequently applied to the children of the poor of all colours. Even more instructive, however, was the board’s reply. They admitted that the evils Principal Ross perceived existed in most schools to some extent, but that they would “tend to disappear gradually as the pupils and parents...come more and more under the humanizing influence and intellectual stimulus of the schools”.³³ Schools could well be seen, wrote Professor Walter Murray of Dalhousie University, as “moral dispensaries es-

27 J.B. Calkin, *Notes on Education* (Toronto, 1888), p. 286.

28 See, for example, *ER*, 4 (1890-91), p. 189.

29 See *ER*, 2 (1888-89), pp. 150-1.

30 *Manual of the Public Instruction Act and Regulations of the Council of Public Instruction of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1900), p. 29. This wording was adopted almost *verbatim* from an Ontario model, and it is retained in the contemporary education acts of each of these two provinces.

31 *ER*, 10 (1896-97), p. 2.

32 Minutes of the Halifax Board of School Commissioners, 4 June 1908, v. 11, p. 303a, PANS.

33 *Ibid.*, 30 October 1908, p. 357.

tablished in the midst of communities suffering from moral diseases".³⁴

The example of Christian teachers was central to the work of moral education. Papers on the moral influence of the teacher appeared frequently at meetings of local and provincial teachers' associations.³⁵ And for Nova Scotians the teacher's role as a moral paragon extended beyond the classroom walls. The *Educational Review* expressed the view in 1895 that, as "the public school is a moral institution, no one but persons of a profoundly moral nature have any right to appointment...as school teachers".³⁶ In Nova Scotia a teacher could not be licensed unless it had been certified by a minister of religion or two Justices of the Peace that:

the moral character of said candidate is good, and such as to justify the Council of Public Instruction in assuming that the said candidate will be disposed as a teacher to inculcate by precept and example a respect for religion and the principles of Christian morality, and the highest regard for truth, justice, love of country, loyalty, humanity, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, chastity, temperance, and all other virtues.³⁷

Backsliders were warned in 1889 by Dr. David Allison, Superintendent of Education in the province, that his department would cancel the licences of teachers upon receiving evidence of immoral behaviour on or off school grounds³⁸ and he delivered on his promise. The minutes of the Council of Public Instruction for the following several years record the cancellation of the licence of one Ernest F. Johnson after he refused to deny that he had seduced a 15-year-old girl in his charge and that of Peter J. Webb of Frankville, Antigonish County, for drunkenness and giving liquor to his pupils.³⁹ Suspensions were handed down to Malcolm MacLeod of Point Tupper for illegal liquor selling, to Kenneth MacLeod of Englishtown for violations of the Elections Act, and to T.C. Pattilo, Inspector of Schools for Lunenburg County, for misappropriation of funds and neglect of duty.⁴⁰ Lesser penalties were meted out for the fairly widespread practice of fraud or forgery of documents to obtain higher grades of teachers' licence.⁴¹

The use of the school to inculcate morality had been encouraged in part by

34 W.C. Murray, "Public Schools and Ethical Culture", *ER*, 10 (1896-97), p. 52.

35 District 4 (Annapolis-Digby) Teachers' Association Notebooks (1882-1908), MG 2a, p. 2, PANS.

36 *ER*, 8 (1894-95), p. 227.

37 MacKay, "Moral Instruction and Training", p. 288.

38 *ER*, 3 (1889-90), p. 49.

39 Minutes of the Council of Public Instruction, 5 July 1888, p. 265, 27 November 1888, p. 268, 12 November 1895, p. 386, 13 November 1895, p. 387, PANS.

40 *Ibid.*, 3 April 1889, p. 271, 26 September 1892, p. 310, 12 August 1889, p. 276, 11 December 1889, p. 278.

41 See, for example, the actions taken against Rebecca C. McEachern of Inverness and Alice Miller of Miller's Creek, Hants County: *ibid.*, 14 August 1893, p. 329, and 26 August 1895, p. 374.

pedagogic theory in the 19th century. Virtue had been proclaimed as the ultimate aim of education by both Frederick Froebel and Johann Herbart, perhaps the two most influential theorists of the century. While Froebelian theory looked largely to the careful nurture of a natural development process among children, Herbart's pedagogy emphasized the creation of new interests, the use of psychology to bring the will into line with prevailing ethical ideals, and the stimulation of the will to act habitually in accordance with those ideals. For Herbart, moral formation could be divorced from sectarian religion, for, in the words of one of his disciples, "all ethical systems arrive at substantially the same rules of life".⁴²

