THE RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE OF T.C. DOUGLAS: SOCIAL GOSPEL THEOLOGY AND PRAGMATISM

A Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis contends that T.C. Douglas' religious perspective is best understood as a coupling of social gospel theology and pragmatism. I am asserting that the classic interpretation of Douglas, as an exponent of social gospel theology, fails to incorporate all of the evidence about his religious reflections. Rather, the records indicate that as Douglas reflected upon the inadequacies of social gospel theology in a world with such manifestations of evil as Nazi Germany, he found this theology's moral logic wanting. Instead Douglas developed a position that originated from the moral reasoning found in the pragmatic philosophical tradition in currency at the University of Chicago, which he attended briefly as a doctoral student. This left Douglas' religious perspective rooted in the intellectual traditions of social gospel theology and tempered by pragmatism. But at the same time, through this intellectual vehicle, in the late-1930s, Douglas was able to gain insights into politics, morality and the human condition, that came into wide currency as Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realist theology became accepted among Canadian Protestants in the mid-1940s. In effect, Douglas reshaped his interpretation of social gospel theology, through the resources of the pragmatic intellectual tradition, so that it was a relevant and effective moral guide for Christian action in the modern world. Although Douglas' position lacks the academic rigor that can be found in the writings of other religious thinkers, his religious perspective was tested by the fires of political experience and affirmed by his political successes. In effect, this thesis will portray Douglas as a far more sophisticated theologian than any author has previously suggested. It is hoped that future scholarly studies of his life will heed these conclusions and discuss his religious ideas with more care.

Acknowledgments

Graduate scholarships from the Faculty of Graduate Studies were gratefully received during the research and writing of this thesis. The guidance, criticism and encouragement of my advisor Dr. Bryan Hillis and the members of my committee such as Dr. Richard Hordern, Professor I. Gorski, and Dr. Kenneth Oh is deeply appreciated. Their unyielding commitment to scholarship, personal integrity and the search for truth has given me the courage necessary to write this thesis. I must mention that the encouragement of Dr. Roland Miller, who initially encouraged me to study Islam, was an invaluable part of this process. Lastly, I must thank my friends, my brother Barry Pittendrigh and my parents, Robert and Irene, for their unwavering support in this endeavour.

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In this thesis, I will demonstrate that T.C. Douglas was a social gospeller who used the philosophical tradition of pragmatism to make social gospel theology relevant and viable. No one has ever said this before. In effect, I am attempting to reveal the creative religious thinker who so impressed the theology faculty at the University of Chicago that they offered him a Chair in Social Ethics.[1] Some scholarly investigations into the C.C.F. in Saskatchewan, using the non-philosophical or colloquial concept of pragmatism which denotes a perspective dominated by consideration of what is practical or feasible,[2] have described these socialists as being "pragmatic" or "pragmatically oriented".[3] However, no study has ever associated Douglas' theology with the American pragmatic philosophical tradition,[4] which included the pragmatic reflections of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.[5]

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1 Lewis H. Thomas, ed., The Making of a Socialist : The Recollections of T.C. Douglas (Edmonton : The University of Alberta Press, 1982), 80, 349-50.

2 Roger Scruton, A Dictionary of Political Thought (London : Pan Books, 1982), 367-8.

3 John W. Bennett, and Cynthia Krueger, "Agrarian Pragmatism and Radical Politics," in S.M. Lipset, Agrarian Socialism : The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in Saskatchewan : A Study in Political Sociology (Berkeley, Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1971, 3rd edition), 347-363; The best statement of this view of the C.C.F.'s pragmatism in contained in Evelyn Eager, Saskatchewan Government Politics and Pragmatism (Saskatoon : Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980), 1-12, 18, 43-46, 49, 51, 64-66, 71, 79-81.

4 Some of these great pragmatists include such men of letters as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand Canning Scott Shiller, William James, Sidney Hook, John Dewey, the historian Charles Beard, the literary critic Lionel Trilling and the sociologist C. Wright Mills. For commentary on Ralph Waldo Emerson's pragmatism see Cornel West, The American Evasion of Philosophy : A Genealogy of Pragmatism (Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 9-41 passim. For other views of Emerson that do not place him in the pragmatic tradition, but lend some support to West's assertion see Harold Bloom, Poetry and Repression : Revisionism from Blake to Stevens (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1976), 235-66; Sacvan Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad (Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 182-205. The pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce, Ferdinand Canning Scott Shiller and William James is well discussed in Copleston, A History of Philosophy, vol. 3 (New York : Doubleday, 1974) 304-351. The pragmatism of the philosopher Sidney Hook is well discussed in Milton R. Konvitz, "Sidney Hook: Philosopher of Freedom," in Sidney Hook and the Contemporary

This thesis will ask the reader to look beyond Douglas' folksy rhetoric, his brilliant use of the prairie idiom, his highly successful political career and examine him as a theologian who reflected upon the importance of coupling academic pragmatism with the social gospel theology usually associated with the work of Walter Rauschenbusch. This is a wholly new interpretation of T.C. Douglas' theology.

In 1981, two years before his death, the great historian of the Canadian plains, Lewis H. Thomas, despaired over the scholarly treatment of the religious ideas which shaped the motivations of the leaders of the early C.C.F..[6] He maintained that sociologists and political scientists, while writing eloquently and cogently about the political ideologies

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World : Essays on the Pragmatic Intelligence, ed. Paul Kurtz (New York: John Day, 1968), 18. Sidney Hook, Out of Step : An Unquiet Life in the Twentieth Century (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 7-16. Also see Hook's works such as, The Metaphysics of Pragmatism (Chicago : Open Court, 1927). Sidney Hook, John Dewey : An Intellectual Portrait (New York: John Day, 1939). The positions of the great pragmatic philosopher John Dewey are covered in George Dykhuizen, The Life and Mind of John Dewey (Carbondale : Southern Illinois University Press, 1973); Neil Coughlan, Young John Dewey : An Essay in American Intellectual History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973). The impact of Dewey's early Congregational Christian faith on his later philosophy is explored in Bruce Kuklick, Churchmen and Philosophers : From Jonathon Edwards to John Dewey (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1985), 230-53. The pragmatism of the controversial historian Charles Beard is examined in David W. Marcell, Progress and Pragmatism : James, Dewey, Beard and the American Idea of Progress (Westport Connecticut : Greenwood Press, 1974),196-258 passim. The pragmatic ideals of Lionel Trilling, the great American literary critic, are revealed in Lionel Trilling, "The Uncertain Future of the Humanistic Educational Ideal," ed. Diana Trilling, Last Decade : Essays and Reviews, 1965-1975 (New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 175-6. For commentary on the nature of Trilling's thought see William M. Chace, Lionel Trilling: Criticism and Politics (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1980) and Mark Krupnick, Lionel Trilling and the Fate of Cultural Criticism (Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1986). The sociologist, C. Wright Mills, made his earliest statement on his pragmatism in his dissertation published under the title, Sociology and Pragmatism : The Higher Learning in America (New York : Oxford University Press, 1964), 35. Also see Irving Louis Horowitz, C. Wright Mills : An American Utopian (New York : Free Press, 1983).

[5] West, 150-164.

[6] Lewis H. Thomas, "C.C.F. Victory in Saskatchewan," 1-3. Saskatchewan History vol. 34, (Winter 1981) : 1.

of the C.C.F., failed to seriously consider or comprehend the importance of these socialists' theological motivations.[7] This general paucity of scholarship even colours works that recognized the importance of religious motivations in T.C. Douglas' life and political career. Thomas and Ian McLeod,[8] Joseph D. Ban,[9] Doris French Shackleton,[10] and most recently, George Rawlyk,[11] authors who have examined T.C. Douglas' religious thought, have successfully associated his religious perspective with social gospel theology.[12] However, these authors, along with many others, have not reflected upon the whole body of evidence and, as a result have not nuanced Douglas' religious perspective as it so deserves.

The McLeods' biography of T.C. Douglas, Tommy Douglas The Road to Jerusalem (1987), stands as a superb example of a political biography. As authors, who are deeply familiar with their subject, they recognize that Douglas was profoundly influenced by social gospel theology. Although they masterfully incorporate every available source in their work, it is marred by a rudimentary comprehension of social gospel theology. Their enviable sophistication, depth of reflection and entertaining prose, which they use to explore the nuances of Douglas' career, is punctuated by such theological gaffs as proposing that theological pluralism was the prime force that

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[7] Ibid. Anthony W. Rasporich has made some efforts to address this in his essay "Utopia, Sect and Millennium in Western Canada, 1870-1940," in Prophets, Priests, and Prodigals : Readings in Canadian Religious History 1608 to Present (Toronto : McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1992), 231-3.

[8] Thomas and Ian McLeod, Tommy Douglas : The Road to Jerusalem (Edmonton : Hurtig Publishers, 1987), 11-14, 18, 31-36, 48, 303.

[9] Joseph D. Ban, "Tommy Douglas: A Case Study of the Conscientious Pastor," in American Baptist Quarterly, No. 3, S (1983) 256-268.

[10] Doris French Shackleton, Tommy Douglas (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart Limited,1975), 31, 56-7, 76-7.

[11] George A. Rawlyk, "Politics, Religion, and the Canadian Experience : A Preliminary Probe," in ed. Mark A. Noll, Religion & American Politics : From the Colonial Period to the 1890s (New York : Oxford University Press, 1990) 269.

[12] Thomas, 1982, 60-1, 349.

undermined the credibility of the Canadian social gospel movement.[13] Kenneth David Falconer[14] and John Oussoren,[15] in their respective and extensive examinations of Douglas' thought, have gone little beyond the proposition that T.C. Douglas was an exponent of social gospel theology. L.D. Lovick, a literary scholar, has written a brief and penetrating commentary on Douglas' theology which grasps the Biblical foundation of his religious thought. Yet this study is limited by its brevity.[16] Joseph. D. Ban also does not go beyond characterizing Douglas as an exponent of social gospel theology.[17] Lastly, Ben Smillie, the respected theologian, citing Walter E. Ellis, suggests that Douglas, as a "social gospel Baptist", can be associated with a view that accepts "the inherent goodness of people".[18] Although this is an interesting proposition, it needs to be systematically demonstrated with Douglas' own writings and speeches. After all, this is where the most

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[13] "In the decades after 1920, the social gospel's combination of Christian reformism and tolerance, for other religious views, proved difficult to sustain. After all, if God can be anything you want Him to be, why have a church?" McLeod, 18. Although the McLeods correctly understand that social gospel theology went bankrupt in the late 1920s, their reading of it does not fit standard accounts of its causes. For a much more extensive and nuanced perspective on social gospel theology's collapse in Canada see Richard Allen, The Social Passion Religion and Social Reform in Canada : 1914-28 (Toronto : University of Toronto Press).

[14] Kenneth D. Falconer, Tommy Douglas, 1930-1944 : A Case Study of Leadership and Social Structure (M.A. thesis, Regina : University of Regina, 1978,) 106; Although Lipset does not examine Douglas' thought specifically, he does note the importance of religious ideas in socialist political parties in the British Commonwealth. Lipset, 169-171.

[15] John (Jan) Oussoren, From Preacher to Politician : T.C. Douglas' Transition (D.Ed. dissertation, Toronto : Graduate Department of Education, The University of Toronto, 1993), chap. 5 passim.

[16] L.D. Lovick, ed., Tommy Douglas Speaks : till power is brought to pooling (Lantzville, British Columbia : Oolichan Books, 1979), 11- 43 passim. Lovick's essay on Douglas' thought is only thirty-two pages. Perhaps only four of these pages can be said to focus on Douglas' religious ideas. See Lovick, 27-39.

[17] Ban, 256-68.

[18] Ben Smillie, Beyond the Social Gospel : Church Protest on the Prairies (Saskatoon : The United Church Publishing House and Fifth House Publishing, 1991),130; Walter E. Ellis, "Baptist Vision of the New Jerusalem in Western Canada," lecture, Hamilton, McMaster Divinity College, 16-17, October 1984, 23 cited in Smillie 162.

substantial record of Douglas' religious thought is contained.[19] It should be emphasized that the years between 1928 and 1950, when he graduated from Brandon College and the early years of his premiership of Saskatchewan, were the most theologically productive in Douglas' life. Although the latter portion of this period, 1944-1950, was interrupted by Douglas' duties as premier of Saskatchewan, his imagination remained fecund. In 1950, emulating President Franklin D. Roosevelt,[20] Douglas created a series of radio programs called the Fireside Chats, which described many of his basic theological arguments. Although Douglas may have spoken about theological issues later in his life, these ideas remain extensions of those assembled during this period. In light of this body of evidence, which has never been used as one resource before, I am proposing that this study, which incorporates the whole body of primary sources about Douglas' religious thought, will fill a deep void in the literature about his life, career and theology.

T.C. Douglas' theological thought is best understood in terms of its relationship with Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr. Rauschenbusch is known as the classic exponent of social gospel theology in the English speaking world. Reinhold Niebuhr is associated with a much more pessimistic theological position called Christian Realism. Conventionally, these theological positions have been understood as having opposite assumptions about the nature of the human condition and possibilities within it.[21] Recently, as pragmatism has been revitalized as a defensible philosophical position, these

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[19] Alan Whitehorn's commentary upon what has been written about T.C. Douglas has been extremely helpful in this thesis. See his essay, "Douglas and The Historians : What Writers Have Said About The Man, His Government and His Place in The Party," in NeWest Review, May 1987.& Whitehorn, Canadian Socialism : Essays on the C.C.F.-N.D.P. 143-151.

[20] McLeod, 181-3.

[21] For an early effort to accomplish this see Reinhold Niebuhr, "Walter Rauschenbusch in Historical Perspective," in ed. Ronald H. Stone, Faith and Politics (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 36-46; Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis (New York : The Macmillan Co., 1908; reprint, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991), xxiv-xxix passim.

theologies have been contrasted in new ways. To be specific, Rauschenbusch's and Niebuhr's respective theological positions can be understood as non-pragmatic and pragmatic views of the human situation.[22] As a social gospeller, interested in pragmatism, T.C. Douglas articulated theological concepts that had parallels with both positions. In order to underscore this unique conceptual feature of his thought, I will use Rauschenbusch's and Niebuhr's respective views of the human condition as a framework for analysis.

Before I enter the substance of this thesis, it is appropriate to discuss the logic of its structure. Chapter one will define the basic terms of this thesis and will flesh out the features of Rauschenbusch's and Niebuhr's theology and their respective relationships with pragmatism. As this thesis proceeds, I will gradually unveil Douglas' relationship with this philosophical tradition and then his relationship with these two theological positions. Chapter two is essentially a theological biography. Because this thesis is not another study of Douglas' politics, his importance in Saskatchewan's history or the development of the C.C.F. or N.D.P., it will not follow the norms that one might expect in a historical or political study. Instead, I will examine the events in Douglas' life that contributed to his unique theological perspective. Chapter three will examine this man's historical position within the Canadian social gospel movement. I will examine the unique circumstances that gave him the opportunity to develop a new position. In chapter four, I will examine the historical circumstances that forced Douglas to couple pragmatic insights with social gospel theology. And lastly, chapter five will delineate the uneasy wedding of pragmatism, social gospel theology and liberal theology that defines his roughly formed theological position.[23]

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[22] Robin W. Lovin, Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism (New York : University of Cambridge Press, 1995), 47, 82.

[23] Before beginning the text of this thesis I should note that T.C. Douglas, typical of linguistic and cultural norms of Canadians of his age, often used language that is now characterized as being sexist. One would be hard-pressed to show that a malicious intent

Chapter I

Terms, Methods and Sources

This study is an exercise in theological categorization. In essence, I am asking where the perspective of T.C. Douglas fits within the grand theological currents, which swept over North America, when he was refining his intellectual position. Between 1924 and 1940, Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) and Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) were the two most widely recognized and influential Protestant theologians.[24] Their theological writings represented completely different views of the human situation that were both discredited and adopted by leading intellectuals in North America. In this chapter, I define their basic terminology, describe how they can be used as a means of understanding Douglas' theology and discuss records of Douglas' religious reflections which lend themselves to such scrutiny.

The Intellectual Origins of Rauschenbusch's and Niebuhr's Theology

In Western intellectual culture, the seventeenth century movements, called the Enlightenment, gave birth to two perspectives that have had a tremendous impact upon theology in the twentieth century. In Continental Europe, figures, such as Voltaire, Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau urged people to look toward reason as the lode-star to guide them through history.[25] Individuals, often

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was betrayed by Douglas' speech patterns, because there is no evidence to support this proposition. In this essay, I am accurately citing Douglas, while being wholly aware that some aspects of his use of the English language may be offensive to contemporary readers.

[24] Linwood Urban, A Short History of Christian Thought (New York : Oxford University Press, 1986), 147-50; Lovin,1-32 passim; West, 150-164 passim.

[25] For a classic examination of the Enlightenment's effect on Christian thought see William Hordern, A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology (New York : Collier Books Macmillan Publishing Company, 1968), 29-50; For an overview of the interaction of philosophic and theological ideas since the Enlightenment see Nancey Murphy, Beyond Liberalism & and Fundamentalism : How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set The Theological Agenda (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania : Trinity Press International, 1996); Diogenes Allen, Christian Belief in a Postmodern World (Louisville, KY : Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity

intellectuals, who claimed to be on the side of reason, now had a new legitimacy. They could guide humanity, from intolerance, superstition, habit, custom and tradition, into a brave and better new world.[26] In the late nineteenth century, Albrecht Ritschl displaced Christian orthodoxy's low estimate of humanity's moral capacities with Kant's more optimistic estimate of the force of morality and reason in human consciousness. This union of Christianity and Kantianism constituted the fundamentals of the liberal theological tradition.[27] True to Kant's tradition of moral reflection, it was marked by a sense of confidence and certainty that humanity could know what was right and could and should act on it.[28] Although liberal theology remained dominant in Protestant circles in the early half of the twentieth century, other intellectual forces grew to displace it.

The Enlightenment was not restricted to the European continent nor did all the members of the movement share the same opinions. Its Anglo-Scottish branch, which was led by such figures as Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, David Hume and James Madison,[29] was skeptical about the brave assumption that reason could lead humanity into a better social order and tended to have a dim view of human beings' moral capacities. These people believed that human nature was complex and ambiguous and that many traditional social institutions, which had weathered the test of the

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(Cambridge, M.A.: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

[26] Williston Walker, Richard A. Norris, David W. Lotz, et al., A History of the Christian Church (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985) 571-72, 579, 622-26, 628, 630, 668.

[27] Hans Schwarz, Evil A Historical and Theological Perspective (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 1995), 149-155.

[28] After all Kant proclaimed that people should be guided by the following principle: "Act only on the maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, trans. H.J. Paton (New York : Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 89.

[29] Russell Kirk, The Roots of American Order (Washington, D.C. : Regnery Gateway, 1991), 374-90, 366, 367, 358-68, 434-36.

contingencies of history, implicitly reflected this. Thus, it is not surprising that these people had considerable respect for the tradition of Christianity. Yet the American branch of the Anglo-Scottish Enlightenment, led by such figures as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, was particularly interested in letting people experiment with new religious forms. In the wake of the American Revolution, with religious freedom enshrined in the United State's constitution, citizens of the new order could experiment with different forms of religious practice. In the midst of this tradition of religious experimentation, the only available foundation for theology was to test its viability in social reality, coherence, cogency and relevance. This circumstance, coupled with the early American tradition of testing concepts against people's experience of social reality,[30] was the fertile social soil where theological pragmatism would emerge, grow and be refined into an intellectually respectable system of thought.

Pragmatists maintain that scholars can not honestly call themselves purveyors of truth, morality and beauty. All scholars can do is produce intellectual constructs that the intelligentsia and wider population find credible, coherent and which can be verified by experience. If these ideas appeal to these criteria, they can be judged to be true. False constructs are seen to be too obscure, incredible or incoherent and unsupported by experience.[31] The honest intellectual must also know that truths are

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[30] Even the French aristocrat, philosopher and respected commentator on the norms of American society, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), who arrived in the post-colonial America in 1831, noted that Americans had little taste for the intellectually lofty and apparently endless philosophical debates that occupied European academics. Instead, he maintained that Americans tended to believe that true ideas were the ones that were affirmed by their experience of reality. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America Abridged with an introduction by Thomas Bender, vol. 2 (New York : Modern Library College Editions, 1835, 1981) 294-297.

[31] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Coherance, Incoherence, and Christian Faith," in Christian Realism and Political Problems 165. Jeffrey Stout, Ethics After Babel (Boston : Beacon Press, 1988), 25. The intellectual implications of this are discussed in Robert L. Arrington, Rationalism, Realism and Relativism : Perspectives in Contemporary Moral Epistemology (Ithica : Cornell University Press, 1989), 119-31.

necessarily pregnant with doubt because any idea can lose its credibility in changing historical circumstance.[32] Hence, valuable intellectual constructions must hinge upon this irony of inquiry.[33] Initially, figures like C.S. Peirce and the famous William James formed pragmatism into a credible intellectual position.[34] In late 1940s and early 1950s, it was revived by intellectuals like Arthur Schlesinger, Lionel Trilling, Daniel Bell, Daniel Boorstin, Oscar Handlin and the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.[35] Although a sense of confidence in the scholarly world eclipsed pragmatism's influence in the 1960 and 1970s, it came to be respectable again.[36] Pragmatism also marks a fundamental conceptual divide between Walter Rauschenbusch's social gospel theology and Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realism.