One of the most thoughtful writers on moral education in Canada was Walter Murray, the New Brunswicker who taught philosophy at Dalhousie University, served on the Halifax Board of School Commissioners, and later became the first president of the University of Saskatchewan. In 1892 Murray wrote "The Teaching of Ethics in Schools" for the *Educational Review*, suggesting caution in the development of moral education programmes. He noted that much that had been written on the subject confused teaching children the knowledge of the right with the practice of the right. A flood of "ethical textbooks" had come available, but all dealt with the formal teaching of a body of moral principles. This, in Murray's view, was dangerous, for teachers risked engaging in abstract discussions of ethics with students who could not yet follow them. Children were not capable of the reflection required for a scientific study of ethics and could be led to unhealthy skepticism or "moral nausea". Teaching morals from a text would result in mechanical understanding to which youth might pay lip-service. A method which in other subjects had produced "a race of intellectual prigs" could in moral education produce "a host of moral prigs". Rather, as one successfully taught an academic discipline by requiring students to attack certain problems, moral discipline would be ensured by the securing of right actions and the formation of habits of good conduct.⁴³

An Anglican clergyman from Halifax, Rev. E.P. Hurley, replied to Murray that children would not long continue to do good if they did not really understand why, and that children's wills were moved by moral reasoning. He also noted that intention is a crucial aspect of personal morality, and morality by habit-formation confused utility and moral goodness. Finally, as many children never reached higher levels of schooling, Hurley feared that they might never be

42 Charles de Garmo, *Herbart and the Herbartians* (New York, 1896), p. 48. Most of the leading British and American educators acknowledged their debt to Herbart, and the influence of his moral didacticism on Canadian teachers seems to have been comparatively powerful: when Herbartian ideas came under attack from John Dewey and other progressive educators in the 20th century, it was only to challenge the methodology employed rather than the premise that the school's chief function was to promote personal and civic morality. See Wilson *et al.*, *Canadian Education*, pp. 308-10, and John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed* (Chicago, 1897), p. 17.

43 *ER*, 6 (1892-93), pp. 135-6, 213-4.

exposed to the process of moral reasoning which Murray believed should be reserved to late adolescence.⁴⁴

This debate reflected the division among moral educators over methodology and classroom strategy. Was moral instruction to be given on a systematic or irregular basis? Was it to have an assigned place in the timetable or be taken up within the framework of other subjects? Were children to be introduced to a "science of ethics" or merely to be taught to develop suitable habits by non-intellectual processes?

In 1897 the *Educational Review* called for "a definite and positive course of morals" in the region's schools.⁴⁵ Perhaps due to an overcrowded timetable, the resistance of teachers, or the belief that compartmentalizing morals reduced their importance in overall school life, no province in the Maritimes did so. In Nova Scotia, schools were to devote two per cent of their day specifically to "morals", another three per cent to "hygiene and temperance",⁴⁶ and five per cent to "opening exercises" which might include devotional and patriotic activities. Teachers were left free to decide how much morality to teach and how and when to teach it.⁴⁷

Most writers and teachers in the province preferred indirect moral instruction woven into daily lessons, usually through didactic or edifying stories. Lizzy Mahony, a Halifax teacher, wrote in 1891 that stories "will lift the child into an ideal world.... We may produce certain impressions by telling children of great and good things that can be done".⁴⁸ Some expected story-telling to be accompanied by pointed morals, while others preferred tales in which the moral might "steal into the mind unsuspected".⁴⁹ Walter Murray also rejected textbook morals, urging instead that teachers "begin with the concrete. Start from the pupil's experience". But Murray also expected teachers to modify the classroom environment, intimate moral ideals, and, while avoiding overt moralizing or "goody-goody talk", to assign stories, biographies, and histories which could "inspire right and noble action".⁵⁰

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 173-5, 197-8, 232-4.

45 *ER*, 10 (1896-97), p. 136.

46 Temperance advocates in this period wished to promote the "scientific" teaching and study of temperance. An act was passed in the Nova Scotia legislature in 1892 calling for "appropriate instruction" to all pupils in public schools "as to the nature of alcoholic drinks and narcotics, including tobacco". While textbooks were prescribed by the act to underscore the "scientific" approach to the subject, the aim was certainly moralistic and the actual practice was probably didactic: *ER*, 5 (1891-92), pp. 243, 252. For an excellent discussion of the aims and methods of temperance educators in western Canada, see Nancy M. Sheehan, "Temperance, Education, and the WCTU in Alberta, 1905-1930", *Journal of Educational Thought*, 14 (1980-81), pp. 108-24.