Intellectually, Walter Rauschenbusch was a product of the certainty of the nineteenth century and its liberal theology. After becoming the Baptist pastor for the miserable and poverty stricken parish of New York City's Hell's Kitchen, on June 1, 1886, he concluded that Christians had an imperative to go beyond the search for personal salvation and to act against evil and suffering in society.[37] As a graduate student in Germany, he imbibed the intellectual optimism of the major liberal

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[32] West, 69.

[33] West, 150-64; Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 172.

[34] Copleston, 304-351. For a discussion of Peirce's theology see Robert S. Corrington, An Introduction to C.S. Peirce (Lanham, Md : Rowman and Littlefield, 1933), 68-72. For survey of pragmatism see Morton O. White, Pragmatism and the American Mind (New York : Oxford University Press, 1971.)

[35] Richard H. Pells, The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age : American Intellectuals in the 1940s & 1950s (New York : Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), 130. For a good discussion of the relationship that Reinhold and his brother Richard Niebuhr had with pragmatism see S. Mark Heim, "Prodigal Sons : D.C. Macintosh and the Brothers Niebuhr," Journal of Religion, 65 (July, 1985) : 336-58.

[36] Andrew Feffer, The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism (Ithica, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1993), 2.

[37] Rauschenbusch, 1991, 93; A.E. McGrath, Christian Theology : An Introduction (Oxford : Blackwell, 1994), 340.

theologians of the day and concluded that human beings had a duty to build a social order called the "Kingdom of God on earth."[38] Liberal theology had usurped Christian orthodoxy's position that human beings were divided from the Divine by their sinful nature, with the postulate that this gap could be closed and society could become holy. Christians, through the clarity of moral insight granted by God's grace, coupled with reason, science and moral persuasion could hope to build a relatively sinless social order called the Kingdom of God on earth.[39] The impossible was understood, in this perspective, to be possible.[40] After he published Christianity and the Social Crisis (1912) and A Theology of the Social Gospel (1917), it became clear that Rauschenbusch was the foremost exponent of social gospel theology on the North American continent. Protestants now had the theological confidence, which had been carefully regulated by the strictures of orthodoxy in the past, to look at social evil with the same disdainful confidence that the predator projects upon its wounded prey.

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38 Although Rauschenbusch was deeply influenced by the theology of Adolf von Harnack, it best to understand Rauschenbusch as an intellectual child of Albrecht Ritchl. Harnack can be understood as a popularizer of Ritchl's views. Hordern, 49. For more information on Ritchl's influence see David L. Mueller, An Introduction to the Theology of Albrecht Ritschl (Philadelphia : Westminster, 1969); Albrecht Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation : The Positive Development of the Doctrine, trans. H.R. Mackintosh, and A.B. Macaulay, (New York : Charles Scribner's 1900); Albrecht Ritschl, "Instruction in the Christian Religion," trans. Alice Mead Swing, in Albert Temple Swing, The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl (London : Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901); John Orr, The Ritschlian Theology and the Evangelical Faith (London : Hodden, 1905). For Ritschl's own statement of his theological position see A. Ritschl, "Introduction to the Christian Religion" & "Theology and Metaphysics," in Three Essays (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1972).

39 For a supurb discussion of Rauschenbusch's concept of human nature see D.B. Meyer, The Protestant Search for Political Realism 1919-1941 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 130-144 passim..

40 See Walter Rauschenbusch, "The Genesis of Christianity and the Social Crisis," in Rochester Theological Seminary Bulletin, (November 1918), 51-2; Walter Rauschenbusch, "The Kingdom of God," in Cleveland's Young Men, January 9, 1913.

The horrors of World War One shook European scholars from their stupor and forced them to recognize that liberal theology's assumptions about humanity's moral and rational capacities and the potential for these to guide them into a better future were unfounded. The mass brutality, inhumanity and sheer horror of trench warfare forced them to realize that reason and technological progress had only made humans more dangerous. Civilization only appeared to be a thin veneer covering the truly simian features of human nature. In response, the Swiss theologians Emile Brunner and Karl Barth turned to the texts of Christian orthodoxy.[41] The teachers of Christian orthodoxy, living in a world that affords few pretensions about humanity's moral capacities, presented a much darker image of humanity. Calvin, Luther, St. Augustine and other great minds in the Christian tradition presented humans as creatures with a tendency to defer to their own selfish interests. As well, these men presented all human creations, no matter how intellectually piquant, technically proficient or beautiful, as necessarily flawed and thus vulnerable to the forces of caprice within the universe.[42] Humanity was not the master of creation; it was only a creature within it.

In the United States, the experience of the Great Depression, of the 1930s, had a similar effect upon Liberal Christian theology. The poverty, misery, economic and social chaos of the decade, the growth of fascism in Europe and Stalin's morally debased efforts to build a communist society in the Soviet Union shook intellectuals' faith that reason and moral reflection could brace humanity from the caprice, cruelty and tragedy of history.[43] But other developments were also creating a climate where the smug intellectual security of the nineteenth century was being undermined. In science, in the early 1930s, quantum mechanics and Einstein's special and general

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[41] For a good discussion of the circumstances which surround the rise of neo-orthodoxy see Hordern, 111-129.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology : On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 1988), 299-314.

theory of relativity shattered the certainties of the Newtonian world and the mathematician Kurt Godel showed that logic operates in boundaries and patterns which reason cannot justify.[44] No credible intellectual dared to maintain that reason, science and scholarly reflection would simply lead humanity to some sort of utopia. The idea was bankrupt. Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realist theology was an effort to find intellectual accommodation in this burgeoning age of epistemological, moral and even aesthetic uncertainty.[45]

In early 1928, Reinhold Niebuhr, a young, bold, impertinent, and prolific academic at Union Theologian Seminary, decided that European theological scholarship had correctly assessed the human condition.[46] After graduating from Yale Divinity school, and studying under the great Christian Pragmatist Douglas Clyde MacIntosh,[47] Niebuhr forsook doctoral studies and, on August 1, 1915, traveled to Detroit and took up the role of German Evangelical Synod clergyman in Bethel Evangelical Church. His histrionic preaching style and prose, active involvement in

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[44] June Bingham, Courage to Change : An Introduction to Life and Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 264-5.

[45] Bell, 300, 302, 311. It was the young Niebuhr who wrote "There doesn't seem to be much malice in the world. There is simply not enough intelligence to conduct the intricate affairs of a complex civilization." Reinhold Niebuhr, Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic (Chicago : Willett, Clark, and Colby, 1929), 43. Similar motifs are apparent in his first book, Does Civilivization Need Religion? A Study in the Social Resources and Limitations of Religion in Modern Life (New York : Macmillian, 1927). For a riviting exposition of this theme in Niebuhr's career, see Ernest F. Dibble, Young Prophet Niebuhr : Reinhold Niebuhr's Early Search for Social Justice (Washington, D.C. : University Press of America, 1977), 26-95.

[46] Lovin, 39.

[47] Douglas Clyde Macintosh ed., Religious Realism (New York : Macmillan, 1931), v. For more commentary on Macintosh's life and character see John T. Noonan, The Believer and the Powers That Are (New York : Macmillian, 1987) 229; West, 153; Under Macintosh, Niebuhr was primarily exposed to the pragmatism of William James. See William James, The Will to Believe (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1979), 45; William James, Talks to Teachers on Psychology (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1983); William James, Essays in Religion and Morality (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1982).

civic politics and the American socialist party, and open lack of fear of Henry Ford and his thugs' efforts to suppress the burgeoning union movement, brought him to the centre of the city's political life. Through the brutal contingencies of experience, Niebuhr found liberal theology's ethic largely irrelevant and began to foster a tough-minded faith that allowed him to reject the liberal theology of the day and critically interpret what European theologians like Brunner and Barth were doing. At Union Theological Seminary, in New York, the urban centre of American intellectual life in the period,[48] he combined Christian orthodoxy and pragmatism into a new credible theology.[49] Its influence stretched well beyond the realms of the church,[50] because he articulated Christianity in a form that American Protestants in diplomatic, military and political circles found to be a practical moral guide in the caprice, terror and anxiety of World War Two and then the Cold War.

Rauschenbusch and Niebuhr: The Human Situation

Walter Rauschenbusch's and Reinhold Niebuhr's understandings of the human situation are derived from their respective concepts of human nature. Walter Rauschenbusch, true to the social science of his day, argued that human beings could

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[48] Richard W. Fox, Reinhold Niebuhr : A Biography (New York : Pantheon, 1985), 49, 55.

[49] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Coherence, Incoherence and Christian Faith," in Christian Realism and Political Problems (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 155. For commentary on Niebuhr's pragmatism see his interview in June Bingham, Courage to Change : An Introduction to the Life and Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons), 83; Fox, 34. As well see Arthur Schlesinger Jr, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Role in American Political Thought and Life," ed. Charles Kegley & Robert W. Bretall in Reinhold Niebuhr : His Religious, Social and Political Thought (New York : Pilgrim Press, 1956, 1961), 195-6; Paul Tillich, " Reinhold Niebuhr's Doctrine of Knowledge," Charles Kegley & Robert W. Bretall, 36; Richard Wightman Fox, Reinhold Niebuhr : A Biography (New York : Pantheon Books, 1985), 32; West, 150-164. For more recent scholarly commentary on Niebuhr's pragmatism see Lovin, 41- 54 passim.

[50] For an excellent assessment of Niebuhr's life see Charles C. Brown, Niebuhr and His Age : Reinhold Niebuhr's Prophetic Role in the Twentieth Century (Philadephia : Trinity Press International, 1992), 246-51.

overcome the egoism or selfishness rooted deep in their consciousness,[51] by fostering altruistic tendencies that emerge in adolescence,[52] through religious institutions, the community, education and the family.[53] He was interested in creating "a regenerated personality ... a will which sets justice above policy profit , and ... an intellect emancipated from falsehood."[54] He envisioned nothing less than "a new type of Christian" who acts in society, wins over others to the task of social reconstruction, expands the realm of religious duty to include social redemption, and recruiting various professions to the service to God and His people.[55] Ultimately, he envisioned the forces of light and darkness or salvation and sin, manifest in social movement, locked in a battle for the future of humanity. He wrote,

> Sin is a social force. It runs from man to man along the lines of social contract. Its impact on individuals becomes most overwhelming when sin is most completely socialized. Salvation, too, is a social force. It is exerted by groups that are charged with divine will and love. It becomes durable and complete in the measure in which the individual is built into a social organism that is ruled by justice, cleanness, and love. A full salvation demands a Christian social order which will serve as the spiritual environment of the individual.[56]

Christians, inspired by God, would have the strength and direction to battle evil and redeem society from sin. They aimed to build an order, barren of coercion,[57] based on brotherly love. Although Rauschenbusch believed that some suffering would always persist in the human situation, much of it could be removed.[58] In his mind, Christians

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[51] Walter Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel (New York : The Macmillan Company, 1917), 92-3.
[52] Rauschenbusch, 1991, 309-10.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 349, 351.
[55] Ibid., 352-7.
[56] W. Rauschenbusch, Christianizing the Social Order (New York : Macmillan, 1912), 116.
[57] Ibid., 67.
[58] Ibid., 421.

had clear choices to make about joining or obstructing the forces of righteousness in society.

Reinhold Niebuhr's view of the human consciousness did not allow the intellectual luxury of certainty.[59] In his *magnum opus*, the Nature and Destiny of Man (1949), he found the intellectual resources to describe human nature in the Old Testament and in the writings of Christian Orthodoxy. Paradoxically, human beings are creatures "known and loved by God" and upon reflection we tend to want to obey His will and act ethically,[60] but tragically we do not have the resources to do this.[61] Niebuhr turned toward St. Augustine's reflections on the transcendent and existential self in human consciousness for an explanation.[62] This is a view of humans who are creatures that can stand in and above experience of their animal, bodily or existential self.[63] They can do this, respectively, through their imagination, memory and capacity for reasoned reflection.[64] Human creativity and sin is spawned from the tension between these two aspects of consciousness. Our ability to imagine our situation in different terms than its current state, drives us to affect the world, create and innovate.[65] Yet when we imagine ourselves capable of producing ideas, assessments and principles that cannot be wrong and things that will never collapse, or fail and will

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[59] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. perceptively observed of Niebuhr, in an essay comparing his thought to William James, that Niebuhr "shared with William James a vivid sense of the universe as open and unfinished, always incomplete, always fertile, always effervescent with novelty. Where James called it a "pluralist universe," Niebuhr would call it a "dynamic universe"; but the sense of reality as untamed, streaming and provisional was vital for both. Similarly both revolted against the notion that this unpredictable universe could be caught and contained in any closed philosophical system." Schlesinger, 1956, 195-6.

[60] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man : A Christian Interpretation., vol.1, Human Nature (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941, 1964), 12-18.

[61] Ibib., 1-12.

[62] Ibid., 178-207 passim.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 156.

[65] Ibid., 251-254; Brown, 78.

remain eternal,[66] we are saying that we are more than creatures trapped in our historical condition. We are effectively arguing that we can transcend our creaturehood and historical situation. This is the sin of pride.[67] It is considered sin or rebellion against God because transcendence over history is a position reserved for the Divine,[68] not statesmen,[69] intellectuals,[70] or social reformers.[71] Conversely, people engage in the sin of sensuality when they attempt to escape the vicissitudes of history by indulging their sense experiences in the form of food, alcohol, sex, the imagination or some other experience.[72] Traditionally, orthodox Christian thinkers have viewed sensuality as the sin of the pathetic, and turned their verbal weapons upon pride because it is the sin of the powerful.[73] In prophetic tones, Reinhold Niebuhr aimed his message at Protestant intellectuals, statesmen, diplomats, soldiers and other leaders. He wanted them to comprehend the implicit moral irony and ambiguity of their actions. His view that the human situation was inevitably defined by sin, evil and uncertainty, effectively divided him from Rauschenbusch's much more optimistic views.

So how does one go about comparing T.C. Douglas' religious thought with the theological positions of Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr? Despite Douglas' excellent theological education, he had little interest in expressing his thought in a systematic form. Although his ideas are sporadically contained in his speeches, interviews, journal articles, and radio programs, they betray common themes and conclusions that parallel those of both Reinhold Neibuhr and Walter Rauschenbusch.

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66 Niebuhr, 1941, 182-6.
67 Ibid., 188-194.
68 Ibid., 186-93.
69 Ibid., 197-8.
70 Ibid., 194-197.
71 Ibid., 199-203.
72 Ibid., 228-240.
73 Ibid., 209-228.

The nature of these sources is not problematic; rather, the process of comparing their contents with these scholars' position requires some discussion.

An essential difference between Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold Niebuhr resides in their respective emphases on certainty and uncertainty in the human situation. The recognition of ambiguity in moral, theological and aesthetic realms demarcates the end of Walter Rauschenbusch's influence. All of the propagators of social gospel theology agree that Christians had fairly clear choices in the political, economic and social realms.[74] In essence, they had little sense of the moral ambiguity of their choice. Although this made them committed activists, it negated their ability to act effectively in politics. They were not able to see, as Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realism emphasized, that efforts to perpetrate good are often tainted with evil.[75] Social gospel theology, as an ideology, is not noted for its sense of irony. Its leaders were people with few doubts about the good they were perpetrating, the righteousness of their aims and God's approval of their efforts. Christian Realism, by contrast, recognizes the irony implicit in human action. Thus theological, literary, scientific, and other serious scholarly productions must reflect the doubt that is manifest in a reflective mind which comprehends the capricious nature of history. Concepts of God, Christianity's intellectual prestige, moral certitude and other realms tend to reflect this principle.[76] In this study, I will show that Douglas' theological thought reflected many of the characteristics of Christian Realism while being wholly rooted in the language of Rauschenbusch's social gospel theology.

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[74] Hordern, 86.
[75] Lovin, 72-4.
[76] Ibid., 56-60.

Chapter 2

T.C. Douglas' Religious Development: A Brief Theological Biography

This chapter will highlight the discrepancies in standard biographical accounts of T.C. Douglas' life. Conventionally, histories of T.C. Douglas' childhood, youth, schooling and brief career as a clergyman, emphasize his association with social gospel theology. It is extremely difficult to refute this proposition, about his life, within the current body of evidence. Yet one can also argue, with considerable cogency, that he was the product of an unconventional interpretation of social gospel theology. This chapter will examine the elements of T.C. Douglas' life, between 1904-1950, which allowed him to develop a pragmatic approach to social gospel theology which resulted in positions that paralleled those of Niebuhr's Christian Realism.

Douglas' Early Religious Life: 1904-1924

Thomas Clement Douglas was born on October 20, 1904, in Cameron, the industrial part of Falkirk, Scotland, the son of a journeyman iron-molder. In all probability, like most working class Scots, the Douglas family lived in a one or two room stone tenement house that was within walking distance of the foundry.[77] In the midst of these humble beginnings, T.C. Douglas and his two younger sisters, Nan and Isobel were immersed in an atmosphere of piety, intense religious and political debate and open denominational dissent.[78] T.C. Douglas' mother, Ann Douglas, the daughter of a Baptist lay minister, appears to have led the family's spiritual life by promoting regular Sunday worship within the home.[79] This practice fostered an enduring religious commitment in Douglas.

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[77] T.C. Smout, A Century of the Scottish People : 1830-1950 (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1986), 202.

[78] Thomas,1982, 4; Oussoren, 85.

[79] McLeod, 17; Thomas, 1982, 20-1.

The faith of the Douglas family had little room for intellectual certainties or deference to religious authority. Ann's father, Andrew Clement, lived in close proximity to the Douglas' home and he spent significant amounts of time with young Douglas. This grandfather's effect was to reinforce his daughter's values and the value of principled religious dissent. Andrew, who joined the Plymouth Brethren in his twenties, deeply admired the bravery of the sect's founders who broke from the established church and faced persecution for their beliefs. However, in time, the sect's conformist tendencies grated with his values. Andrew, who was becoming deeply involved in the Scottish cooperative movement, grew intolerant of the Brethrens' passive economic *ethos*. These were Christians who viewed history fatalistically. The past, present and future were a manifestation of God's will. The Brethren reasoned that the will to affect one's condition was also the impulse to rebel against God.[80] Andrew, apparently not willing to accept this logic, became a Baptist lay preacher.[81] Similarly, Douglas' father, Thom, an active trade unionist, was also something of a religious rebel. He broke with his family's tradition of Presbyterianism because of encounters with clergy who did not support organized labour.[82] In retrospect, Douglas viewed the actions of these figures as admirable, and he learned to put a high premium upon principled religious dissent.[83]

Thomas Douglas, T.C. Douglas' paternal grandfather, an iron-worker, the son of a successful civic politician, a prominent Liberal party member, portrait painter and self-styled intellectual, was a considerable force in his early life. Theologically, Thomas' greatest influence upon T.C. Douglas was that he fostered the youngster's love of Robert

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[80] For a rationale of this position see C.I. Scofield, Addresses on Prophecy (New York : A.C. Gabelein, 1910), 41. This is also affirmed in C.A. Baass, Backgrounds to Dispensationalism (Grand Rapids : Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960) and H.A. Ironside, A Historical Sketch of the Brethern Movement (Grand Rapids : Zondervan Publishing House, 1942).

[81] Thomas, 1982, 2; Falconer,102.

[82] Ibid.

[83] McLeod, 8.

Burns' poetry. As a child, Douglas listened to his grandfather recite the poet's work and saw how citing its contents could settle heated arguments about politics, philosophy or theology among his father and his uncles.[84] Thomas Douglas appeared to have understood Burns' poetry as an eloquent and insightful expression of the injustices which affect the lives of working-class Scots.[85] In part, Burns' poetry stirred Thomas' own resolve to address these grievances by participating in the political process.[86]

Thomas and Ian McLeod maintained that the poetry of this Scottish nationalist, social critic, and master of the working-man's vernacular had a considerable influence over Douglas' ideas about God, Creation and the human situation.[87] Burns' idea that human beings were judged before God on their merit and not their social rank[88] appealed to him. Yet, Ian and Hector McLeod speculate that Douglas found "in Burn's theology the reflection of his own thinking about the eternal truths." They go on to describe the ideas that Douglas acquired from Burns. They write,

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[84] Thomas, 1982, 11. The fact that Douglas has an amazing memory helped him recall the content of their conversations later in life. Douglas himself recounted, "I've been fortunate in having a very good memory. It's not as good as it was. As a student I was able to read a column or an editorial in the *Free Press* three times, and then I could recite it. I can actually see the words and simply read them. I've done it from force of habit, but I never thought that it was any gift." Thoma, 1982, 345.

[85] Ibid., 2, 9-11 passim.

[86] McLeod, 7-8.

[87] McLeod, 9.

[88] Although there is a tendency in North America to look at Robert Burns as simply a poet, Scottish scholars have underscored that this constitutes a gross misrepresentation of Burn's impact in Scotland. Rather, as T.C. Smout,1986, 202, emphasizes, Burn was as much an inspirational political radical as he was a poet in the minds of working-class Scots. See Tony Dickson, Capital and Class in Scotland (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 1982), Henry Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution (Glasgow : Glasgow University Press, 1912). Also see Joan M. Smith, Commonsense thought and working-class consciousness : some aspects of the Glasgow and Liverpool labour movements in the early years of the twentieth century, unpublished Edinburgh University Ph.D. thesis, 1981.

The poet of Scotland demonstrated a faith in a benevolent Creator with whom he [Douglas] preferred to deal directly, and a conviction that God's sacred nature pervaded the whole of his creation.[89]

Between 1910 and 1921, T.C. Douglas was exposed to a number of variants of social gospel theology which had a tremendous impact upon his theological development. In 1910, his father moved his family to the working-class and ethnically diverse north end of Winnipeg. Ann Douglas, like many Evangelicals, became involved in the various institutions of the rising Canadian social gospel movement. She began to work in the social service centre called "The All People's Mission", which was directed by the highly respected social gospeller the Rev. J.S. Woodsworth. T.C. Douglas spent time in the mission, in the shadow of this man's prestige and he grew to admire Woodsworth and respect his ideals.[90]

After 1911, Douglas' life underwent a great deal of upheaval. In a Winnipeg school yard, he acquired an osteomyelitic infection in his leg, [91] that plagued him for the rest of his life. As well, Thom Douglas enlisted in the Scottish 12th Field Ambulance with the intent of serving his country in World War One; unfortunately a soldier's salary did not sustain his family in Canada. Consequently, his father moved his young family back to Glasgow so that they could live with Ann's parents. The family's financial hardships, during the war, forced T.C. Douglas, against the will of his father, to drop out of school and work in a barber shop and a cork factory.[92] Ironically, this period was also one of intellectual and religious growth in Douglas' life because Glasgow was a centre of political, social and theological ferment.

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[89] McLeod, 7-8.

[90] Ibid., 11.

[91] T.C. Douglas' interview by Ian McLeod, Saskatchewan Archives, April 26, 1985.

[92] Thomas, 1982, 21-2.

Evangelicalism had an important role in Great Britain's political life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Since John Wesley had formalized the evangelical tradition of eschewing theology and emphasizing religious experience into a body called the Methodist Church; these Christians had gone beyond the search for personal salvation and sought to redeem society. Their influence was so prominent, that some scholars have speculated that these Christians effectively usurped the forces that might have produced a violent social revolution on British soil, which might have paralleled the French Revolution.[93] Initially, their influence was manifest in the British Liberal Party through the leadership of William E. Gladstone, one of the nation's greatest prime ministers.[94] The pious political leader directed wide legislative efforts to better the lot of working people and to humanize the industrial order of Britain's urban centres. As the Victorian Age dawned, the focus of the Evangelical ethos moved from the Liberal Party to the Labour Party which was founded in 1900.[95] This party, which sought the support of the British working class and affiliated itself with Evangelical clergy and union leaders, had an electoral platform that included such proposed measures as redistributing wealth, eliminating social privilege and expanding democratic institutions.[96] In essence, its allegiance with the label "socialism" had more to do with the spirit of Evangelical piety than any amount of reflection based on the texts of Marx.[97] The evidence clearly indicates

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[93] Kirk, 336-7.

[94] For an entertaining investigation into the depths which Evangelical Christianity affected Gladestone's daily thoughts see Gertrude Himmelfarb, The De-Moralization of Society : From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values (New York : Vintage Books, 1994), 24-6, 96-7, 192.

[95] Shackleton, 20.

[96] A classic statement of the development of the British Labour Party can be found in G.D.H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement : 1789-1947 (London : George Allen and Irwin Limited, 1937, 1948). For a statement of the British Labour Party's values and aims see W.T. Roger, and B. Donahue, The People Into Parliament (London : Thames & Hudson, 1966), 26.

[97] The standard scholarly definition of Evangelicalism can be found in D.W. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain : A History From the 1730s to the 1980s

that by World War One, 1914, the Labour Party's ideas were influential within non-conformist churches and the leading quarters of organized labour.

Glasgow has always been characterized by debate and intellectual dissent. Politically, its literate and well organized working class population has created a welcome home for Social Democrats, Marxists, and the Labour Party.[98] It was in this city that Keir Hardie broke from the Labour Party and formed the Scottish Independent Labour Party (S.I.L.P.). Hardie, as a professed socialist, whose ideology owed more to the Gospels than any European social theorist, aimed to underscore the importance of ethical and religious ideals in public life.[99] Although his ability to influence and inspire the Labour Party to follow his cause was limited, he represented a stream of religious-political thought that was prominent in the life of Glasgow; and T.C. Douglas had ample exposure to it. In later years, he recounted going to Glasgow Green, or the city park, and listening to Hardie's brother in dissent, Jimmy Maxton, one of the city's most colourful and outspoken socialists politicians, berate the war effort, appeal to people's Christian ethics, and urge them to use democratic means to support and build a socialist society.[100]

(London : Unwin Hyman, 1989). Mark Noll maintains that this is one of the most useful general definitions of Evangelicalism. Mark A. Noll, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind (Leicester, England : Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 8. Although Bebbington discusses the relationship between Evangelicals and the Labour Party, S.M. Lipset supplies a less opaque and more concise explanation of why there has been a close association between the Labour Party and Evangelicalism. He gives the following reasons "(1) the Anglo-Saxon left-wing movements never accepted a Marxist theoretical approach to socialism with its initial antagonism to organized religion, (2) the strong nonconformist churches in the British countries were primarily poor men's churches, whose ministers often took part in the organization of workers' parties, and (3) the Catholic Church [as a potential challenger to these other churches and their political activities] has been relatively weak in the British Commonwealth." Lipset, 169.

[98] Smout, A Century of The Scottish People, 8-9, 27, 49-9, 87-8, 261-2 passim; Shackleton, 20.

[99] Thomas, 1982, 16-8, 20.

[100] Shackleton, 19.

The Evangelical Churches of Glasgow were also forums for speeches about the moral merits of socialism. Even Glasgow's Evangelical clergymen, who often were Labour politicians, had a long standing tradition of airing their political views in the context of their sermons.[101] On Sundays, Ann Douglas, sometimes in the company of her parents, took her children to the local Baptist Church.[102] Douglas, who recounted being exposed to these figures, gained familiarity with the principle that it was legitimate to mix discussions of religion and politics in the pulpit.

It is wrong to argue that T.C. Douglas was simply influenced by social gospel theology because he spent a large portion of his life in a much more conservative form of Christian practice. After Tom Douglas returned home from World War One, in 1919, and moved his family back to Winnipeg, Ann Douglas and the children began attending Beulah Baptist Church.[103] In this congregation, the search for personal salvation took precedence over any other consideration. Douglas' involvement in the congregation was considerable. He was active in the youth wing of the Masons or the Order of DeMolay, drama, boxing, the Boy Scouts and worship services. Although Douglas was skeptical of the conservative theology in the church, it does appear to have had some effect on his thinking. Stanley Knowles recounted, that while he and Douglas were not fundamentalists, when they entered seminary, their religious ideas were relatively narrow.[104] But this was not the whole story. Douglas appears to have been navigating the tensions between the credibility of the Christian practice of his church and the social gospel theology.

There are considerable reasons to think that Douglas was prompted to explore other venues of Christian theology than the one in his Baptist Church.[105] J.S.

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[101] Ibid., 20
[102] Ibid.
[103] M. Talney, taped memoirs, May 1986. cited in McLeod, 17.
[104] Stanley Knowles' telephone interview, Feb. 12, 1990. cited in Oussoren, 96.
[105] Oussoren, 91-2.

Woodsworth and William Irvine, as social activists, reformers and Christians, were well known in this quarter of Winnipeg where Douglas lived. Furthermore, T.C. Douglas and his friend, Mark Talney, witnessed the suppression of the Winnipeg general strike, and were aware of J.S. Woodsworth's trial and imprisonment.[106] Mark Talney recounted that he and Douglas concluded, from these events, that the best thing they could do to improve society would be to enter the Christian ministry.[107] Although this statement probably best serves Talney's desire to have a sense of continuity between the T.C. Douglas of his childhood years and the one of his adulthood, it does reflect an important value of the period. The social gospel movement had coupled social reform and Christianity in many people's imagination.

Despite the influence of conservative Baptist Christianity in Douglas' thought, there were other theological influences in his life. The books that he read and the discussions that he had with his friends largely hinged on themes in social gospel theology.[108] His new job as an apprentice printer at Dawson Richardson Publications[109] required that he enter night school. The print shop, run by Tom Campbell, encouraged reading, personal research and debate.[110] Douglas was even encouraged to read works about archeology and the Old Testament.[111] It is likely that the values within the shop reflected the ambiguous relationship which printers had with the social gospel movement in this period. After all, on June 1, 1921, when the Canadian members of the international

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[106] Thomas, 1982, 39; Dave Stockand, "Douglas kept hectic schedules for 40 years", The Leader-Post. Regina, (April 1971).

[107] Rev. E.J. Baily interviewed by Ian McLeod, July 24, 1985, cited in Oussoren, 95; also see McLeod, 17.

[108] Thomas, 1982, 36. Interview of the Rev. Dr. E.J. Baily by Ian McLeod, July 24, 1985; Oussoren, 92. J. Black, The Dilemmas of Jesus, (Edinbourgh : University of Edinbourgh Press), 1918; Thomas, 1982, 36. Interview of the Rev. Dr. E.J. Baily by Ian McLeod, July 24, 1985.

[109] Ibid., 24; Shackleton, 27.

[110] Oussoren, 93.

[111] Ibid.

printers' union went on strike, it found itself at odds with major portions of the Canadian social gospel movement; furthermore, these Christians' disdain for strikes and their call for solutions to be found in brotherly love effectively discredited them among the union.[112] But the radical social gospellers, such as J.S. Woodsworth, Ernest Thomas and Salem Bland, were probably more appealing to the printers. After all these Christians supported strikes as a means of bettering working conditions. Thus, it is quite probable that T.C. Douglas was being introduced to critical and supportive evaluations of the social gospel movement within the social circles of the print shop.

Douglas' Theological Experience and Education: 1924-1935

In the spring of 1924, Douglas and Mark Talney decided to enter Brandon College. They chose this institution for theological and financial reasons. It was a bastion of liberal and social gospel theology in the Baptist community.[113] It also supplied opportunities for students to supplement their income by preaching in the surrounding community.[114] No matter what mixture of motivations prompted Douglas to enter the college, its scholars had a considerable impact upon his theology.

Theologically, Brandon College was at the epicenter of the great theological debate of the twentieth century. As an institution, it was committed to free, rigorous and critical thought by educated clergy and lay people who were unthreatened by modern scholarship.[115] In tangible terms, what this meant is that its faculty and many students were not especially deferential to the dogma, doctrines, symbols and theological arguments of the conservative ecclesiastical authorities of the Baptist Church. The precipitant tensions culminated in the school's break with the Baptist Union of Western Canada by 1938. Baptist authorities' outrage at the generously fostered intellectual

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[112] Allen, 175-196 passim.

[113] Knowles, S., interview by John Oussoren, Wed., April 30, 1930, cited in Oussoren, 96.

[114] McLeod, 17; Oussoren, 96.

[115] Ibid., 19-20.

disobedience of the school was only a symptom of a larger theological cleavage that pervaded Christendom.

In 1924, when T.C. Douglas entered Brandon College, liberal theology and Christian fundamentalism were becoming locked in a theological conflict. The liberal theologian, H.E. Fosdick, commented that the "centre of gravity" in Christian life had shifted from the gospel to "the prevalent intellectual concept of our time." [116] In essence, the legitimacy of Scripture, as a font of truth, was declining in relationship to "experience" or empirical observations of the natural world. In 1922, this crisis was heightened when conservative Baptists in the United States lost the Scopes "Monkey Trial" and were subsequently forced to accept the presence of Darwin's theory of evolution in children's school curriculum. The conflict between science and religion caused conservative Christians to panic. In their eyes, it appeared as if faith had no place in the modern world.[117] At Brandon College, the scholarly response to the apparent conflict between science and religion was to reformulate religion so that it was consonant with the scholarship of modernity. This effectively allied them with liberal theology.

The atmosphere of academic freedom, rational inquiry and debate, which pervaded Brandon College, gripped T.C. Douglas' imagination. It was here that Douglas completed his high school equivalency and his B.A. in theology. The New Testament scholar Dr. H.L. MacNeill, a product of the University of Chicago and such liberal scholars as Ernest deWitt Burton, Edgar J. Goodspeed and Shailor Mathews were formidable forces in Douglas' intellectual life.[118] As a scholar and a student of Shailor Mathews, MacNeill had probably studied most of the writings on social gospel theology and was aware of

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[116] H.E. Fosdick, The Living of These Day, (New York, 1956), 245.

[117] For an excellent interpretation of how fundamentalism has sought accommodation within the modern world see Hordern, 51-73.

[118] J.R.C. Perkin, ed., Summer in His Soul : Essays in Honour of Harris L. MacNeill, Scholar, Teacher, Churchman (Hamilton, Ont. : McMaster Divinity College, 1969), 5-8.

Mathews' criticism of the scholarly foundations of social gospel theology or its proposition that human beings were capable of living in accordance with Christ's ethic of absolute selfless love.[119] Thus, even though Douglas recounted that MacNeill thought of the Kingdom of God as a historical possibility which Christians had an imperative to build, it is likely that McNeill's presentation of this theology was more critical in tone. As Douglas recounted, McNeill "had a profound influence on me. ... [i]n the aggregate, it [his teachings] liberalized my views."[120] Given the intellectual backdrop of Brandon College, it is likely that Douglas meant that he became increasingly open to liberal theology and other manifestations of modern scholarship.

In the spring of 1930, Douglas graduated from Brandon College. This young and charming clergyman, with his wife, the former Irma Dempsey, whom he married on August 30, 1930, took his first parish in Saskatchewan. On May 4, 1930, he took charge of Calvary Baptist Church in Weyburn and the Stoughton Baptist Church. Undoubtedly, his early sermons resembled the ones in his practice-preaching parish,[121] where he was entertaining as well as inspiring. The Baptist deacons of Weyburn made the following report about Douglas' ability to conduct a week-long prayer retreat.

> ... the Christian Messages so ably interpreted and forcefully applied by Mr. Douglas ... were practical and helpful far beyond human ability to measure ... We are grateful to our Heavenly Father for the influence of these meetings upon our Church life, for the Decision made and the additions to the membership of our Church through the Baptisms that followed.[122]

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[119] K. Cauthen, "Introduction: The Life and Thought of Shailer Mathews," in S. Mathews, Jesus on Social Institutions (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1928,1971), xxi.

[120] Thomas, 1982, 50.

[121] "Why we fail as Christians", "The Gospel in a Nutshell", "God Provides Food for Every Bird, but He Doesn't Throw it in the Nest", and "The Woman who was a Hustler in the Church". McLeod, 26-7.

[122] T.C. Douglas Calvary Centre, Weyburn, Minute Book, 1928-33. Board of Deacons, Annual Report, 1932.

Most of the evidence indicates that Douglas behaved the way one might expect a rural Evangelical clergyman in Saskatchewan to behave in the late 1920s. He associated with the community's business people, professionals, and leading politicians,[123] and articulated ideas that did not challenge the norms of the community. The Weyburn Herald's accounts of his sermons do not suggest that he was a clergyman interested in social reform. As a minister, he was concerned with individuals' morality and spiritual well-being.[124] What efforts he made to address the poverty and suffering of the unemployed and drought-ridden farmers were done in conjunction with other clergymen, the city council and local professionals. But in retrospect, he described his stay in Weyburn as "... the incubation period for his philosophy of social justice."[125] It took the force of a spiritual crisis to change his life.

Discovering Pragmatism at the University of Chicago

Despite Douglas' popularity and success in Weyburn, he was not wholly satisfied with his situation. Thus in the summer of 1931, he travelled to the University of Chicago to begin taking classes toward his Ph.D..[126] Brandon College had a tradition of sending

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[123] McLeod, 30; The Weyburn Review, (Wed., April 30, 1930).

[124] Ibid., (Thursday, Nov. 27, 1930), 4; The Weyburn Review, (Thursday, October 23, 1930), 4; The Weyburn Review, (Thursday, Nov. 17, 1932), 4; The Weyburn Review, (November 24, 1932), 6; The Weyburn Review, (April 23, 1933), 2.

[125] The Leader Post, (March 3, 1986).

[126] One should remember that in the early part of the twentieth century, despite efforts to build formalized Ph.D. programs at major American academic institutions, the degree programs were loosely structured. Most American intellectuals of this age were spared the rites of the modern Ph.D. because universities did not play the leading role in American intellectual life. The insignificance of the academy often prompted aspiring scholars to eschew doctoral programs and concentrate their efforts on publishing and debate. Russell Jacoby, The Last Intellectuals : American Culture in The Age of Academe (New York : Basic Books Inc., Publishers), 18. There is also evidence that Canadian intellectuals in the C.C.F. were not overly concerned about one's possession of a Ph.D. What is striking in M. Horn's account of the League for Social Reconstruction (1980), is the number leading Canadian academics in the League that had never undertaken doctoral studies. Thus when Douglas describes taking doctoral courses at Chicago, then subsequently finished an M.A. at McMaster, as I will discuss, and then talks about going

its graduates to the University of Chicago to embrace academic opportunities that were unavailable in Canada.[127] As a student, Douglas intended to finish a doctorate in sociology or more accurately the discipline of Christian sociology. The Divinity School, had pioneered this field, by establishing the first chair in this discipline in 1892. Christian sociologists, as profession, intended to couple empirical studies of the poor, oppressed and down-trodden with the insights of academic sociology,[128] into a cohesive program for social change, transformation and ultimately the construction of the Kingdom of God on earth. Intellectually, it was not far removed from the study of theological ethics. Thus, when Douglas studied sociology under Professor Arthur Erastus Holt and Christian Drama, the dramatic means of communicating the gospel,[129] under Dr. Eastman, it was not an odd array of courses.[130]

T.C. Douglas entered the University of Chicago when the ravages of the Great Depression and drought had affected the Canadian industrial and agricultural economy. The hopelessness, depravation and anguish, which he had witnessed in Weyburn, weighed heavily on his mind. A.E. Holt, a prominent social gospeller, committed to gathering accurate statistical evidence on the nature of poverty in Chicago, used his graduate students to collect data about the encampments of vagrants or the "Hobo Jungle" adjacent to the railway tracks in Chicago.[131] The effect of this experience upon Douglas was considerable.

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back to finish his Ph.D. at Chicago, he is not confused. He is only reflecting the cavalier and loosely organized Ph.D. system within American universities in the 1930s.

[127] See J. Brian Scott, "Brandon College and Social Christianity" in ed. Harold K. Zeman, <u>Costly Vision : The Pilgrimage in Canada</u> (Burlington : Welch Publishing Company Inc., 1988), 153-8 passim.

[128] C.H. Hopkins, <u>The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism : 1865-1915</u> (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1940), 105-6, 162-170, 275-6.

[129] For mention of Douglas' use of drama as a method of communicating the gospel see Shackleton, 48.

[130] Thomas, 1982, 64.

[131] Falconer, 121. See A.E. Holt's works such as <u>Christian Roots of Democracy</u>

It is easy to rationalize the failures, misery and short coming of others, from a socially and economically secure vantage point. As a clergyman in Weyburn, this is what Douglas did with the impoverished whom he sought to help. He had always thought of himself as having some qualities, such as perseverance, bravery and intelligence, that separated him from the wretched of Western Canada. Conversely, he could explain and possibility justify their plight in terms of their lack of discipline, wisdom, intelligence or effort.[132] In the Hobo community, Douglas found career indigents who fit his explanation of poverty. However he also found young men, like himself, who were intelligent, talented, able and honest, but they found themselves swept into the caprice of the failing economy.[133] Through this experience, he realized how easily he could have been subject to their fate. This sense of vulnerability piqued a personal crisis that reshaped T.C. Douglas' life.

Soon, T.C. Douglas had a crisis of conscience. His account of these events indicates that it began with an intellectual dilemma that precipitated a religious commitment. Douglas, as a cleric that practiced a mild form of Evangelical Christianity, which was tempered by his liberal theological education, was not far removed from the Evangelical emphasis on religious experience and conversion. D.W. Bebbington, the Baptist cleric and respected historian, notes that these are strong themes in the Evangelical tradition.[134] Although Douglas does not describe this crisis as a religious experience, one should remember that the liberal Baptist tradition was a part of the Evangelical tradition.

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in America (New York : Friendship Press, 1941); The Fate of the Family in the Modern World (Chicago : Willett, Clark and Co., 1936); Social Work in the Churches (Boston : Pilgrim Press, 1922). What is evident about Holt's work is that he was interested in discovering techniques of achieving the aims of social gospel theology in rural communities. Given the rural nature of Douglas' parish and experience, this was probably the reason he chose to work under him.

[132] Thomas, 1982, 64.

[133] Ibid.

[134] For a brief summary of Bebbington's position see Mark Noll, 8. Also for a full overview of Bebbington's concept of Evangelicalism see Bebbington, chap. 1.