47 *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Education on the Public Schools of Nova Scotia, 1901* (Halifax, 1902), pp. xx, 12.

48 *ER*, 5 (1891-92), p. 192.

49 *ER*, 6 (1892-93), p. 34.

50 W.C. Murray, "Teaching Versus Preaching", *ER*, 15 (1901-02), p. 186.

In Nova Scotia schools, where religion could not be taught, moral education had to be placed within some or among all other disciplines. Even the cult of manual training was as much concerned with the moral efficacy of the subject as with its practical utility for the student and society. James Bingay, supervisor of schools in Glace Bay, wrote in his history of public education in the province that the aim of manual training was "general and cultural, rather than specific and vocational".⁵¹ While most writers believed that every subject could be employed in raising moral standards, heaviest emphasis was placed upon literature and history. J.B. Calkin argued that reading lessons should be "freighted with rich and high-toned moral sentiment".⁵²

But it was to history, traditionally a teacher of lessons, and, in the 19th century widely seen as a science of human relations, that moral educators most often turned. In 1888 the *Educational Review* observed: "In a country where religious instruction is banished from its schools, what a considerable opportunity has the teacher during the history lesson to inculcate high moral principles on the minds of his pupils!" The teacher, the writer continued, has a duty to "place a lofty ideal before...his pupils", and this could best be done through factual, not mythical stories. That historical tales could be shown to be true, concrete occurrences drawn from the lives of real people was thought to increase their moral impact upon children and to "elevate the sentiments, ennoble the aspirations, and quicken the urge to rigorous and well-sustained effort".⁵³

The use of history as a substitute for religion was a common feature of the moral education movement in the Western world,⁵⁴ and most British and American educators of the time would have agreed with the popular British historian James Anthony Froude that history was "a voice for ever sounding

51 James Bingay, *Public Education in Nova Scotia: A History and Commentary* (Kingston, N.S., 1919), p. 102. Elodie Bourque, a Moncton teacher, suggested in a paper on manual training and character-building that, in addition to promoting carefulness and thoroughness, mechanic science could "cultivate a love for the right, the good, and the beautiful": *ER*, 15 (1901-02), pp. 184-5. The civic implications of the manual training movement were suggested in an address to the Dominion Educational Association in 1901 by T.B. Kidner, a British teacher who had come to Canada to spread the manual training gospel; the accuracy demanded in the workshop, "where there is no approximation, the thing is right or wrong", would, he contended, combat the "weak and flabby method of approaching vital questions . . . one of the most glaring evils of the world today": quoted in Douglas Lawr and Robert Gidney, *Educating Canadians* (Toronto, 1974), pp. 164-6.

52 Calkin, *Notes on Education*, pp. 268-9.

53 "On the Teaching of History", *ER*, 1 (1887-88), pp. 169-70.

54 See William Brickman, "The Teaching of Secular Moral Values in the Nineteenth Century: U.S.A., England, France", *Paedagogica Historica*, 12 (1972), p. 381. The American Herbartian Charles de Garmo saw historical study as "a potent means of giving the young correct ideas of ethical principles, and of enlisting their dispositions on the side of right": Charles de Garmo, "Ethical Training in the Public Schools", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2 (1891-92), p. 587.

across the centuries the laws of right and wrong".⁵⁵ History teachers were to make that voice heard by parading ethical models before their students and by demonstrating history's broader moral lessons. One writer pointed to the value of studying the vanished supremacies of Western history: "So long as the people remained simple, truthful, pious, and were uncontaminated by the grosser forms of vice, they prospered; but when they abandoned themselves to the indulgence of their baser natures,..they fell".⁵⁶ Teachers, it was thought, could demonstrate historically, if not scientifically, that "righteousness exalteth a nation".

As patriotism came to play a greater role in moral instruction, history seemed an even more appropriate discipline through which to promote desirable knowledge and attitudes. More emphasis on Canadian history and the desirability of its uniform teaching appeared on the agenda of teachers' conferences.⁵⁷ An advocate of extended history teaching in 1900 suggested that the subject encouraged students "to conduct themselves with reference to other human beings, so that all might work together for the best good of all". Too much study of the sciences, he claimed, "emphasizes the selfish, individual tendencies of our own nature", while historical study develops "the altruistic and cooperative tendencies".⁵⁸ The extent to which historical study was to be reduced to a mere didactic tool is indicated in A.H. MacKay's 1914 *Monograph on the Curriculum of the Public Schools of Nova Scotia*; history teachers were instructed to "endeavor to make the facts of history in each epoch reveal to the utmost the contrast with our own time in point of individual liberty, religious tolerance, democratic power,..material comforts, and education".⁵⁹