In effect, his conclusion, that there must be something "wrong with the economic system",[135] can be understood as an intellectual route to a religious commitment. He alluded to it in the following terms,

> And as I went among them, this was the first time that I began to feel a challenge to whole way of life which I was a part. Here I was working with these people all day and then get up early the next morning to go and worship in the beautiful cathedral built by the Rockerfeller money on the Chicago campus. And here was a sixty million dollar cathedral and I was going out all day handing out a dime, if I had one, to some fellow so he could get something to eat. And I thought, there is something wrong here. Here is the richest country in the world and twenty million people walking the streets. People starving when up in Canada, where I come from, we can't get rid of wheat. And in British Columbia farms can't get rid of their apples. There is something crazy about a system like this, it's not only economic, its insane and unchristian. That made me think first of all.[136]

His conclusion that the world was "insane and unchristian" took him on an intellectual quest in the Chicago community. He recounted that "I'd studied socialism and syndicalism and communism and capitalism ... but I'd never sat down and honestly asked myself what was wrong with the economic system."[137]

T.C. Douglas' crisis of conscience in Chicago did more than crystallize his self-image of his role as a clergyman in the human community; it gave him the opportunity to see the flaws in a type of thought called "absolutism". This was extremely important because it was the foundation of his subsequent pragmatic theological reflections. Although the implications of these conclusions were religious, their origin was in political debate.

After Douglas' crisis of conscience, he met Norman Thomas, an ex-Presbyterian minister and associate of Reinhold Niebuhr's.[138] Thomas had become a sparkling,

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[135] Ibid., 64-5.
[136] Falconer, Ibid, 123.
[137] Thomas, 1982, 65.
[138] June Bingham, Courage to Change : An Introduction to the Life and Thought

eloquent and erudite leader of the American Socialist Party. Douglas and Thomas, two men with theological backgrounds and an interest in social reform and socialism,[139] had much in common. But, Douglas grew dissatisfied with the American socialists' perspective. Their understanding of the human condition and approach to social reform grated against Douglas' fundamental values.

Douglas and Thomas' party had remarkably different views of socialism. The labour historian, Gad Horowitz, emphasizes that the Anglo-Socialist tradition, predominant in the British Commonwealth, is British, religious, democratic, deeply practical and non-theoretical. By contrast, the Continental Socialist tradition, which is predominant in the United States, is derived from the non-English speaking world, is anti-religious, revolution oriented and deeply theoretical.[140] As a result, Douglas, whose background was in the Anglo-Socialist tradition, was frustrated by many of the American socialists he met. Yet the evidence suggests that Douglas' frustration with American socialism was more than a sense of dissonance with new ideas. He summarized his assessment of these socialists' ideas in these terms.

> That experience soured me with absolutists. I learned to be wary of people who say, "If we can't have society completely socialist we don't want anything to do with it. We don't want to patch up the old system." I've listened to that until I'm sick and tired of it.[141]

What Douglas meant by absolutism was the perspective that social reality should conform to the criticism and plans of intellectuals and reformers. In other words, Douglas was

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of Reinhold Niebuhr (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961),163.

[139] Falconer, 261-2.

[140] For commentary on the nature of Canadian socialism and the values that British immigrants brought with them to Canada see Gad Horowitz, "Conservatism, Liberalism and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation," in Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science vol. 32 (May 1966) : 143-171. Also see "Creative Politics," in Canadian Dimension 3 (1) (1965) : 14-15, 28; "Tories, Socialists and the Demise of Canada," in Canadian Dimensions, (May-June 1965) : 12-15.

[141] Falconer, 124.

wary of people who could not accept that there would be dissonance between the reformer's or social critic's imagination and social reality. One could argue that this was sustained by a deep sense that reality is not so flexible that it can conform to any intellectual production. But there was more at work in Douglas' assessment than just well-founded opinion.

Most accounts of T.C. Douglas' life have glossed over the impact that the University of Chicago had upon his theology. But there is considerable evidence to indicate that Douglas was exposed to the intellectual currents that circulated among the scholars of this institution. His wife, Irma, recounted that he spent a considerable amount of time debating and discussing issues surrounding social reform with his theology professors. She remembered the impact of these personalities upon Douglas.

> Oh, I would think so. ... He gadded around with them. [the theology professors] You see, he would go down and visit with them and they would sit around and talk about it all. [social reform] He got a tremendous lot of help from them to see what he wanted to do, because he couldn't believe that people [the Chicago hobos] had to live like that.[142]

Hence any account of what happened to T.C. Douglas at the University of Chicago should also contain something about the intellectual atmosphere of the Divinity School. It was in this atmosphere that Douglas began to think about questions of epistemology and their relationship to social gospel theology.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, largely through the influence of the great American philosopher, educator and pragmatist, John Dewey,[143] the University of Chicago had become a centre of pragmatic scholarship. Within the university, many scholars had accepted a particular view of human nature. People, as creatures, cannot be understood simply as intelligent, tool-makers or social beings. Rather, they must be

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[142] Irma Douglas' telephone interview, Feb. 12, 1990, cited in Oussoren, 119.
[143] Rucker, 3-13, 18-20 passim.

understood as fundamentally active agents in their situation who are guided by self-conscious reflection on their experiences in a changing and often capricious world.[144] Accordingly, we are not creatures that can locate epistemological, moral or aesthetic certainties. Dewey understood these realms of inquiry to be historically contingent.[145] In essence, this was a philosophical movement that was deeply skeptical of the Kantian philosophical conclusion that it was possible to ground human intellectual productions in universal and timeless principles.[146]

At the core of Chicago pragmatism is the idea that practice or action is a profoundly important feature of the human condition. Dewey, accepting this proposition, argued that a philosophy based on this assumption was the best means of contending with

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144 Darnell Rucker, The Chicago Pragmatist (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 5.

145 West, 91-2. Dewey, Quest for Certainty (1929, New York : Capricorn, 1960), 193-4; John Dewey, "The Development of American Pragmatism," in Philosophy and Civilization (New York : Peter Smith Edition, 1931, Reprint 1968), 24-5; John Dewey, Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics (Ann Arbor : Register, 1891).

146 Kant taught that it is a logical error for philosophy to pretend to transcend the bounds of experience. After all, as he maintained, we can only know what is a possible object of experience. Kant himself then turns around and appeals to a *noumenal* realm or things-in-themselves, which are not possible objects of experience. He distinguishes between "transcendental" and "transcendent". The former respects the limits of experience, the latter "takes away these limits or even commands us actually to transgress them". Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason trans. Norman Kemp Smith, (London : Macmillan, 1978), A296/B353. Also see Carl J. Friedrich, ed. "Introduction," in The Philosophy of Kant Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings, 3rd ed. (1949; New York : The Modern Library, 1977), xi-xiv passim. John Dewey's philosophy, which was deeply influenced by the work of the British philosopher T.H. Green, was an attempt to develop a post-Kantian position that attempted to adhere to Kant's cogent dictum against attempting to transcend the bounds of experience more rigorously than Kant did. In effect, this is the post-Kantian logic that lurks behind Douglas' theological position. Brian J. Scott's account of academic life at Brandon College indicates, that by 1915, a course dealing with "the study of the philosophy of Kant" and "Post-Kantian idealism", which concentrated on moral and theological issues, was being taught at the College. Scott,151. It would appear likely that Douglas had at least a passing familiarity with these philosophical issues before he entered the University of Chicago.

the problem of formulating a clearly valid epistemological position.[147] Dewey and other American pragmatists[148] did not think that a self-conscious or transcendental subject could escape the contingencies of circumstance through their rational, moral or aesthetic sense.[149] Thus, if there is no method of grounding concepts in transcendent ideas of truth, beauty and morality; then, almost by default, these intellectuals settled for the reality that their productions would have to be verified within the shifting contingencies of their historical condition. In the simplest terms, Dewey and the Chicago pragmatists agreed that the truth of a concept can only be ascertained by testing it against social reality.[150] Although these intellectuals knew and expected that changing circumstances would invalidate intellectual productions, they thought that this was the best means of validating them. Thus such diverse departments, such as history, psychology, sociology, philosophy and some members of the theology faculty began to work within these norms.[151] Douglas was obviously well-acquainted with this pragmatic intellectual perspective.

The best evidence to indicate that T.C. Douglas was exposed to people influenced by Dewey's pragmatism is that his advisor was Arthur E. Holt.[152] As a social scientist, clergyman and social gospeller, Holt was interested in restructuring rural societies so that they were based on the principles of fraternal love.[153] Holt's effort to empirically survey the poor in the hobo encampment was one small aspect of the tradition of active involvement in the community, which Dewey helped to reinforce at Chicago. As well,

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147 West, 91-2.

148 For an excellent example of Kant's thinking about this in the moral realm see Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, 89.

149 West, 91-2; there is also a hint of this on page 5.

150 Rucker, 9-10.

151 Ibid., passim. chap. VI "Sociology, Economics and Political Science . Applied Pragmatism".

152 Thomas, 1982, 64.

153 Ibid; see the flyleaf of A.E. Holt, Christian Roots of Democracy in America (New York : Friendship Press, 1941) for a brief biography of the man, his education and academic interests.

most Chicago pragmatists were deeply interested in social reform,[154] and as an individual with similar interests, Douglas gravitated toward them. Furthermore, given the tradition's skepticism that conceptual absolutes can be founded within the growing, changing, shifting and even capricious nature of social reality,[155] it is likely that Douglas' non-absolutist position was fostered in this environment. And it is this non-absolutist position that was the foundation of his pragmatic interpretation of social gospel theology.

The M.A. Thesis at McMaster

In the post-Chicago period, when T.C. Douglas returned to Weyburn Saskatchewan, he defined the rudiments of his interpretation of social gospel theology. According to his own accounts, he read Walter Rauschenbusch's Christianity and the Social Crisis (1917) and a variety of Harry Emerson Fosdick's works. He also read works of the industrialist and cooperative theorist Robert Owen,[156] the Christian and socialist William Temple,[157] the economist R.H. Tawney[158] and socialist theorist Fred Henderson.[159] Douglas was becoming increasingly convinced that it was possible to reshape society. In fact, he had concluded that it was possible to build a society consonant with "Christian principle".[160] He divulged what he meant by this term in the work which he produced in this period.

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154 Rucker, 1-27 passim.

155 For Dewey's statement of the quest for intellectual foundations in intellectual uncertainty, which were originally presented in the Gifford Lectures see Dewey, Quest for Certainty (New York : Capricorn, 1929, Reprint 1960),178.

156 Robert Owen, The Life of Robert Owen (London : Cass, 1967).

157 F.A. Iremonger, William Temple Archibishop of Canterbury : His Life and Letters (New York : Oxford University Press, 1963).

158 R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (London : Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926).

159 Fred Henderson, The Case for Socialism (London : np, 1920?) was reprinted in 1930 by the C.C.F. and became a standard statement of the party's interpretation of socialism.

160 Thomas, 1982, 100.

In 1933, Douglas completed an M.A. thesis in Christian Sociology at McMaster University. A contemporary reader might be appalled by its contents because it is a study in the pseudo-science of eugenics or how the unregulated breeding of human beings has produced communities of individuals who tend toward indigence, feeble mindedness, mental illness, sexual licentiousness, and juvenile delinquency.[161] But issuing a moral condemnation from the present is a historically purblind act. These ideas were in currency among respectable academic circles of the day and gripped the imaginations of many intelligent, thoughtful and genuinely moral individuals. Although Douglas accepted these ideas at the time, eventually he rejected them and they were of little relevance to the other dimensions of his thought.[162] The McLeods maintain that T.C. Douglas' M.A. is essentially a statement of his commitment to use the resources of modern science, the church and state to navigate humanity's future.[163] Although this is correct, it is not the whole story. What is also important about the document is its theological contents.

As a theological thinker, T.C. Douglas was interested in "sub-normals" or people who were thought to have a genetic disposition toward poverty, promiscuousness, prostitution, crime and mental retardation. Specifically, he was interested in these people's position in humanity's relationship with the Divine. In essence, he argued, true to the strictures of liberal theology, that religion centres around the act of entering into a new relationship with humanity, the universe and the God beyond it.[164] He also described religion in terms of the order of patterns of thought that define human consciousness. Douglas began discussing this in terms of the church's role in society and its duty toward sub-normals.

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[161] McLeod, 39-42.
[162] Mcleod, 39-41.
[163] Ibid., 39.
[164] This ideas appears to have been taken from Harry Emerson Fosdick, <u>The Modern Use of the Bible</u> (London : SCM, 1924), 184-6.

> Many of them have fallen so low in the social scale, but no lower than society has made them conscious of having fallen. Their sense of worth has been impaired.[165]

Douglas thought that the Christian tradition held the resources to address this problem. When these people entered a spiritual realm called the "Kingdom of God", this could be overcome. Douglas explained,

> They [the sub-normals] need to learn what the Fourth Evangelist meant when he said, "To them gave He power to become Sons of God". It is because the Church has the power to help men into a new relationship [with God and the rest of humanity] that her contribution is so important.[166]

This was the way that Douglas explained how the Church could help people enter a relationship with God and humanity characterized by fraternal love. He postulated that this condition would transform people's lives. He wrote,

> Nothing can lift these people faster than their own evaluation of themselves. Once they have re-evaluated themselves in the light of the Kingdom of God, other reforms will follow naturally. But until they have developed sufficient self-respect to care, there is little that can be done for them. Hence the Church has the opportunity of coming to this class with a message of hope and deliverance that "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new."[167]

Evidently Douglas believed that religion could be a force in social change and that it could transform people's lives. In tangible terms, this meant that a revived spiritual life would help these people live decent lives and give them strength to resist criminality,

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[165] T.C. Douglas, The Problem of the Subnormal Family, M.A. thesis, McMaster University, (1933), 33; also see T.C. Douglas, "Youth and the New Day," in C.C.F. Research Review, (Regina, June 1934) : 1-5.

. For further commentary see H.Laughlin, "A Model Eugenical Sterilization Law," in ed. Carl Bajema, Eugenics Then and Now (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1976), 138-52.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid.

sexual activity and bringing illegitimate children into the world. This theological logic is typical of social gospel theology.[168] After all, at the core of Rauschenbusch's classic expression of social gospel theology is Evangelical Christianity's proposition that the believers' experience, of the Divine, could change their life. "Spiritual regeneration", Rauschenbusch wrote, "is the most important facet of any life history."[169] This was a means to a Christian social "revolution both inside and outside."[170] Clearly he was a social gospeller at this point in his career, but T.C. Douglas had not yet coupled social gospel theology with the pragmatic ideals to which he had been exposed in Chicago.

Puting Christianity in Practice: The Entry Into Politics

In the post-Chicago period, Douglas began to search for avenues to reform the social order. Shortly after his arrival in Weyburn, he was in the proximity of one of the most brutal industrial disputes in Saskatchewan's history. The miners of the Estevan coal fields, who were grossly underpaid, deeply indebted to their employers and working in dangerous and despicable conditions, were locked in a dispute with their employers who did not recognize their right to unionize or bargain collectively. The strike was brutally suppressed and three miners were killed.[171] As he recounted in 1958, Douglas saw this as part of a pattern in society.

> ... Certainly, as the years went by, the Winnipeg General Strike left a very lasting impression on me. Not until the Estevan Riot and later the Regina Riot did I realize that this was all part of a pattern. Whenever the powers that be can't get what they want, they're always prepared to resort to violence or any kind of hooliganism to break the back of organized opposition.[172]

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168 Allen, 5.

169 Rauschenbusch, 1912, 104.

170 Ibid., 495.

171 Thomas, 1982, 32-3, 212.

172 Ibid, 32. The Regina Riot was an episode in the "On-to-Ottawa" trek of single unemployed men who resented conditions in the Dominion government relief camps of British Columbia. On July 15, 1931, the "trekkers" and police clashed, in Regina, in the most violent riot in Canadian history.

Douglas' sermons, during the period of the strike, included such topics as "Jesus the Revolutionist," and "Would Jesus revolt against our present system of graft and exploitation?"[173] These sermons, coupled with efforts to meet the physical needs of the strikers, supports the proposition that Douglas had moved beyond reflecting upon social gospel theology.

The evidence indicates that Douglas was looking for a means to live this theology's imperative to reform society. In 1931, he contacted the august leader of the radical wing of the Canadian social gospel movement, J.S. Woodsworth, asking him for advice. Woodsworth put Douglas in contact with a small network of Christians, social activists and intellectuals who were plotting strategies for permanently undermining the poverty, deprivation and misery that plagued Canada in this period.[174] Although the exact nature of the intellectual discourse between Douglas and these people is not recorded, it is clear that he, like the leading intellectuals of the C.C.F., began to equate socialism with the Kingdom of God on earth. He found fertile ground for this idea in Saskatchewan.

Social gospel theology, when in currency in the English-speaking intellectual world, has always maintained some sort of connection to socialist thought. The reason for this is simple. The theological movement, like most expressions of socialism,[175] rose as a reaction against the ravages of the industrial order in Europe and North America. In the 1930s, many of the immigrants who inhabited Saskatchewan were familiar with these two traditions and saw them as complementary political forces.[176] Most of these people appear to have been familiar with the Anglo-socialist tradition. During the 1920s, the farm

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[173] Weyburn Review, (Sept. 24, 1931).

[174] As J. Oussoren notes, there is some debate whether Douglas and Woodsworth began to correspond in 1931 or 1932. Oussoren,143-4; Saskatchewan Archives, T.C. Douglas interviewed by Ian McLeod (April 26, 1985).

[175] For a brief discussion of the interaction between socialism and social gospel theology see Allen, 13-14.

[176] Lipset, 56-117; McLeod, 33.

journals that circulated throughout the province tended to equate the idea of a socialist order with a society governed by "Christian" social ethics.[177] Thus in 1932,[178] when George Williams,[179] head of the United Farmers of Canada (U.F.C.), and M.J. Coldwell, an Anglican social gospeller who organized the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.)[180] wanted to work toward electing a socialist government in Saskatchewan, they were well received because the currents of social gospel theology and Anglo-socialist tradition had paved the way. In 1931, Douglas, on the invitation of Coldwell, formed and led the Weyburn branch of the I.L.P..[181]

Theologically, T.C. Douglas' participation in this blossoming political movement only served to legitimize the connection between socialism and Christian practice. Between 1931 and 1933, Douglas completed his M.A. in Christian sociology, while keeping abreast of the developments within the Farm Labour Alliance[182] where a critical mass was building. In July of 1932, under the guidance of J.S. Woodsworth, farm and labour groups from the three prairie provinces and intellectuals from Eastern Canada met in Regina to form a new Farm Labour party.[183] In 1936, it would be known as the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. This name reflected the influence of social gospel theology within the party because the term "cooperative commonwealth", within the discourse of social gospel theology, was associated with an effort to build the Kingdom of God on earth.[184] Hence, as a social gospeller, the formation of this new

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177 Allen, 196-218 passim; McLeod, 33.

178 McLeod, 34.

179 McLeod, Ibid., 33-4. For a sympathetic biography of Williams see F.Steininger, George H. Williams : Agrarian Socialist (M.A. thesis, University of Regina, 1977).

180 McLeod, 34; also see Thomas, 1982, 73-4.

181 Thomas, 1982, 73.

182 Ibid.

183 McLeod, 47.

184 "The name had coinage on the prairies," said Douglas. But he thought that it " was an awful mouthful." Ibid. 47.

political party assured Douglas that his view of socialism was based on these principles. As well, in 1933, at the formation of the party, he had the opportunity to interact with leading Christian socialists such as John King Gordon.[185] Although he did not have much exposure to them in his early political activism, the reality that these intellectuals saw Christian socialism as a credible system of thought must have bolstered Douglas' confidence in his own conclusion that it was a legitimate manifestation of Christianity.

The best evidence indicates that T.C. Douglas did not expect to have a successful career in politics. Rather, he intended to pursue an academic career. In the spring of 1934, largely motivated by a sense of duty to the new Farm Labour Party, Douglas ran in the provincial election as the party's candidate for Weyburn and was defeated on June 19, 1934.[186] His political life did not appear promising. Baptist officials urged him to abandon his political aspirations, take a quiet parish in Wisconsin, finish his Ph.D. and begin an academic career. The registrar at the University of Chicago had also told Douglas that he could probably attain an academic position at this institution. After he had grown to some prominence in the political world, the Divinity school later offered Douglas a chair in Christian and social ethics.[187] However, when the Baptist superintendent, Reverend A. Ward, threatened to ruin Douglas' career if he continued to be active in politics, Douglas, with the encouragement of his wife, Irma, and his friend, Stanley Knowles, decided to run as the Farm Labour Party's candidate for Weyburn, in the 1935 Federal election.[188] On October 14, 1935, Douglas won the election.[189] He went

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[185] McLeod, 47-9; for a discussion of the influence of intellectuals in the religiously orientated circles C.C.F. see N.K. Clifford, "Religion in the Thirties : Some Aspects of The Canadian Experience" in eds. R.C. Francis, and H. Ganzevoort, 125-6. For a description of intellectuals influence in the formation of the Regina Manifesto, the C.C.F.'s founding conference and the early party, see Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction : Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1980) 42-4 passim.

[186] Thomas, 1982, 76-9.

[187] Ibid., 80.

[188] Ibid., 81-2.

to Ottawa as the Member of Parliament for Weyburn though he intended to leave politics and go back to University of Chicago and complete a Ph.D.[190] Although Douglas did not have the time to develop his theological ideas in a systematic fashion, the experience of political life did not stifle his reflection in this realm.

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[189] Ibid., 86.
[190] Ibid., 80.

Chapter 3

T.C. Douglas' Historical Position in The Canadian Social Gospel Movement

T.C. Douglas was able to couple social gospel theology and pragmatism because he was on the historic and geographic periphery of the Canadian social gospel movement. He produced a theological position, that had marked parallels with the pragmatic logic of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realism, years before it came into currency among theologians and clergymen in Canada. Yet at the same time, he did not leave the tradition of social gospel theology. Furthermore, after Christian Realism came into currency, Douglas resolutely associated himself with social gospel theology. This chapter will detail how the circumstances of his theological reflection allowed him to produce a unique interpretation of social gospel theology that distinguished itself among the major currents, of scholarly theological life in Canada.

The Canadian Social Gospel Movement: 1880-1930

Before I begin discussing Douglas' place in the Canadian social gospel movement, it would be useful to describe the nature of the movement.[191] The British and American Evangelicals, who immigrated to Canada before the turn of the nineteenth century, intermingled with Canadian Protestants who had a long tradition of aspiring to bring righteousness and justice to the community around them.[192] The Canadian social gospel movement was driven by the theological

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[191] For a elementry discussion of the origins of the social gospel movement see McLeod 11-14, 31-36 passim. This theory works far better as an explanation of the origins of the American social gospel movement. It can be found in works like Aaron I. Abell, The Urban Impact on American Protestantism (New York : Harper and Row, 1943). and Henry F. May, Protestant Churches and Industrial America (New York: Harper and Row, 1949).

[192] As Richard H. Niebuhr has noted, since the first half of the eighteenth century, American Evangelicals had prophesied an earthly kingdom of justice and righteousness and worked to build it by fighting evil in society. See his work, The Kingdom of God in America (New York : Harper and Row Torchbook, 1959), ix-x, chap. iv.; T.L. Smith,

principle that Christians have an overwhelming duty to battle sin in society. But before 1890, the Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican Churches, the denominations that dominated the movement, were deeply unsympathetic to the idea that Christians should attempt to act on this ideal. They accepted Christian orthodoxy's position that the battle to eradicate evil was futile.[193] After all, the leading minds of the Christian church had argued that humanity was perennially mired in sin.

However change was afoot. As the sociologist S. Crysdale and the historian Richard Allen note, after 1890, Presbyterians, Methodists and Anglicans adopted a new position. Many of these churches' leaders concluded that the Christian church should use all of its resources to fight evil in society.[194] By the

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Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America, (New York : Abbington, 1957), chaps. x & xi, passim. For a statement of his observation of this feature of Evangelicalism in nineteenth century American Protestantism see William G. McLoughlin, ed. The American Evangelicals : 1800-1900 (New York : Harper and Row, 1968), 1. This is not an unusual thesis. It can be found in Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-Over District : The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York : 1800-1850 (Ithica : Cornell University Press, 1950), William G. McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism : Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York : Ronald Press, 1959), Bernard A. Weisenburger, They Gathered at the River : The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact Upon Religion in America (Boston : Little Brown, 1958).

193 For example, in 1872, the Anglican Church Herald, The Presbyterian Witness, and the Methodist The Christian Guardian, all published articles condemning the Toronto Printers' union when it went on strike for better wages and improved working conditions. For a detailed analysis of the religious press during this strike see S. Crysdale, The Industrial and Protestant Ethics in Canada (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1961), 18-19. Furthermore, when Canadian Protestants heard that the socialist Henry George formed an anti-poverty society in New York City, in 1887, they were critical of his efforts. The Anglican and Presbyterian churches would have echoed the Methodist Christian Guardian, on June 29, when it condemned George for considering the idea that poverty could or should be abolished. Christian Guardian, (29 June 1887).

194 S. Crysdale, 19-21. R. Allen, 8-9. This chapter is deeply indebted to Allen's work. In many cases I have used primary sources that he has cited in The Social Passion because they represent some of the best material on the period. Where there is an overlap between my research and what has Allen uncovered, I cite Allen's work first.

mid-1890s, people were doing more than talking about social gospel theology. They were beginning to act upon its principles and consequently they formed a wide array of social institutions to reform the social order.[195] By the1900s, Canadian Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican churches had formed a wide-ranging network of research institutions, social service institutes and new administrative structures that were intended to transform Canadian society.[196] This was an age when Protestants believed that the end of social evil was imminent.

By 1914, one whole generation of Canadian Protestants had spent most of their church-going lives listening to social gospel theology. They were convinced that God was directing human history so that His Kingdom would be built on earth.[197] Even civic bureaucrats, like the Toronto city planner J.O. McCarthy, in 1912, concluded that since God was working to inspire people to resist perpetrating sin, "municipal governments and departments" would no longer have to worry about crime and poverty. In the new sinless social order, bureaucrats could " take up new responsibilities."[198] By 1918, leading church newspapers could even print that World War One was a part of a Divine plan to extend "God's Kingdom on earth." [199] Despite this optimistic consensus, there were problems within the movement.

Between 1917 and 1928, the Canadian social gospel movement divided into three factions, the Conservatives, the Liberals and the Radicals.[200] Each of

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[195] Ibid., 11. Stewart Crysdale incorrectly dates the formation of the Canadian social gospel movement as beginning after 1900. Crysdale, 19-21.

[196] Allen, 12-15.

[197] Ibid., 18.

[198] The United Church Archives, "The Municipal Departments," in Social Service Council of Canada, 191.

[199] Presbyterian and Westminster, (26 June, 3 July, 1919).

[200] As Richard Allen notes, the use of the categories Liberal, Conservative and

these factions articulated a view of how society should be reformed. The Conservatives, those most influenced by the norms of Evangelical Christianity, emphasized personal ethics and the role of God's redeeming power in individuals' lives. The Radicals viewed society in organic terms. They believed that the social order was so corrupt that there could be no possibility of personal salvation without social salvation. Toward these ends, they argued that Christians should seek political power to build the social framework for the Kingdom of God on earth. Between these two poles were the Liberals. They endorsed a broad range of programs from either group but never wholly accepted the Conservatives' individualistic position or Radicals' advocacy of political social reconstruction as a means to create the opportunity for individual salvation. Between 1914 and 1928, these groups began to quarrel about the way that the Kingdom of God on earth should be built. These divisions were underscored during the Winnipeg general strike of 1919,[201] the Methodist Book Company's strike of 1921,[202] and in the collapse of the Progressive Party in 1926.[203]

Radical this classic way of understanding the social divisions with the Social Gospel Movement. Allen, 17.

[201] Norman Penner, ed., The Strikers' Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike (Toronto : James Lewis & Samuel, 1973), xi-xiii. For examples of liberal and conservative views on the strike see Presbyterian and Westminster, (5 June 1919), 549-50; Presbyterian and Westminster (26 June 1919), 628-9; Presbyterian and Westminster (24 July 1919), 75; W.B. Creighton, The Christian Guardian, (5 March 1919), 5; The Christian Guardian (18 June 1919), 4; The Christian Guardian (11 June, 1919) 3; The Christian Guardian (4& 5 June 1919) ; Allen, 118-119. For an example of radical views on the strike see J.S. Woodsworth, Western Labour News, (1 August 1919).

[202] This is manifest in the headline "Verbiage Covers Mistake of the Injustice to Printers," in The Canadian Labour Press (19 Nov. 1921).

[203] Ibid., 195. For evidence of non-radical social gospellers' increased interest in politics see Presbyterian and Westminster (14 Aug. 1919); Social Work (1 Oct. 1918), 14; Allen, 197, 200-201, 351-2; also see Paul F. Sharpe, The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1948), 61.

These crises effectively discredited social gospel theology as a viable force within Canadian politics and religious life for the time being.[204] Between 1926 and 1930, the idea that Christians should work to build a sinless social order began to disappear from the pages of newspapers that had once supported the social gospel movement.[205] Rather than systematically examine why the social gospel movement had not achieved its goals, most of these Christians simply began to pursue their personal salvation instead of fighting evil in society.[206] By 1929, the former social gospeller D.N. McLachlan, the secretary of the United Church of Canada's Board of Evangelism and Social Service observed that "... one of the chief characteristics in church life at the present time is [that the] ... Books of the "Social Gospel" have been largely been set aside in favor of manuals of devotion, books on applied psychology and mental hygiene."[207] Most Canadian Protestants no longer believed that Christians should provide leadership to change industrial society.[208] Instead they wanted the church to tend to their spiritual and

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[204] Ibid., 353-6 passim. This idea is vaguely implied, in these pages, in Allen's book. However, it has never been detailed by any historian of the period.

[205] This assessment is based on a cursory reading of these papers between this period, <u>The Methodist Guardian</u> (Dec. 1926-1930), passim; <u>The Presbyterian and Westminster</u>, (Dec. 1926-Dec.1930), passim; <u>The Methodist Recorder</u> (Dec. 1926-Dec.1930), passim; and <u>The Grain Growers Guide</u> (Dec. 1926-Dec.1930), passim.

[206] For a good examination of an example of this trend see Robert G. Stewart, "Radiant Smiles in the Dirty Thirties: History and Ideology of the Oxford Group Movement in Canada 1932-1936," (M.Div. Thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1974); also see Reinhold Niebuhr's commentary on this period in Canadian religious history. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Hitler and Buchman," <u>Christian Century</u> (7 October, 1936), 1315-1316.

[207] D.N. McLachlan, The United Church of Canada, <u>Annual Report of the Board Evangelism and Social Service</u>, (1929), 18. Also see G.W. Paul, "The Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church of Canada : An Historical Analysis of the Enterprise of the Board from 1925-1968," M.S.T. Thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1974.

[208] N.K. Clifford, "Religion in the Thirties : Some Aspects of the Canadian Religious Experience" in eds. D. Francis, & H. Ganzevoort, <u>The Dirty Thirties 'n Prairie Canada</u> (Tantalus Research Limited : Vancouver, 1980), 132.

psychological needs.[209] But there was a faction within the social gospel movement which remained resolute in its ambition to redeem the social order.

The Social Gospellers and the C.C.F.

One of the unique features of radical social gospel Christianity,[210] in the 1930s, was that it had a very visible leader and spokesman called J.S. Woodsworth. This Member of Parliament, for Winnipeg North since 1922,[211] led a number of members of the Progressive Party who agreed with his conviction that Christians should work to replace the capitalist system with a state-run economy governed by principles of Christian charity.[212] In the late 1920s, Woodsworth's criticism of capitalism was rejected by most social gospellers.[213] This was a decade when the Canadian economy was relatively prosperous and few people believed that there was anything wrong with the economic system. However, after 1929, when unemployment grew exponentially and farmers were impoverished by low grain prices and drought, Woodsworth's assessment was taken much more seriously.[214] By 1930, a group of socialist academics organized into the League for Social Reconstruction and labour leaders and some farm organizations began to view J.S. Woodsworth as a man with a credible assessment of Canadian society and a leader for their cause.[215] In July of 1933, by virtue of his prestige within

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209 Robert T. Handy, A Christian America : Protestant and Historical Realities (New York : Oxford University Press, 1971), chap. vii; Donald Meyer, The Positive Thinkers : A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power : from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale (New York : Doubleday & Co., 1965).

210 Hereafter, "Radical Christianity" refers to the radical faction of social gospel theology as described in the immediately preceding pages.

211 Allen, 173-4.

212 Ibid., 173-4, 350-1. As well as Woodsworth, the Ginger group included Robert Gardiner, E.J. Garland, H.E. Spencer and Agnes MacPhail. See Mills, 1991, 100, 103.

213 Neatby, 96.

214 Ibid., 99.

215 Ibid., 96-7.

these groups, Woodsworth was able to bring them together to found and ratify the platform of a new political party that would be called the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.).[216] Now, radical social gospellers had a dynamic leader who was the head of a new political party which aimed to build a social order consonant with Christian principles.

During the 1930s, unlike previous manifestation of the social gospel movement where social gospellers attempted to use church-run institutions to change society, these radical social gospellers devoted most of their efforts to promoting the C.C.F. in an effort to affect social change.[217] There were some radicals who wanted to regenerate the social gospel movement in the churches.[218] However, most Canadian Protestants had lost interest in social reform in the mid-1920s, closed their institutions that supported the social gospel movement and tended to take a dim view of the radicals' activities.[219] Some like T.C. Douglas, Stanley H. Knowles, and Alexander "Sandy" Nicholson concluded that they, as Christian Socialists, were not wholly welcome in their churches; therefore, they joined the C.C.F. because the new party tolerated and supported their activities.[220] It is wrong to describe the C.C.F. simply as a political manifestation of social gospel theology, because the party was united more by socialist principles than religious ideals. However, because the C.C.F. was dominated by the British

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216 Ibid., 97-8.

217 John Webster Grant, 142.

218 R. Hutchinson, "The Fellowship for Christian Social Order : A Social Ethical Analysis of a Christian Socialist Movement" (University of Toronto : Doctoral Thesis, 1975). stands as probably the best scholarly description of the theological debates and ideas that haunted these Christian Socialists. Although I have reviewed this work, my understanding of this group is based upon many of the primary sources that Hutchinson used.

219 N.K. Clifford, 125-8, 132-134 passim; For commentary on the United Church of Canada see Horn, 62; for a slightly different emphasis see Grant, 141.

220 Grant, 142.

interpretation of socialism or the Anglo-socialist tradition, which was deeply pro-Christian in character, social gospellers were often welcomed in positions of leadership and influence within the party.[221] As well, because many C.C.F. members were familiar with the Anglo-socialist tradition of describing a socialist society with Christian imagery, they were comfortable with the radical politicians describing a socialist social order as the Kingdom of God.[222] Furthermore, the agricultural wing of the C.C.F., which was often composed of farmers who had participated in the social gospel movement in the 1920s and were often familiar with the language of the movement through farm publications such as the *Grain Growers Guide*, often welcomed radical social gospellers as political leaders.[223]

Douglas, Radical Christianity and the Rise of Christian Realism

T.C. Douglas graduated from Brandon College and took his parish in Weyburn, Saskatchewan and joined the remnants of the movement, at an odd time in its history. He became a social gospeller in the wake of the movement's collapse. When he made contact with social gospellers in the early 1930s, radical Christians were the only people who continued to articulate what was understood, among them, to be a credible plan to build the Kingdom of God on earth.[224] Unlike other elements of the social gospel movement that were alienated from the conflicts and power struggles of social reform, the Radicals accepted it as a necessary aspect of reform and were wholly prepared to brave the ambiguities of politics to achieve it.[225] Unlike the years between 1890 and 1928, there were no

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221 For good examination of this topic see Lipset, 168-73 passim.

222 Ibid., 169.

223 Allen, 201-7 passim. For an example see W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1950), 28-9. For more commentary on the development of this tradition see Rasporich, 231-3.

224 Allen, 350-1.

225 McLeod, 73.

journals or clerical conferences, popular literature or lectures from leading ecclesiastics, intellectuals and evangelists urging the faithful to work toward building the Kingdom of God on earth. Douglas joined this stream of Christianity when Protestant churches were uninterested and even somewhat hostile to the movement. Douglas was relatively free to develop his own theological perspective, although there were obvious influences from the Baptist ecclesiasts who recommended that he avoid political life and finish his Ph.D. and the academics with whom he corresponded at McMaster University where he was finishing his M.A. In effect, he had a remarkable amount of intellectual latitude to pursue new avenues of thought.

Allen Whitehorn notes, in a somewhat puzzled tone, that during the 1930s, T.C. Douglas had remarkably little to do with the League for Social Reconstruction, which contained the intellectual wing of the C.C.F.[226] As well, Douglas was also relatively isolated from a religious adjunct of the organization called the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order. This organization, which was founded by theologians John King Gordon and John Line in April of 1934 when they united the Fellowship of Socialist Christians (F.S.C.) and the Movement for a Christian Social Order (M.C.S.O.) to form the F.C.S.O., was peopled by some of Canada's leading Christian socialist thinkers. Its ranks included such luminaries as R.B.Y. Scott of the United Theological College in Montreal, the economist Eugene Foresy, the philosophers Eric Havelock and Gregory Vlastos, the classicist H. Martyn Estall and United Church ministers R. Edis Fairburn and J.W.A. Nicholson. Accordingly, John King Gordon argued that the F.C.S.O. sought to give intellectual credibility to the aims of the C.C.F. and Radical Christianity.[227] It

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[226] Whitehorn, 1992, 146.

[227] J. King Gordon, "A Christian Socialist in the 1930s," in ed. Richard Allen, The Social Gospel in Canada : Papers of the Interdisciplinary Conference on the Social Gospel

cannot be said that Douglas was wholly alienated from these intellectuals. After all, the evidence indicates that he accepted this small organization's principle that capitalism was "fundamentally at variance with Christian principles" and that Christians should work to build a new socialist society that adhered to Christ's ethical teachings.[228] Yet he did have enough intellectual distance from them to critically evaluate their thought.

There is no clear evidence to indicate why Douglas appeared to distance himself from the Christian intellectuals of the F.C.S.O.. Perhaps it was too Eastern, intellectually lofty and maybe a little effete for the tastes of an almost equally well educated and erudite but nevertheless rural prairie preacher. Whatever his motivations, this situation gave Douglas a sense of latitude to reject their thinking. Douglas' distance from their scholarly debates, comments and meetings of this intelligentsia released him from any of the subtle and implicit social pressures which they might have exerted upon him to conform to their ideological strictures. But at the same time, these people were probably charmed by him and by virtue of this he appears to have been afforded some access to their debates.[229] This situation put Douglas in the social periphery of the leading intellectual circles of the C.C.F. Thus it should not be surprising that he developed different opinions than the ones in currency in this realm.

In the mid-1930s, as T.C. Douglas was reflecting upon his interpretation of social gospel theology, new theological currents were gaining currency among

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in Canada, March 21-24, 1973, At the University of Regina. (Ottawa : National Museums of Canada, 1975) 137.

[228] Ibid., 137; The New Outlook, (9 May, 1934), 345. As of 30 June, 1937, the F.C.S.O. had at least 265 members; J. King Gordon,1975, 139.

[229] Horn, 123. As well, the fact that John King Gordon, whom Douglas met in 1935, was chosen to be the latter's eulogist, definitely suggests that these men maintained at least a cordial relationship. Given that many of Douglas' colleagues, kith and kin were still living, this indicates that the two men were probably more than just acquaintances.

North American Christians. In Canada, in the early 1930s, social gospel theology was still thought to be theologically sound even if increasingly unpopular.[230] By the mid 1930s, intellectuals in the F.C.S.O. were becoming aware of Reinhold Niebuhr's cogent Christian Realist critiques of their interpretation of social gospel theology. The differences between Niebuhr and the F.C.S.O. were underscored in the debate over the F.C.S.O.'s widely read and reviewed volume of essays entitled *Toward a Christian Revolution* (1936).[231] In Niebuhr's review of this work, he identified the central conflict between these Canadian Christians' version of social gospel theology and Christian Realism.

Canadian Christian Socialists had argued that Christians should be prepared not to compromise their ethical principles when they acted in politics. Niebuhr argued, by contrast, that politics offers little opportunity for uncompromising ethical action.[232] By definition, political struggles are manifestations of competing sinful or selfish interests of social groups. Because Niebuhr maintained that people could never wholly transcend their selfish or sinful character and that it was even intensified when they were in social groups, he had a dim view of the opportunities for Christians to act ethically in politics. The opportunities that do occur are inevitably tied to openly or hidden sinful or selfish interests.[233] Thus, Christian practice in politics must follow a pragmatic moral logic which maintains that people must make morally ambiguous decisions and participate in compromises

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[230] The earliest theological challenge to the assumptions of social gospel theology that I could locate in Canadian journals was D.L. Ritchie's account of Karl Barth's theological criticism of the principles behind the social gospel movement. See D.L Ritchie, New Outlook, (19 Oct., 1927).

[231] R.B.Y. Scott, & Gregory Vlastos, eds., Toward a Christian Revolution (Chicago : Victor Gollancz, 1936).

[232] Reinhold Niebuhr, Radical Religion (Spring, 1937), 42-44.

[233] This is the thesis of Reinhold Niebuhr's most famous work Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York : Charles Scribners' Sons, 1936), xi-vvv passim.

between greater and less evils. Canadian Radical Christians rejected this reasoning and argued that Christians must act in close accordance with Christ's teachings when they participate in the political realm.[234] These socialists, who were still relatively close to the intellectual tradition of Rauschenbusch's social gospel theology, viewed sin as a human creation and did not think that humanity needs to be compromised by it.[235] These were Christians who were being true to the uncompromising spirit of Walter Rauschenbusch's social gospel theology, since they were intolerant of social evil and optimistic regarding the chances of overcoming it.