Good citizenship had always been perceived as an aim of moral education, but traditionally it had been thought secondary to that of personal morality. Francis Parker, the American progressive educator, told a gathering of Maritime teachers in 1888 that the main question respecting education was not how much would be added to the material wealth of the nation but would it "put more power and action into the soul of man?"⁶⁰ Local teachers' meetings at the end of the last century most often concerned themselves with personal moral formation, kindness to animals, politeness, and the development of Christian virtues. J.W. Longley in many ways represented this older view. In 1898 he warned the Dominion Educational Association against the deterioration of the sentiment of patriotism into one of national pride. Citing Rudyard Kipling as a man whose devotion to humanity earned him a reputation of disloyalty, he reminded

55 J.A. Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (London, 1888), I, p. 27.

56 "On the Teaching of History", p. 170.

57 See Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 98-9.

58 "The Study of History", *ER*, 13 (1899-1900), p. 187.

59 [A.H. MacKay], *Monograph on the Curriculum of the Public Schools of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1914), p. 14.

60 *ER*, 2 (1888-89), p. 44.

educators that their duty was to make the nation "worthy and great in the moral tone and fibre of its people", and that while Nova Scotians and other Canadians could glory in their country and the empire to which it belonged, "we must ever keep in mind that no power is destined to last", save that which was divinely inspired.⁶¹

At the same time, some educators began to link moral instruction with the direct promotion of national and imperial sentiment. In 1887 one of Canada's leading imperialists, George R. Parkin, told New Brunswick teachers that the school's chief duty was the promotion of the spirit of loyalty and self-sacrifice. Direct civic instruction was needed in part as a corrective to the partisan, and by implication, unpatriotic, press. Parkin claimed to favour a schooled, responsible patriotism, but he stressed that even an "undiscriminating and unreasoning patriotism" as might be found in Russia or Turkey was preferable to the *status quo* in Canada.⁶² A pan-Canadian concern with nation-building, or at least nation-shoring-up, intensified during the 1890s. Bertha Cameron, a primary teacher at Parrsboro, won ten dollars for an essay on teaching patriotism which held that true patriotism "lays the axe at the root of all selfishness" and urged teaching that "none of us lives for himself, but each must consider what is the highest good for all".⁶³ Even Walter Murray noted that the age of the individual was passing, that "we think less about the individual and more about society", and that education should help children to think and act more effectively in collectivities.⁶⁴

Many teachers objected to direct patriotic teaching on the grounds that it was jingoistic or that it might lead to political partisanship.⁶⁵ But as Nova Scotians became more involved in the work of nation-building and the Western world in general became ever more enmeshed in national, imperial, and military rivalries, lessons in patriotism were given more attention than lessons in personal virtue. A.H. MacKay, whose career as Superintendent of Education might be summed up in his claim that "nothing has been left undone...to inculcate into youth a sense of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship",⁶⁶ called for the introduction of compulsory military drill — a programme he had established in Halifax in 1892 — into the province's schools as an aid to personal and civic discipline and, ultimately, as a preparation for war.⁶⁷

61 Longley, "The Spiritual Element", p. lxxv.

62 George R. Parkin, "On Teaching the Principles of Civil Government in Our Schools", *ER*, 1 (1887-88), pp. 137-9.

63 *ER*, 8 (1894-95), p. 153.

64 Murray, "Public Schools and Ethical Culture", p. 52.

65 *ER*, 6 (1892-93), pp. 87, 95.

66 Nancy M. Sheehan, "Alexander H. MacKay: Social and Economic Reformer", in R.S. Patterson, *et al.*, eds., *Profiles of Canadian Educators* (Toronto, 1974), p. 263.

67 MacKay, "Moral Instruction and Training", pp. 295-6. In 1908 an agreement with the Department of Militia and Defence was approved by the Council of Public Instruction

International tension prior to the First World War hastened the march to overtly nationalistic moral education. Many schools in the province took up the *Duty and Discipline* series of textbooks, first issued in England in 1910. The thrust of the essays contained in these books was that British and imperial society were endangered by a decline in public attention to patriotic duty. A typical essay, by Sir Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts movement, suggested that disobedience was a sign of madness, and that unquestioning obedience in business, factories, and schools was the key to building the military strength needed to defend the Empire. Each student was counselled to “be a good brick in this great nation” and to “play the game without thinking of your own comfort or safety, but in order that...the great Empire to which you belong may be strong and flourish forever”.⁶⁸ Morality, which had been difficult to place in the curriculum while it was linked with sectarian religion, became the core of the curriculum as part of a new civic, national, and imperial religion.