The debates between Radical Christians and Reinhold Niebuhr in the 1930s were more than just theological disputes. On one level, they represented a set of polite personal disagreements. After all, Neibuhr maintained friendships with some of these intellectuals.[236] But it also represented a more serious division defined by remarkably different assumptions about the human situation. Langdon Gilkey, a theologian and former doctoral student of Niebuhr's, argued that liberal theology, which was the intellectual foundation of the Canadian social gospel movement, was perceived as cogent, because its fundamental assumptions were already in currency in literate society.[237] However, a cultural shift eroded this situation. Between the mid-1930s and early 1940s, the suffering of the Great Depression, the rise of Nazism and Stalinism, made it clear that liberal theology's optimistic estimate of humanity's moral character did not accord with what was happening in

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[234] See J. King Gordon, 125-26; G. Vlastos, "Sin and Anxiety in Niebuhr's Religion," in The Christian Century (1 Oct. 1941), 1202-1204; R.B.Y. Scott, "Christian in Politics," in The New Outlook (7 Aug. 1935), 776.

[235] John Webster Grant, 152-3. For an account of how these events undermined social gospel theology in the United States see Brown, 45-53.

[236] Horn, 53.

[237] "Secularism's Impact on Contemporary Theology," in Christianity and Crisis (5 April, 1965), 64-7.

society. A darker and less optimistic view of the world began to come into currency.[238]

The intellectual historian John A. Irving observed in his study of theological currents, in Canada after World War Two, that Niebuhr's views gained an increasing grip on Canadian theologians' imaginations in the forties and fifties.[239] Although the F.C.S.O. collapsed in 1945 because of internal disputes,[240] Radical Christianity did not simply disappear in Canadian theological circles; rather it adjusted its assumptions so that it fit Niebuhr's theology. John Webster Grant observes that Radical Christians accepted Niebuhr's pessimistic view of humanity as creatures that tend to sin. Instead of building the Kingdom of God on earth, Radical Christians devoted their efforts to "participation in a struggle against oppression that promised no quick or decisive result."[241] Although T.C. Douglas never explicitly adopted Niebuhr's views, in the mid 1930s, he developed a view of morality in politics that had marked parallels with the pragmatic reasoning of Niebuhr's Christian Realism. In the following chapters, I will examine the development of T.C. Douglas' unique interpretation of social gospel theology.

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[238] Robert T. Handy, A History of the Churches in The United States and Canada (New York : Oxford University Press, 1977) 409. For mention of this see James Morton Freeman, "Religious Liberalism and Reaction in Canada," in The Christian Register (May 1945), 182-3; also see N.K. Clifford, "Religion in the Thirties : Some Aspects of the Canadian Religious Experience,"1980, 133.

[239] John A. Irving, "Philosophical Trends in Canada Between 1850 and 1950," in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XII (2), (December, 1951).

[240] Roger Hutchinson, "The Canadian Social Gospel Movement in the Context of the Christian Social Ethics," The Social Gospel In Canada : Papers of the Interdisciplinary Conference on The Social Gospel in Canada, March 21-24, 1973 at the University of Regina, ed. Richard Allen. (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), 305; For a less detailed, very different, and more personal account of the F.C.S.O.'s collapse see Eugene Forsey, A Life on the Fringe (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1990), 58-59.

[241] John Webster Grant, 154.

Chapter 4

T.C. Douglas and The Pragmatic Ethics of War

This chapter will show that T.C. Douglas departed from the liberal theological ethics of social gospel theology and adopted a pragmatic moral position that recognized and accounted for the ethical ambiguities implicit in human action. This will refute the characterization of Douglas as simply an exponent of social gospel theology.[242] Instead, Douglas developed an ethical position that paralleled the conclusions of Reinhold Niebuhr. I am not arguing that Douglas developed a position that rivaled Niebuhr's sophistication. Rather, Douglas, like Niebuhr, had insight into the morally ambiguous complex, conflict-ridden and ironic nature of politics. Douglas' reflections upon the moral nature of war prompted him to delineate a position which he justified with pragmatic ethical logic. His arguments, which gained currency among leading members of the C.C.F., represented a departure from the moral reasoning of social gospel theology. Douglas' ethical reflection could no longer be characterized as being rigorously disciplined by the philosophical norms or considerations that demarcate the intellectual foundations of social gospel theology. This aspect of Douglas' thought has never been explored in the scholarly literature written about his life and career.

T.C. Douglas' Pragmatism and the Challenge of Pacifism

T.C. Douglas thought of himself as a pragmatist. True to the norms of the American pragmatic tradition, he disdained the social irrelevance of many forms of intellectual inquiry and condemned them because they often stifled social reform.[243] This was evident in 1958, when C.H. Higgenbotham asked Douglas the following question:

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[242] McLeod, 11-14, 18, 31-36, 48, 303; Ban, 256-68 passim.; Shackleton, 31, 56-7, 76-7; Rawlyk, 269.

[243] For the arguments behind this proposition see William James, Pragmatism (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1979), 36-37, 97-98; Niebuhr was keenly aware of this principle and condemned and despised his colleagues who ignored it. When reflecting on why he chose to follow the American pragmatic tradition he said,

> [Higgenbotham] You sometimes hear that this is the age in which man will conquer poverty. What else is there to conquer after you conquer poverty?"[244] ... [Douglas] I'm afraid I'm not an intellectual; I'm a pragmatist. I always think that if you've got an immediate problem you oughtn't to spend too much energy - you've got to spend some but you oughtn't spend too much of your energy - worrying about the problems ahead. Sometimes intellectuals tend to weaken the drive of good social and economic reform movements by constantly saying, "If you solve this problem, then what are you going to do?"[245]

Although it is evident that Douglas identified himself with pragmatic thought; it is not clear why he was motivated to do this. In the following sections, I will argue that he began to build upon the pragmatic insights which he encountered at Chicago when he thought that he must counter "pacifist" arguments articulated within the C.C.F..

T.C. Douglas began to articulate and refine his pragmatic reasoning in the late 1930s. Coincidentally, this was a period that was marked by a revival of pragmatic thought. In this era, American intellectual life was centred in New York City because of the metropolis' vast publishing resources, scholarly institutes and forums of debate.[246] Reinhold Niebuhr, from the vantage point of Union Theological Seminary, became the theologian of the pragmatic renaissance. In the late 1930s, intellectuals, theologians and activists, who had embraced such ideas as liberal theology and Marxism, were becoming disillusioned. They could no longer accept the late nineteenth century assumption, that they found implicit in Marx's writings, that humans could develop intellectual constructions that which transcend the flux of human history.[247]

"Epistemology bored me ... and frankly the other side of me came out: I desired relevance rather than scholarship." cited (no. ref.) in June Bingham, Courage to Change : An Introduction to the Life and Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 83; Cornel West also underscores this aspect of Niebuhr's career. See West, 153-4.

[244] Thomas, 1982, 361.

[245] Ibid.

[246] Pells, 74-6.

[247] For discussion of leading American intellectuals' break with the Marxist

Although many intellectuals found Niebuhr's coupling of Christian orthodoxy and pragmatism cogently portrayed the world in all of its irony, ambiguity and complexity,[248] they also found that it was an effective way of thinking about contemporary events. Through Niebuhr's resurrection of Christian orthodoxy as a credible intellectual position, the insight of such figures as St. Augustine,[249] Martin Luther,[250] and John Calvin[251] gained new currency.[252] The nation's intellectuals,[253] clergymen, social activists, politicians, and diplomats judged Niebuhr's thought relevant to the most contentious political, ethical and cultural arguments of the day.[254] As Niebuhr rose to become the theologian of the cold war era, T.C. Douglas was swept up in the intellectual currents emerging from New York.

It is extremely likely that T.C. Douglas was indirectly influenced by the renaissance of pragmatic thought among New York intellectuals. During the 1930s, the United States, largely through scholars, writers and musicians in this city[255] was defining a high culture that was a distinct rival from the traditions emanating from Europe. An intellectually curious individual in Canada, like Douglas, would have difficulty ignoring the intellectual scene in New York without avoiding many new journals, books and periodicals published in this city. Furthermore, in 1958, Douglas admitted, that like many members of

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tradition see Arthur Schlesinger, "The Perspective Now," in Partisan Review, XIV (May/June, 1947), 242.

248 Pells, 130-31 passim.

249 Augustine, City of God 892.

250 Martin Luther, "Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed," in ed. John Dillenberger, Martin Luther : Selections from His Writings (Garden City, N.Y. : Anchor Books, 1961), 371.

251 John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill. (Philadelphia : Westminster Press, 1960), II, 1487.

252 Pells, 130-31.

253 The roster would include such scholarly notables as Arthur Schlesinger, Lionel Trilling, Daniel Bell, Daniel Boorstin and Oscar Handlin. Pells, 130.

254 Lovin, 41.

255 John N. Ingham, ed., Assult on Victorianism : The Rise of Popular Culture in America 1890-1945 (Toronto : Canadian Scholars' Press, 1987), 267-9.

the League for Social Reconstruction, he regularly read The Nation in which Niebuhr and other leading New York intellectuals published.[256] Given the quality of Douglas' education at Brandon College,[257] McMaster and doctoral studies at the University of Chicago, it is safe to assume that he had the acumen to follow the debates contained in its pages. Although this journal, among other literary works, could have been the taproot of Douglas' interest in pragmatic ethical logic, the origin of Douglas' pragmatic interest is likely to be found in a personal acquaintance.

In the mid-1930s, Douglas began a friendship with theologian called John King Gordon who was Reinhold Niebuhr's teaching assistant at Union Theological Seminary.[258]

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[256] Brown, 100. Even when Douglas was Premier of Saskatchewan, in the midst of an immense workload, he managed to regularly consume The Nation, The Socialist Commentary, The Forum, The New Statesmen, Harpers, and The Atlantic Monthly. Thomas, 1982, 340. Douglas, given his photographic memory (Thomas, 1982, 345), probably retained the contents of these articles. As well, after 1944, as premier, Douglas recounted that he was able to use his Saturday afternoons to read major new works in sociology, history and philosophy. (Thomas, 1982, 340) In all probability, when Douglas was a Member of Parliament, with fewer pressing administrative responsibilities than a premier, he had a intellectual life that was even more vibrant and he may have had considerably more exposure to pragmatic ideals; Although I have emphasized the Niebuhr was the primary exponent of Christian Realism or Christian Pragmatism in North America, it should be remembered that he was addressing a movement within Protestantism. Douglas could have encountered Christian pragmatism indirectly through exponents of this movement. See Brown. 48-53, passim. For an overview of this period see Martin E. Marty, Modern American Religion, 2 The Noises of Conflict : 1919-1914 (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1991) 303-340, passim.

[257] See Scott, 142-53, passim. Another testament to the academic quality of Brandon College is that early in the century the administration of the College had seen fit to hire the great pragmatic theologian, Douglas Clyde MacIntosh who taught there between1907-1909 before he moved to Yale Divinity school, and eventually became Reinhold Niebuhr's thesis advisor and mentor. For commentary on MacIntosh's interactions with Niebuhr see Lovin, 41.

[258] The best evidence of Douglas' life-long friendship with J.King Gordon is that in Douglas' retirement he associated with Gordon and wanted to revive F.C.S.O. with Gordon at its helm. Gordon was also the eulogist at Douglas' funeral. McLeod, 304, 309. For a description of circumstances where they probably met and began to form a friendship see Horn, 53, 141; also see J. King Gordon, "A Christian Socialist in the 1930's," in ed. Richard Allen, The Social Gospel in Canada : Papers of The

Although Gordon was critical of Niebuhr's thought, and was an exponent of a theological alternative to Niebuhr's Christian Realism,[259] it is probable that Gordon spoke to Douglas about these matters. After all, Niebuhr had attended at least one of the League for Social Reconstruction's conferences,[260] critiqued some members' writings,[261] and maintained a friendship with Gordon.[262] In short, there is substantial evidence to indicate that Niebuhr's ideas, even if they were discussed in negative terms, were in currency in circles where Douglas had a peripheral association. However, as a politician, Douglas had to use pragmatic moral logical to challenge the well entrenched and cogently defended pacifist positions in currency within his party.

In the C.C.F., in the 1930s, it was difficult to articulate a credible and cogent critique of the party's quasi-isolationist position on foreign policy, which Douglas called "pacifism",[263] or the principle that Canada should not participate in foreign conflicts.[264] In Canadian society, "pacifism" was viewed as the intelligent course of foreign policy. W.L.M. King, the leader of the Liberal Party, being wholly aware that the English-speaking Canadian public did not want to repeat World War One,[265] and that Canada's participation in a war aroused anti-confederation sentiments in Quebec, actively shunned courses of foreign policy that embroiled Canada in a war.[266] Indeed, within the C.C.F.,

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Interdisciplinary Conference of The Social Gospel in Canada, March 21-24 1973, The University of Regina (Ottawa : National Museums of Canada, 1975), 125-6. J. King Gordon did not make any effort to hide his respect for Niebuhr. His works were circulated and discussed in the League and Gordon brought Niebuhr to Montreal to speak at a conference sponsored by the League. Horn, 53.

259 Hutchinson, 1973, 305-6.

260 Horn, 53.

261 Niebuhr, 1937, 42-4.

262 Ibid.

263 Thomas, 1982, 103.

264 Also see Horn, 144, 150, 152, 154, 155, 204.

265 For commentary on the Canadian public's anti-war sentiments see Arthur Meighen Canada, Senate, Debates, 19 January, 1937. Also see H. Blair Neatby, The Politics of Chaos : Canada in the Thirties (Toronto : MacMillian of Canada, 1972), 173.

266 For a discussion of the varience of Canadian public's opinion over this issue

the legitimacy of the pro-pacifist position was augmented by these leading members of the C.C.F. who condemned participation in war in terms of their socialist ideology. The members of the League for Social Reconstruction viewed war as a brutal and unnecessary social arrangement.[267] In their minds, it was only another manifestation of the immoral profit motive that drove capitalist society. Any contribution to war only fueled the immoral impetus that drove international military conflicts. Furthermore, a non-capitalist or socialist economic order did not contain the impulse which spawned warfare.[268] Hence, socialists had a moral obligation not to contribute to the war effort. This was augmented by the religious ideas in currency among the leading members of the party. After all, the major theologians associated with the C.C.F., such as John King Gordon, R.B.Y. Scott, and the philosopher Gregory Vlastos, true to the Kantian moral *ethos* of liberal theology,[269] argued that Christians could not compromise and must act in rigorous adherence with Christ's ethic of brotherly love.[270] However, the force that entrenched "pacifism" as an official policy within the C.C.F. was J.S. Woodsworth's religious resolve, moral authority and impassioned defense of the anti-war position.[271] In his mind, war was something Christians did not support.[272] In short, in the mid 1930s, Douglas' departure

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see, Neatby,172-3; W.L.M. King, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (20 March, 1939), 2043.

267 Horn, 145, 147, 156-8.

268 Ibid.

269 The theologian Ben Smillie, commenting upon the philosophical considerations behind the pacifism of J.S. Woodsworth and ostensibly other Christian socialist intellectuals in the C.C.F., notes that they understood their position in terms of Kant's moral logic. See Smillie, 35-36.

270 Hutchinson, 1973, 305-6.

271 For an eloquent discussion of Woodsworth's stature in the C.C.F. see Neatby, 96-8.

272 Allen Mills, Fool for Christ : The Political Thought of J.S. Woodsworth (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1991) 58, 78-84, 126, 191-7, 199-200, 205-7, 212-24, 248-9, 252, 257.

from "pacifism" required considerable intellectual and moral confidence. What were the circumstances that forced Douglas to critically examine the party's pacifist position?

A Change in Thinking

It is negligent to argue that any one experience changed T.C. Douglas' thinking about pacifism. Rather, the evidence indicates that his childhood had given him substantial preparation to understand the ironies of the ethics of war. Given that Douglas was raised in a home, rich with poetic recitation, theological and political argument, and high standards of oratory, it does not strain the imagination to suggest that he was simply expected to understand moral irony.[273] With the outbreak of World War One, young Douglas had to live with irony. Although his father doubted the moral veracity of British foreign policy[274] and was a pacifist,[275] he chose to support his nation in World War One by entering the army. His decision was a lesser of two evils. He thought that British foreign policy had more morally redeeming qualities than did Germany.[276] Certainly, when young T.C. Douglas was first exposed to the moral debates surrounding war, no one pretended that there was a clear and unambiguous ethical position.

In the mid-1930s, T.C. Douglas' ironic sense of the ethics of war was not well defined. But there were hints of it. In an "anti-war" article published in the C.C.F. Research Review, in June of 1934, called "Modern Youth and War", Douglas begins with what appears to a be condemnation of war. He wrote,

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273 Ibid., 7-8.
274 Ibid.
275 Ibid.
276 Ibid. Like most late Victorians, Douglas' father appears to have accepted some of Lord Curzon's image of the British Empire in international politics. In 1923, the British aristocrats, statesmen and ambassador minuted to the British Cabinet: "The British government is never untrue to its word, is never disloyal to its colleagues or its allies, never does anything underhanded or mean ... that is the real basis of the moral authority which the British Empire has long exerted" cited in Corelli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (London, 1972), 241.

> [*generation*]. It looks back upon a hundred years of wars fought to gain markets, not one of which was worth destroying a single human life. ... To youth it is becoming apparent that nothing is ever settled by war, and the only people who profit [*from war*] are the munitions manufacturers ... at last youth is learning that international financiers and munitions makers have not patriotism but greed, no ideal but money, no god but Mammon; and for this is increasingly refusing to be butchered mutilated and disemboweled.[277] [*Italicized insertions are mine*]

If Douglas' article had stopped at this point, one could argue that he, like most members of the C.C.F. and the League for Social Reconstruction in the1930s,[278] was clearly pacifist. But this is not the case. He then introduced the possibility that some wars might be worth fighting. He wrote,

> .... *Modern youth will be willing to die for what is noble as any generation that has preceded it*, but will refuse to be cannon fodder in order to enrich capitalists and cover statesmen's blunders.[279] [*My Italics*]

Certainly, during the Higgenbotham interview, when Douglas asserted that "I've never been a pacifist.",[280] there was some merit to his assertion. What is evident is that in the mid-1930s he saw war as immoral. Yet, tragically, it could be a best moral option. This ironic position was developed when Douglas encountered European Nazism.

In the summer of 1936, T.C. Douglas, under the auspices of the World Youth Federation, sojourned to civil war-torn Spain, Nazi Germany, Switzerland and other parts of pre-war continental Europe.[281] This journey had a profound impact upon his moral thinking. It forced him to question the ethical logic of the Christian Socialist within the C.C.F. and recognize the reality that the faithful had to make morally ambiguous choices and pursue the best option before them, even if it appeared contradictory to the spirit of Christ's teachings.[282]

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277 T.C. Douglas, June 1934, 5.
278 Horn, 150-4.
279 Ibid.
280 Thomas, 1982, 103.
281 Ibid., 106.
282 See Commonwealth, Saskatchewan, (14 Oct. 1939), and (6 Dec. 1939).

Douglas used the journey as an opportunity to gauge the nature of Nazi society. He spoke with German labour union leaders, clergymen and social activists about their experiences and understanding of Nazi culture and values.[284] He capped his visit by attending the annual torch-light rituals celebrating Nazi culture, in Nuremberg, Germany. He recounted this experience,

> ... We [*Douglas and some other delegates at conference*] went from Switzerland to Nuremberg, because I wanted to see the great annual festivity Hitler put on each year there. It was frightful. I came back [*to Canada*] and warned my friends about the great German bombers roaring over the parade of self-propelled guns and tanks, Hitler standing there giving his salute, with Goering and the rest of the Nazi bigwigs by his side. There was no doubt that Hitler was simply using Spain as a dress rehearsal for an attack on other nations.[285] [*Italics are mine*]

Although Douglas was manifestly concerned about the rise of fascism in Europe before his trip,[286] his experiences in Europe gave this concern new meaning. He was probably privy to debates, within the League for Social Reconstruction,[287] about the nature of fascist groups within Canada and their parallels with European fascism.[288] But these were sterile and academic compared with the reality of Nazism.

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[283] McLeod, 80.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Thomas, 1982, 108.
[286] For examples of Douglas' speculation on the potential for fascism or other undesirable political movements to arise in Canada see Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (20 June 1936), 4004; Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (20 June, 1940), 981; Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (3 March 1941), 1187; Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (22 March, 1943), 1440.
[287] Horn, 123.
[288] The best evidence that members of the C.C.F. were seriously concerned about the rise of fascism within Canada is evidenced by Frank Scott's article entitled "S", about the rise of fascism in Quebec, in the prestigious journal, Foreign Affairs (April 1938) : 454-466; as well, the alarmist novel by Sinclair Lewis, It Can't Happen Here (Garden City N.Y.: Double Day, 1935) did much to convince the many social reformers and socialists that fascism could arise in Canada and also had some influence in the League for Social Reconstruction. See Horn, 240. For commentary on the influence of fascist sympathies within Canadian Christian circles see Robert G. Stewart, "Radiant Smiles in the Dirty

After Douglas' journey, he wholly believed the C.C.F. intellectuals' proposition that fascism was capitalism "gone nudist".[289] In other words, fascism was a manifestation of the economic interests of the dominant social elements of capitalist society that were unfettered by the norms of democratic tradition and Christianity.[290] However, Douglas had also come to a theological conclusion. He had found that fascism was a radical denial of Christ's ethic of brotherly love,[291] manifest in racism,[292] and it was dangerous because Nazi Germany had the potential military might to enforce these ideas in Europe. In light of this, at a visceral level, Douglas knew that Christians had a moral duty to use all resources available to them to fight fascism.[293] He also concluded that J.S. Woodsworth's[294] and many of the C.C.F.'s intellectuals' pacifist views, although well

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Thirties: History and Ideology of the Oxford Movement in Canada 1932-1936," (M.Div. Thesis, Vancouver School of Theology, 1974; Allan W. Eister, Drawing Room Conversation : A Sociological Account of the Oxford Group Movement (Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, 1950); D.L. Ritchie, "Oxford Group Movement," in Canadian Journal of Religious Thought 9 (1932) : 248-355; Reinhold Niebuhr, "Hitler and Buchman," in Christian Century (7 October, 1936) : 1315-1316.

289 Horn, 83.

290 Ibid., 83-4; Stanley G. Payne, A History of Fascism : 1914-1845 (Madison : The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 443-5.

291 Ibid.

292 Thomas, 1982, 67.

293 Ibid., 103-4.

294 See J.S. Woodsworth, Following the Gleam (Ottawa, 1926) 9; an example the pacifist ideas of the period can be found in Charles A. Beard, Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels : An Estimate of American Foreign Policy (New York : Macmillian, 1939). Also see Manfred Jones, American Isolationism 1936-1941 (Ithica, New York : Cornell University Press, 1966), 161; the pacifist position is not a dated theological idea, it can still be found in contemporary scholarly discourse. See the classic Guy Hershberger, War Peace, and Nonresistance (Scottdale, Pa. : Herald Press, 1944), 298; John Howard Yoder, The Priestly Kingdom : The Social Ethics of the Gospel (Notre Dame, Ind. : University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 135-47. For a more recent example see Stanley Hauerwas, A Community of Character (Notre Dame, Ind. : University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 234n; also see Stanley Hauerwas, Against the Nations (Minneapolis : Winston Press, 1985), 122-30.

meaning, were wrong. However, attacking these people's position was a formidable task and Douglas bided his time before engaging in a confrontation.

Between 1936 and 1939, T. C. Douglas, as an astute politician, refrained from airing his criticisms of the anti-war position in public,[295] and deferred to his party's official position. However, he did not hide his sense of urgency that something needed to be done to curb the influence of fascist powers in world politics. Before he made his journey to Europe, in October 1935, the Italian Fascist Bennito Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in an effort to expand Italy's African Empire and gain access to the East African coast.[296] Douglas' response, in his February 11, 1936 parliamentary speech, was to urge the Canadian government to limit oil,[297] and nickel exports,[298] and to urge other members of the League of Nations to follow suit. On March 2, 1936, the party was able to get Woodsworth to concede that the C.C.F. should support the use of force if it was exercised within confines of the League of Nations.[299] However, Woodsworth's continued resolve to stay out of foreign conflicts was manifest in his reaction to the Spanish Civil War. This conflict emerged in the summer of 1936, when fascist forces in Spain, under the leadership of General Franco attempted to crush a democratically-elected opposition with the aid of Nazi Germany. Despite Woodsworth's appeals that the C.C.F should concentrate on

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[295] McLeod, 80-82 passim.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Although the position to limit the sale of oil to Facist Italy was widely held by Canadian nationalists at this time, the evidence to support it is lacking. Thomas, 1982, 97. Also see W.A. Riddell, World Security by Conference (Toronto : Ryerson Press, 1947), 85-145; L.B. Pearson, Mike : The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1972), 87-96; J.G. Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, vol.2, Appeasment and Rearmament (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1964).

[298] T.C. Douglas, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (11 February, 1936).

[299] Thomas, 1982, 101.

social reform,[300] prominent members of the party such as Dr. Norman Bethune and Graham Spry[301] joined the Spanish Resistance and participated in the war.

T.C. Douglas, like many members of the C.C.F., felt restrained by the party's rigid adherence to pacifism. It appeared obvious to many of these socialists that fascism was a great evil that required a military response. Although Douglas never went so far as to join the Spanish Resistance, he did join the League Against War and Fascism. This organization, which eventually became a front for the Canadian Communist Party,[302] urged the Canadian government to work against the influence of fascism.[303] Much to the relief of M.J. Coldwell and J.S. Woodsworth, who were vigilant anti-Communists, Douglas left the League but continued to pursue his aims within the C.C.F. This was possible because as time went on political circumstance made the pacifist position less tenable. By 1938, W.L.M. King, whose perpetual hand-wringing about keeping Canada out of foreign wars was legendary, directed his government to begin stockpiling arms in anticipation of a war in Europe.[304] In the ranks of the C.C.F., pacifism was no longer viewed as the obvious course of action recognized by any moral individual. It was a position that had to be defended against criticism.[305] As the storm clouds of World War Two gathered, the debate over pacifism came to the forefront of debate within the party.

When Britain's Prime Minister Nevil Chamberlain concluded the Munich Agreement with Germany, on September 29, 1938, which seceded Czechoslovakia to Germany for peace in Europe,[306] the C.C.F.'s position on Canadian foreign policy

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300 Mills, 90.

301 McLeod, 80-81.

302 Douglas commented that he thought that the Soviet and their socialist supporters in North America "... were sincere in their opposition to fascism and their desire to preserve democracy was genuine. Subsequent events have shattered my somewhat naive faith," in Saskatchewan Commonwealth, (3 January, 1940).

303 McLeod, 57, 71-3.

304 McLeod, 81.

305 Manitoba Commonwealth, (30 September, 1938).

306 Ibid; McLeod, 81.

remained the same. M.J. Coldwell and others continued to critique the government on the grounds that its arms expenditures only increased the likelihood of war.[307] By February 26, 1938, as it became obvious that war was imminent, the C.C.F. officially agreed to support military spending if it was "confined solely to home defence".[308] However, on April 3, 1939, Douglas broke with the pacifist demand that Canada abstain from participating in war. Instead, he admitted that Canada would participate and that its "military contribution will at best be relatively small."[309] On September 1, 1939, when Nazi Germany broke the Munich Agreement and invaded Poland, it appeared certain that Canada would go to war.[310] At this moment in history, many members of the C.C.F. were concerned that this was a prelude to centuries of fascist domination in Europe.[311] Hence, disagreements over the moral voracity of pacifism became urgent.

The Defeat of Pacifism Within the C.C.F.

After Nazi Germany invaded Poland, W.L.M. King's government decided that Canada would support Britain in a war against Germany.[312] However, J.S. Woodsworth and many of the C.C.F.'s intellectuals thought that Canada should ignore European conflicts and concentrate upon healing the social wounds of the economic depression and drought.[313] On September 7, 1939, in a room in the west wing of the House of Commons, leading members of the C.C.F., M.P.s, intellectuals, and party organizers

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307 McLeod, 81.

308 C.C.F. Papers, Ottawa, vol. 3, National Council minutes, (26-27 Feb. 1938).

309 T.C. Douglas, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (3 April 1939) : 2517.

310 Horn, 157; For Douglas' earlier and pessimistic commentary on the Munich Agreement see Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (24 Jan. 1939) : 270.

311 Thomas, 1982, 125.

312 According to J.L. Granatstein, "Canada went to war because Britain went to war. Not for democracy, not to stop Hitler, not to save Poland. Canada decided to fight ... only because Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain felt himself unable to escape the commitments Great Britain made to Poland six months earlier," in Canada's War : The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government 1939-1945 (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1975) 19.

313 McLeod 82-3

debated the merits of this position.[314] In this context, it became clear that the ethical logic of J.S. Woodsworth,[315] Stanley Knowles,[316] Mildred Farhini,[317] and other pacifists within the party had lost credibility.[318] This reality was illustrated in an exchange between the McGill Law Professor Frank Scott and the C.C.F. Member of Parliament, Angus MacInnis. MacInnis dismissed Scott's argument that the C.C.F.'s proposed support of Canada's war effort against Germany was tantamount to choosing to support one gangster over another.[319] He said,

> If a bandit enters a building with a shot-gun we send the police to get him. ... We do not leave him alone because he is a product of Canadian

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[314] For Douglas' discussion about the potential persistence of fascism in society see Thomas, 1982, 104, 125. Later sociological, political and historical analysis would indicate that Douglas' assessment of Nazism, as a political front for the interests of industry, finance and other forms of "big" business, was questionable. Klause P. Fischer, Nazi Germany : A New History (New York: Continuum, 1995); Thomas Childers, "The Social Bases of the National Socialist Vote," in Journal of Contemporary History (11 Oct. 1976), 29. The entire October 1976 issue of the journal is devoted to "Theories of Fascism."

[315] Mills 216-7.

[316] McLeod, 82.

[317] Olenka Melnyk, Remembering The C.C.F. : No Bankers in Heaven (Toronto : McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989), 134.

[318] Ben Smillie maintains that the primary reason the C.C.F. gave up its pacifistic position and supported Canada's war effort was because it wanted to gain votes in the next election. Smillie, 100. It appears highly plausible, in light of the records of the period, that electoral popularity was a consideration in the party's support of the war. At least in the case of Douglas, the evidence reviewed in this thesis shows that his decision was carefully weighed and that theological and ethical issues played a considerable role in his reflections on this decision. A better explanation of events, which I will offer in this thesis, would reflect the reality that pacifism, in 1939, in the face of the looming threat of Nazi Germany, no longer appeared intellectually or morally credible for a political party in Canada. After all, Douglas recounted that "[w]e [the C.C.F. M.P.s in the House] felt that if Hitler triumphed in Europe, we would have had the black night of barbarism for centuries to come." Thomas, 1982, 125. With respect to Professor Smillie's position, this statement hardly appears to reflect the intellectual or emotional atmosphere where someone could argue that the C.C.F. should relinquish its pacifistic position for the sake of an electoral advantage.

[319] McLeod, 134.

not mean that you should let him dictate to the whole world.[320]

MacInnis' remark exposed the weaknesses of Scott's position. At this time people were wondering if Nazi Germany would take over Europe, stand as an alternative to democratic civilization, and influence the cultural, political and intellectual history of the West.[321] The uncompromising moral commitment of the Christian socialists of the F.C.S.O., the League for Social Reconstruction and other pacifists within the party was seen to have a dire price. In effect, the advocacy of "pacifism" was understood to implicitly sanction giving Nazism free-rein, on the grounds that battling it was ideologically and morally distasteful. The pacifist position was defeated, within the C.C.F.'s committee room, fifteen votes to seven.[322]

As Canada went to war, there was a fundamental shift in the culture of the C.C.F.. This is affirmed by Mildred Farhni, a prominent member of the Manitoba C.C.F., a pacifist, a Quaker, J.S. Woodsworth's eulogist, and an Evangelical who left the party after it rejected "pacifism".[323] She maintained that the defeat of pacifist principles in the C.C.F. marked the loss of recognition of the idea that "evil can only be overcome with good and that violence is never a solution."[324] In essence, she believed that the party had slipped from the moral high ground. However, this uncompromising view, that Christians should act in accordance with Christ's law of love and elude unsavory ethical concessions such as supporting a war, was no longer acceptable to the majority of the leading members of the C.C.F. In T.C. Douglas' political life, the cultural shift within the C.C.F. gave him greater

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[320] Cited in Ibid., 83; T.C. Douglas "A Socialist Votes for War", Commonwealth. Saskatchewan, (14 Oct. 1939) : 5. T.C. *Douglas "Not Peace but a Sword" Commonwealth. Saskatchewan, (6 Dec. 1939) : 5, 7.*

[321] For Douglas' view of this see Thomas, 1982, 125.

[322] McLeod, 85.

[323] Melnyk, 141-2. Even Horn, 171-2, notes that after Canada's entrance into W.W.I.I, the C.C.F. changed to the point where the League For Social Reconstruction was profoundly diminished and the League disappeared.

[324] Melnyk,139.

latitude to advocate the pursuit of military action against Nazi Germany and to articulate a pragmatic perspective on theological ethics.

In the wake of the shift of the values within the C.C.F., T.C. Douglas had considerably more latitude to urge the Canadian government to pursue war.[325] This did not mean that "pacifism" simply disappeared. On March 25, 1940, the Prime Minister called a national election and embittered C.C.F. pacifists were reticent to work for the party.[326] Yet the C.C.F. actually gained seats and support in the election. In the long term, the influx of British immigrants into the party, who were not sympathetic to "pacifism", effectively ensured its irrelevancy in the major debates.[327] It was not until May 30, 1940, during a debate about Prime Minister W.L.M. King's proposed War Appropriations Bill, that T.C. Douglas made his first post-election parliamentary speech on the war and underscored his support for it.[328] He stated that he believed that "the country should bend every effort toward the successful prosecution of the war", that only "the British Commonwealth and her allies stand against [the] barbarism" of the Nazis "and the extermination of everything that makes life worth living", and that "the Canadian people, in the main, are prepared to fight."[329] This commitment was so prominent in Douglas' mind that he was distressed by W.L.M. King's cautious approach to the pursuit of the war, which was motivated by the King's desire not to arouse anti-confederation sentiments in Quebec.[330] Douglas, driven by an overwhelming desire to see Nazi

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325 McLeod, 86-87.

326 Ibid., 86.

327 Ibid, 84, 101.

328 Ibid, 87.

329 Douglas even went so far as to volunteer for the ill-fated South Saskatchewan Regiment, which would perish in Hong Kong, but he was rejected for active service because of the condition of his knee. As well, the McLeods suggest, by their account, that Douglas was probably judged too flippant and insubordinate in the eyes of his officers. McLeod, 87-88.

330 See T.C. Douglas to Clarence Fines, (11 March, 1942) Saskatchewan Archives, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan C.C.F. Papers, vol. ii-98; McLeod, 89-90.

Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan defeated, spent the duration of the war scrutinizing the Canadian government's policies and its use of resources in the pursuit of the war.[331] What is evident, from his parliamentary speeches, is that Douglas had no moral reticence about urging Canada to pursue victory against Nazi Germany. The reason for this is that he had found a new theological basis for the position that the war was a morally legitimate course of action.

Douglas and Ethical Pragmatism

Before I describe Douglas' pragmatic ethics, I will reiterate the essential features of pragmatism. Pragmatism proposes that contemporary and future philosophers are foolish to expect to successfully understand the relationship between the subject and object through epistemological reflection alone.[332] The idea that it can be done is based on a misunderstanding of the human condition. Pragmatists propose that humanity lives in a stream of history where it is difficult to ascertain truth, beauty or morality. Distanced scholarly reflection is no escape from this situation because epistemological, aesthetic and ethical reflections are coloured by our conditions and all scholarly productions in these realms must be considered tentative. The only path intellectuals can follow is to make the best of a bad situation. All they can do is test their ideas against the contingencies of current historical conditions. As a moral thinker, this is what T.C. Douglas sought to do.

After 1939, T.C. Douglas began to critique pacifism from the vantage point of pragmatic ethical logic. This represented more than a theological squabble. He was rejecting the smug ethical certainties of social gospel theology which the intellectuals of

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[331] See McLeod, 89-95 passim; Thomas, 1982, 121-38 passim.

[332] The features of pragmatism, that I am reiterating here, can largely be found in West, 3-8. For the essence of pragmatism's position see William James, "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," in The Writings of William James, ed. John J. McDermott, (New York : Random House, 1967), 430. For an account of the theological influence of pragmatism see Corrington, 68-72. For the place of pragmatism in the larger history of American religious thought see Kuklick, 195-98.

the F.C.S.O. had used to defend social gospel theology against the influence of the pragmatic moral logic of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realism.[333] The F.C.S.O. intellectuals thought that ethical pragmatism, the proposition that human moral action necessarily represents a compromise between ethical principle and opportunity to act, debased Christianity.[334] They argued that the faithful should stand resolute and not compromise Christ's ethic of fraternal love.

T.C. Douglas began his analysis of "pacifism" by examining the fundamental assumptions behind the position.[335] He maintained that pacifists correctly understood that human life has tremendous value. But they failed to understand the tragic nature of the use of military force. In effect, Douglas was criticizing pacifism as a limited form of ethical reflection. Douglas' arguments were a blow against the moral assumptions behind the social gospel theology which J.S. Woodsworth and other Christian pacifists articulated. Douglas argued that pacifism's fundamental assumption, the proposition that the use of military force is always wrong, stemmed from a flawed view of the world which he called "absolutist".[336] In its place, Douglas argued that Christians should understand the world in different terms.

T.C. Douglas could not accept the proposition that an ethical principle is always valid under every circumstance. He said that "any absolute creed is always an over simplification."[337] Accordingly, an "absolute creed" fails to comprehend the contingent nature of our ethical decisions. This does not mean that Douglas thought that morals were free floating concepts determined by social whim. He looked toward the New Testament as the primary moral reference for morality; but, true to the pragmatic tradition, he recognized that human beings did not always have the opportunity to act in accordance

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[333] Hutchinson, 1973, 305-306.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Thomas, 1982, 103.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Ibid.

with Christ's ethic of fraternal love.[338] Rather, realistic ethical reflection must respond to the crises or circumstances where the contingencies of social reality limit Christians' choices. It is in these circumstances where the contingent nature of humanity's ethical decisions become evident.

Douglas maintained that pacifism, as form of moral absolutism, correctly comprehends that "[i]t is a terrible thing to take a man's life".[339] His critique of this manifestation of moral absolutism is that it failed to comprehend the potentially ironic and tragic nature of moral decisions. This occurs because of the contingent nature of human moral evaluation. Human beings live in an environment where they find that "different things have different values" and in order to make decisions within the context "you must have a sense of value."[340] Douglas recounted: "I think of a man going to set fire to a school in which there are five hundred children. You have to decide whether to kill this man in order to prevent him [from] committing a terrible act of arson."[341] Hence, in light of this conclusion, Douglas recounted articulating the following critique of "pacifism" to Woodsworth.

> ... This is what I used to argue with Mr. Woodsworth. Say you've spent most of your life helping build up trade unions, are you now prepared to say that if a government or a group of employers [motivated by a fascist ideology] uses force to destroy the unions, that you'll stand and watch your life's work and a hundred years of social development wiped out in a single night? This is what is happening in Germany. Personally, I wouldn't stand for it. We've made certain gains, and if we say we will not use force to defend them, we could have them all taken away from us. But there are values to be defended, and in 1936 I saw in Germany and in Spain what was happening to many of these values. I recognized then if you came to a choice between losing freedom of speech, religion, association, thought,

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[338] Ibid. Also see T.C. Douglas, 6 December, 1939.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid.

use force.[342]

What is clear from this argument is that Douglas rejected moral absolutism and "pacifism". Indeed, much like Reinhold Niebuhr,[343] Douglas argued that human beings could only choose the best course among the options available to them, which is defined by the limited nature of the human situation.

Douglas' second critique of moral absolutism is that it allows Christians to abrogate their moral responsibility to the community. He used the following analogy to illustrate his position.

> I think Robert Louis Stevenson once said, "I have a perfect right to turn my cheek if someone slaps me, but I've no right to turn my child's cheek because for my child I'm responsible." And so if I have responsibilities to defend my child, my home, and my wife, to protect my community and the weaker members of society, I can't abrogate this merely on the philosophical idea that force is never correct.[344]

Thus, Douglas found that pacifism, as a manifestation of moral absolutism, was not only based on a flawed conception of ethics, it was simply irresponsible.

Finally, T.C. Douglas primarily critiqued absolutist ethical logic in terms of crises. This made sense because this is where he found that it fails to produce a viable and useful ethic for Christian leaders. In these circumstances it is clear that his proposition that human beings have to make morally ambiguous decisions paralleled Niebuhr's pragmatic moral logic. But Niebuhr maintained that humanity necessarily engages in many moral compromises because of the nature of the human situation. He argued that "there is no pure good in history; and probably no pure evil, either." [345] Although Douglas did not

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[342] Ibid.

[343] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Theology and Political Thought in the Western World," 1968, 56.

[344] Thomas, 1982, 103.

[345] Niebuhr, 1968, 56.

have an elaborate theological framework to systematically support this insight into the human condition, there is evidence to indicate that he did recognize it. Douglas vividly expressed his interpretation of this on April 3, 1939, in parliament, during a debate on the Canadian banking industry. He turned to Dorothy Parker's poetic reflections on moral ambiguity, and recited the following verses:

> When I was young and bold and strong,
> Then right was right and wrong was wrong;
> With plume on high and flag unfurled
> I went forth to fight the world.
> "Come out and fight, you dogs" said I,
> And wept there was but once to die.
>
> Now I am old, and good and bad
> Are woven in a crazy plaid.
> I sit and say "The world is so
> And he is wise to let it go.
> A victory lost a victory won
> The difference is so small my son"
> The inertia rides and riddles me,
> That which is called philosophy.[346]

What is clear, from this cited poetry, is that Douglas thought that an intellectually mature and informed view of human experience accounted for moral ambiguity. In this treatment of moral ambiguity, T.C. Douglas was very much like Reinhold Niebuhr.

Similarities With Reinhold Niebuhr

Like Reinhold Niebuhr, T.C. Douglas urged Christians, paradoxically, to aspire to live by Christ's law of love, by maintaining a tough-minded emotional perspective necessary for making the pragmatic ethical decisions implicit in political life. [347] Both

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[346] T.C. Douglas, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, (3 April 1936) : 3296.