The First World War completed the transformation of moral instruction from the promotion of fixed standards of individual morality to the fostering of a public morality, defined and redefinable by the state itself.⁶⁹ Morality became almost totally identified with good citizenship — with a shift of emphasis from imperial to Canadian citizenship — and the state increasingly displaced the churches and the family as the ultimate arbiter of moral values. In 1922 Principal D.G. Davis, supervisor of schools in Truro, told of how morals were taught in grade one in that town. Children were asked to make up “Good Canadian” booklets which taught morality by emphasizing that “good Canadians” ran errands, but didn’t steal apples, that they listened to good music, but not to vulgar language, and so on. Edifying stores were to relate to the childhoods of leading national figures, such as “little Jack Eaton”, “little Bob Borden”, or “that mischievous little Sammy Archibald”.⁷⁰ Another teacher contributed a “Creed” which she had her students recite every day: “We believe it is our duty to the country to love it, to support its government, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies”.⁷¹

In his influential book, *Idealism and National Character*, Sir Robert Falconer, president of the University of Toronto, and earlier of Pine Hill Divinity College in Halifax, articulated the change. Attacking traditional moral

to “enforce more generally” the practice of military drill in schools: Minutes of the Council of Public Instruction, 23 April 1908, p. 575, PANS.

68 R.S.S. Baden-Powell, “British Discipline”, in *Essays on Duty and Discipline* (London, 1919), IV, pp. 23-33.

69 For another perspective on this topic, see Robert Nicholas Bérard, “The Movement for Moral Instruction in Great Britain: the Moral Instruction League and its Successors”, *Fides et Historia*, 16 (1984), pp. 55-73.

70 D.G. Davis, “Training for Citizenship”, in the programme of the Provincial Education Association’s Annual Meeting, Truro, N.S., July 1922, Miscellaneous School Papers, RG 14, v. 66, PANS.

71 Elsie Waugh, “The ‘School Town’ and Citizenship”, in *ibid.*

teaching, Falconer argued: "Those who teach should...understand that morals, public and private, have not been revealed once for all from Heaven...but are being constantly defined and clarified by the hard experience of humanity".⁷² Seventeen years earlier Falconer had told a Nova Scotian audience that he favoured opening school with prayers — but only prayers which were uniform throughout the province and which had been either chosen or composed by the Superintendent of Education,⁷³ the best person, presumably, to interpret humanity's hard experience. As the churches remained divided and revelation was incomplete, only the government seemed competent to pronounce on questions of morals.

Although the distinction was not always clear in the minds of teachers and educational writers, in the evolution of moral education the schools increasingly shifted their attention from the reformation of individual morality to concern for improving social efficiency. As a result, education came to be tied more closely to patriotism, nationalism, and an uncritical acceptance of fundamental social and political institutions. The process was a significant one, which has continued through the present day and has shaped contemporary debate over what is now called "values education". History has given way to "social studies", but despite objections from professional educators in the social studies field, that area of the curriculum is still called upon to provide guidance to students in matters traditionally thought proper to religious teaching, and to drive home the themes of national unity and identity.

Speaking to the Provincial Education Association in 1906 in favour of greater parental and church responsibility in education, Major B.R. Ward noted the tendency to turn to the school any time any group wished to modify prevailing modes of thought or feeling: "We expect the schools to make the nation temperate, to develop civic feeling, to reform politics, to secure reverence without religion".⁷⁴ Yet there is no clear evidence that the efforts of Nova Scotia's moral educators achieved their aims or were more instrumental in altering moral and civic attitudes than were other institutions or social processes.⁷⁵ Historians must not assume that what was taught in schools was learned, or that its influence was necessarily that which was intended. Still, the study of curricular change, especially that which relates to the moral and ethical formation of the young, does allow us to glimpse the shifting values and expectations of society at large.

72 Robert Falconer, *Idealism and National Character* (New York, 1920), pp. 20, 34, 143-50.

73 See the Notes and Clippings for the Provincial Education Association Annual Meeting, Truro, N.S., 26-28 August 1903, RG 14, v. 157, no. 2, p. 38, PANS.

74 Major B.R. Ward, "The Parents' National Education Association — Home and School Training Harmonized", in *Report of the Seventeenth Convention of the Provincial Education Association of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1908), p. 168.

75 See William Bruneau, "Towards a History of Moral Education: Some Fundamental Considerations and a Case Study", *Paedagogica Historica*, 15 (1975-76), pp. 356-78, for an interesting discussion of some of the pitfalls facing any historian of education.