[347] Niebuhr did not believe that the Christian church had been successful in fostering the character necessary to successfully live the social reality of conflict and to battle evil. Reinhold Niebuhr, "When Will Christians Stop Fooling Themselves," in ed D.B. Robertson, Love and Justice: Selections of Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr (Louisville : Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 43.

Douglas and Niebuhr realized that the faithful might not have the fortitude necessary to withstand these pressures and act effectively in the chaotic, ambiguous and ironic world of politics. Hence both of these men urged Christians to realize that they should not reflexively skirt social conflict, even in its most violent manifestation, because it might be the most moral course of action available to them. In The Commonwealth, on October 14 and December 6, 1939, Douglas attempted to justify his position.[348] In the first article, Douglas recounted the Nazi Germany he observed during his trip and how colleges became propaganda factories, the streets crawled with secret police and how labour leaders were put before firing squads.[349] In his second article, he set out a more refined theological justification for Canada's entry into World War Two. He began with the Biblical quotation from the Book of Matthew (10:34).[350] He wrote:

> I am come not to bring peace on earth, but a sword. I am come to set a man at variance against his father - and a man's foes shall be they [sic.] of his own household. (Matthew 10:34)[351]

Douglas used this passage to underscore the moral necessity for Christians to support armed conflict. Furthermore, he went on to write:

> We [Christians socialists and other members of the C.C.F.] sometimes make the mistake of assuming that conflict is always a sign of human depravity and social retrogression. There have been times when social conflict has been indicative of positive good at war with the established evils of the day ... *The forces of justice will always come into conflict with those of oppression.*[352] [*Italics are mine*]

T.C. Douglas was not willing to argue that Christians should support all wars or social conflicts. Rather, he was arguing that the faithful had an obligation to enter some conflicts because it was their duty to battle injustice. Douglas' statement in italics, which

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348 McLeod, 102-3, 110-111.
349 T.C. Douglas, (14 October 1939).
350 Ibid., (6 December 1939).
351 This Biblical citation is probably from Douglas' memory.
352 T.C. Douglas, (6 December, 1939).

underscores the perennial nature of the struggle of forces of light and darkness in the human society, marks a parallel with Reinhold Niebuhr's statement in his most famous work, Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932) which says that "social conflict" is "an inevitability in human history, probably to the very end."[353] However, because Douglas did not expand upon this remark or repeat it, I cannot argue that Douglas was beginning to ally himself with a position that paralleled Christian Realism's pessimistic view that human society would be forever torn with conflict, strife, irony and tragedy. Rather, all the evidence indicates is that Douglas' view of war and conflict had some marked parallels with Niebuhr's position.

So can one conclude that T.C. Douglas became a Christian Realist? How does his moral logic and assessment of social reality examined in this chapter accord with his interpretation of social gospel theology? The evidence shows that when Douglas thought about international conflict and war, he departed from the moral logic of Rauschenbusch's social gospel theology and adopted a position that paralleled the pragmatic logic of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realism. This does not make Douglas a Christian Realist. However, it does show that his thought cannot be easily categorized as being a simple manifestation of social gospel theology. In the following concluding chapter, I will examine what this means in Douglas' interpretation of social gospel theology.

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[353] Reinhold Niebuhr, 1932, xx.

Chapter 3

Pragmatic Tendencies in T.C. Douglas' Theology

The theological concepts which T.C. Douglas articulated between 1930 and 1950 betrayed a pragmatic intellectual influence. Theology, as a field of scholarly inquiry, is the use of epistemological methods to build intellectually credible concepts of the relationships between the Divine, human beings and their experience of history.[354] In his theological reflections, Douglas was concerned with epistemological issues. But he did not search for absolute or timeless intellectual moorings that are invulnerable to change. Instead many of his arguments took on an undeveloped, nevertheless discernible, pragmatic formation. In this chapter, I will delineate Douglas' basic theological concepts and show that they were closely tied to the pragmatic tradition.

So how should one go about structuring a chapter on T.C. Douglas' religious perspective? The best answer lies in Douglas' own account of his concept of religion. Douglas made the following characterizations about the basic parameters of his thought in the field. He said,

> .... religion in essence was entering into a new *relationship* with *God* and into a new *relationship* with the *universe*. And into a new relationship with your *fellow man*. And that if Christianity meant anything at all, it meant *building the brotherhood of man*. If you really believed in the *fatherhood* of *God*, if you believed what *Jesus* said, that we live in a

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[354] Although this definition is a gross simplification, I believe that it reflects a wide swath of contemporary theological scholarship. Certainly this definition can be supported by Karl Rahner's and Herbert Vorgimler's definition contained in their Theological Dictionary trans. Richard Strachan, David Smith, Robert Nowell, and Sarah O'Brien Twohing (New York : The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), 397-8. This definition is also reasonably consonant with Alfred T. Hennelly's description of Latin American, Feminist, Black, Hispanic, African, Asian and Ecological interpretation of Liberation Theology. Liberation Theologies : The Global Pursuit of Justice (Connecticut : Twenty-Third Publications, 1995). However, the centrality of epistemological question in theological reflection is clearly underscored in Nancey Murphy, Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning (London : Cornell University Press, 1990), where she examines the development of different epistemological positions within theological discourse.

that meant a helpful relationship between *man* and *man*, building a *society* and building institutions that would *uplift mankind*, and particularly those who were *least fortunate*, and this was pretty well the sort of message I was trying to get across. [Italics are mine.][355]

Evidently, Douglas maintained that there were a number of basic elements of "religion" or theology. These include the idea of a Divinity or God, His creation or the universe, human beings and a concept of what people's relationship should be with God and each other and Jesus. Although this definition of religion does not indicate that Douglas was influenced by pragmatism, his more detailed explanation of its elements supports my argument. I will divide this chapter into sections that examine these essential elements of his theology.

Interpreting Sacred Text

Douglas' approach to interpreting Biblical text was derived from the teachings of Brandon College's Dr. H.L. MacNeill.[356] This academic challenged the fundamentalist intellectual inclinations among his students.[357] He was not willing to give credence to their position that sacred text was funneled from the Divinity, through humanity onto the pages of the Bible. He contended that the work was far more complex than that. Through MacNeill's teachings, Douglas learned to think of the Bible as ...

> ... a library made up of poems like the Psalms, drama like the Book of Job and the Book of Esther, historical books, letters such as the Epistles of St. Paul, and prophecies and actual biographical accounts like the Gospels.[358]

Furthermore, each of these texts was thought to betray its author's respective intent. He discussed how his mentor, MacNeill, expressed this concept. Douglas said,

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[355] Shackleton, 32.
[356] Thomas, 1982, 50.
[357] Ibid., 51.
[358] Ibid.

> He thought that each of these [Biblical texts] should be interpreted in the light of the purpose for which they were written. He took the view that divine inspiration meant that God was speaking to man, but that the same literal application shouldn't be applied both to a verse of the Psalms and a statement from the Acts.[359]

Hence, Biblical texts must be interpreted selectively in light of the purpose that the text plainly betrays.[360] A historical account, poetic verse, or legal strictures, in sacred text, should be understood for what they are. Although the ancients who composed them, might have lived under remarkably different cultural conditions than ours, Douglas appears to have assumed that among all human beings there are enough common defining experiences with the Divinity, that make religious discussion intelligible across linguistic, cultural and historical barriers.[361]

The essential exegetical element of social gospel theology is the assumption that human beings can live their lives in the same ethical way as Christ was portrayed in the New Testament.[362] Intellectually, there are two means of supporting this conclusion. Classic interpretations of social gospel theology argued that human beings, through God's grace, moral reflection, education and reason, can overcome any inclination to perpetrate evil and live sinless lives.[363] Another route to this interpretation, associated with the social gospel movement in 1930s in Canada, was to argue that the Kingdom of God is not

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359 Ibid.

360 In light of the various theories of textual criticism, in currency in English literature, which scoff at the idea that text can have a "plain meaning", this might appear to be an audacious thing to say. See Patricia Waugh, ed., Postmodernism : A Reader (London; Edward Arnold, 1992). For an example of a more contemporary approach to Biblical interpretation see David Tracy, The Analogical Imagination : Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism (New York : Crossroad, 1981), 102.

361 T.C. Douglas, "Faith," in The Fireside Chats, Saskatchewan Archives, Tapes, C.K.C.K Radio, Regina, (3 March 1950); T.C. Douglas, "Prayer," in The Fireside Chats, Saskatchewan Archives, Tapes, C.K.C.K Radio, Regina, (24 February 1950).

362 For an exquisitely clear statement of this principle see Lovin, 1.

363 Allen, 5-7 passim.

a sinless social order but a community based on fraternal love.[364] Hence, in terms of this branch of Christian thought, Jesus is not the divine made flesh. Rather he is a moral teacher, a social planner and political rebel. He is portrayed as an individual of profound religious intuition, who grasped the nature of God, the universe, the social order and human nature, and understood the possibilities within it.[365] Douglas showed that he was familiar with this interpretation of the New Testament when he spoke about MacNeill's lectures. Douglas said,

> Dr. MacNeill believed that Jesus was essentially a child of his time. He thought in the framework of this time, and therefore thought of the Kingdom of God as Jewish prophets have thought of it for centuries. But he projected this and gave it a new meaning; rather than an earthly kingdom based on power and might and on the sword, it was to be a Kingdom of the spirit in men's hearts, made up of righteousness and justice.[366]

Douglas was much more comfortable with this view. It was not so much a social gospel perspective but a pragmatic approach to what could be expected in life.

As a resolute theological liberal, Douglas disdained the utterly certain theological world of fundamentalists and their literal or "absolutist" readings of Biblical text.[367] Instead, he readily identified himself with the logic of the liberal exegetical tradition of looking beyond the immediate meaning of Biblical text for more nuanced literary and theological literary formations.[368] It was Douglas' exposure to this intellectual position that allowed him to say that the Bible was "like a bull fiddle, you can play almost any tune

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364 For a brief but cogent essay on this "accommodated" Christianity see Hutchinson, (1973), 292-4.

365 For a conservative but classic description of these ideas and their summation in twentieth century scholarship see A.M. Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament : 1900-1950, (Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 1951), 140.

366 Thomas, 1982, 51.

367 McLeod, 17.

368 For one of the best overviews in print of Protestant liberal theology see Hordern, 73-110.

you want on it."[369] Although this does not prove that his approach to Biblical interpretation conformed to the norms of pragmatism, it does indicate that he rejected an "absolutist" or fundamentalist position.

In terms of his own vocabulary, T.C. Douglas was an anti "absolutist"[370] interpreter of Biblical text. What he meant by this is that he did not think that the "plain meaning" of scripture of the Christian tradition supplied a categorical moral imperative for the faithful. Although he thought the meaning and intent of Biblical text was intelligible across cultural, chronological and linguistic barriers, he did not think these principles could be applied consistently. Thus, Christians always face the problem of interpreting the principles of the New Testament so that they are relevant to their circumstances. Christians, who are "absolutist" interpreters of Biblical text, do not have this problem. They argue that Christians must categorically adhere to the moral principles which they find in the "plain meaning" of the New Testament. Douglas' criticism of this position was that social reality rarely offers opportunities to act in strict accordance with abstract ethical dictums that limit many courses human action. He reflected upon this matter after Canada entered into World War Two, and went to war against Nazi Germany.[371] He described the paradox of the ethics of Biblical text in the following terms,

> There is a distinction in Jesus' teaching between individual ethics: turning one's cheek, giving one's coat, going the extra mile - and social ethics ... When someone attacks a small child whom I have pledged to defend with my life, then the lion becomes me best. I can give my coat, but I have no power to give away an old man's coat at the command of a well-clad bully. I can give up some of my rights, but when a group of lawless men endeavor to destroy the fabric of law and order by which human society is possible, then I have a responsibility to discharge.[372]

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[369] Shackleton, 17.
[370] For Douglas' most important statement on absolutism see Thomas, 1982, 103.
[371] Ibid.
[372] T.C. Douglas, (6 December 1939).

Thus, like Niebuhr,[373] Douglas concluded that Christians articulated a position that left them with an imperative to read sacred text and interpret its ethical dictums for humanity pragmatically and with a sense of irony. They cannot literally interpret the ethics, which they find in the New Testament. They must understand their relationship to their context and reinterpret text so that it is appropriate.[374] Such as the case of the bully or the lawless, Christians might be required to respond with violence. Although this may be morally ambiguous, it is a path they must consider. This argument paralleled the moral logic of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realist approach to Biblical interpretation.[375] In summary, T.C. Douglas' approach to Biblical text can be described, in his own terms, as fundamentally non" absolutist" or pragmatic.

God, Faith and Christianity: Pragmatic Rationales

In T.C. Douglas' theology, God is the Creator of the universe and the Father of humanity. True to Christian orthodoxy, Douglas' view of God was somewhat paradoxical. On one hand, God is the omnipotent force that created the universe,[376] shapes human history and transcends humanity's existential condition; on the other hand, God is a loving

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[373] The foundation for this perspective is in Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man., (1964), 1-34. Niebuhr's most famous expression of the idea of irony can be found his, Faith and History, 1949.

[374] In 1976, while reflecting on the relationship between principle and practice within the N.D.P., Douglas articulated a similar position in regard to politics. He commented that principles have to be adopted, "... depending on the situation in which we find ourselves, depending on the stage of social evolution of the country in which we happen to be. Depending upon the state of the economy at any particular year or any particular decade," in T.C. Douglas "Testimonial Dinner" (November 1976), cited in L.D. Lovick, 31.

[375] Lovin, 82. For a more in-depth study of the philosophical tensions between pragmatism and Christianity see Todd D. Whitmore, "Christian Ethics and Pragmatic Realism : Philosophical Elements of a Response Ethic" (Unpublished Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 1990).

[376] For a discussion of God's subtle but powerful presence in the universe see T.C. Douglas, "Prayer," in The Fireside Chats, Saskatchewan Archives, Tapes, C.K.C.K Radio, Regina, (24 February 1950).

and benevolent Father, who demands that humanity live in accordance with the principle of fraternal love.[377] Despite Douglas' certainty in making these assertions, he discussed God in the ambiguous terms that are characteristic of pragmatism.

Douglas suggested that human beings should believe in God because it was useful. Although this may seem crass, it was also one of Niebuhr's central arguments for the existence of God, [378] in that the idea of God brings intellectual order and coherence to experience. Douglas, by contrast, argued that belief in God brought emotional peace to existence. He expressed this in the verse that he read at the beginning of the Fireside Chats episode entitled "Faith".

> Said the Robin to Sparrow
> "I should really like to know?"
> "Why these human beings rush about and hurry so?"
> Said the Sparrow to Robin
> "Friend, I think that it must be"
> "That they have no heavenly Father such as care for you and me."[379]

Accordingly, "[i]n these simple lines we have the answer to the fear and uncertainty that is so characteristic of our generation. It's a strange thing, that despite all the progress we have made ... worry and a sense of insecurity still pervade our lives. ... For all our scientific inventions and for all our modern knowledge, this is not an age of faith."[380] Douglas argued that "... confidence comes to men" when they know that the universe was shaped by the Creator. When they have faith they can say "This is my father's world."[381] Parallel to common strictures of pragmatic arguments about God's existence, Douglas argued that the faithful should believe in God because of the precipitant psychological

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377 Shackleton, 32; McLeod, 9.

378 Lovin, 56-60; this type of argument has not lost currency in theological circles. See Jeffrey Stout, Ethics After Babel. (Boston : Beacon Press, 1988), 183.

379 T.C. Douglas, "Faith," (3 March 1950).

380 Ibid.

381 Ibid.

condition which this choice produces. But this was the not the only reason. He believed that the idea of God could be tested against the realities of the experience of the human condition.

Humans have always claimed to sense God's presence. Douglas argued, during the Fireside Chats, in 1950, that through all of history, across the expanse of the many creeds, religions and traditions that define human faith, people have agreed upon one proposition: That somewhere "at the [spiritual] centre of the universe" there is a "power", which, as Tennyson suggested, is connected to humanity by a metaphorical "golden chain".[382] In essence, Douglas was arguing that the concept of God was believable because the idea of a higher "power" has had credibility across many cultures over long periods of time. In essence, Douglas was suggesting, parallel to the pragmatic tradition's standard of truth, which William James eloquently underscored,[383] that the idea of God is a "living option".[384] In this sense, Douglas is proposing that the idea of God, as an argument, is worth accepting because it is a key element in a coherent view of human beliefs and actions.[385] Yet, Douglas, apparently comprehending the implicit irony of interpreting religious experience, was not willing to argue that Christianity had a monopoly on an intellectually coherent interpretation of the world.

As a Christian who was deeply interested in other manifestations of religion, Douglas saw the many varieties of religious tradition, inside and outside of Christianity, as a manifestation of the paradoxical nature of God. On one hand,

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[382] T.C. Douglas, "Prayer", (24 February 1950).

[383] William James "The Will to Believe", in The Writings of William James, 718; Also see Bernard Williams, "The Truth in Relativism," in Moral Luck (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1981), 138-40.

[384] This is what the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor calls "an articulation of what is crucial to the world in one's best account," Sources of the Self : The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 76. This type of argument is also what the theologian David Tracy calls a "relatively adequate" concept. Plurality and Ambiguity (San Francisco : Harper and Row, 1987), 22-23.

[385] Lovin, 67-9.

all human beings can know, at a subtle and intuitive level, that He is there; on the other hand, God's presence in our lives, His meaning, and our obligation to Him are never clearly defined issues.[386] These are matters for profound debate and even discord. He tended to see Christianity as only one aspect of the great religious debate of humanity. Although there was disagreement about its details, he thought that there was common ground among the "values that emanate from the teachings of Jesus or from the other great religious leaders."[387] This is why Douglas could maintain that great religious thinkers had fundamental insights into the nature of the human condition. In his mind, religion was "[a] value system which recognizes that while man must have bread to live, the idea that man does not live by bread alone is not new." [388] He went on to say,

> It goes all the way back to the Hebrew prophets and is found in the great religions of the world. But in very period of social upheaval mankind must be reminded that materialism is not enough and that the things of the mind and the spirit must have a high priority in our scheme of things.[389]

Thus, Christianity, like the other great world religions, can be considered intellectually valuable because it is time-tested and its basic concepts have currency

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[386] T.C. Douglas,"Prayer" (24 February 1950). The source of this idea is probably the discussions on comparative religion held at Brandon College. The 1914-15 catalogue described a History of Religions course that is "a comparison of the essential truths of Christianity with the ruling conceptions of the other great world religions and of the Christian Scriptures with the Sacred Books of other religions," in Brandon College Calendar, Brandon University Archives, (1914-15), 51. Furthermore, Ian and Hector McLeod, despite their mistaken claim that religious relativism was a force that brought down the social gospel movement, note correctly that the movement was open to the study of comparative religions. Douglas was aware of this and had some interest in inter-faith dialogue. McLeod, 18.

[387] T.C. Douglas interviewed by Ian McLeod, (29 Jan.1985), Saskatchewan Archives. cited in McLeod, 18.

[388] T.C. Douglas "Social Democracy", (1960). cited in Lovick, (1979), 131-2.

[389] Ibid.

across many cultures.[390] Accordingly, the different religious manifestations of these ideas can be found because God never speaks to humanity in plain, blunt and clear terms. Thus, the following position is the only legitimate position that faithful can take. "We can never all agree on what religion means - we can only know what it means for us ... Judge not, that ye be judged. [sic.]"[391] This conscious doubt parallels the fundamental epistemological concern that pervades Reinhold Niebuhr's pragmatic Christian Realist writings.[392] Furthermore, Douglas' admission that there can be a plurality of truths is characteristic of the norms of pragmatic theology.[393]

If Christianity can be considered intellectually valid because it has insights into the human condition, then its intellectual formations must have some value in political practice. T.C. Douglas found this to be true. When T.C. Douglas reflected on the insights that Christianity gave him in political life, he turned to 1 Corinthians 13. He describes the insights of this text in an essay, which he wrote on the 1930s, where he recalled how one citizen of Saskatchewan recounted C.C.F.'s effect on the history of Saskatchewan. This person said,

> "Now a lot of us have been saying that we should thank Mr. Douglas because when he came in there was no blacktop road and now we have blacktop roads to Regina, to Estevan, to Weyburn. We had no telephones; now we have telephones. We had no high school here; now we've got a high school and buses to bring the children to high school. Now we've got Medicare and hospital insurance. We've got car insurance. But those are not things that are important to me. What I want to say to Mr. Douglas is,

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[390] This is an idea that continues to be in currency in academic circles. See Ronald M. Green, Religion and Moral Reason : A New Method for Comparative Study (New York : Oxford University Press, 1988), 3; See also his earlier Religious Reason : The Rational and Moral Basis of Religious Belief (New York : Oxford University Press, 1978).

[391] T.C. Douglas, "Faith," in The Fireside Chats, Saskatchewan Archives, Tapes, C.K.C.K Radio, Regina, (3 March 1950) ; also see McLeod, 183.

[392] Lovin, 81.

[393] Lovin, 52-4. For a discussion of the plurality of ethical perspective and the pragmatic approach to contending with it, see Jeffrey Stout, Ethics After Babel, (1988).

us and said, 'It's possible, it can be better." And he said, "For me, he kept a flame in my heart, a hope that some day it would be better."[394]

Douglas realized that this man had a profound insight into human nature. He wrote,

> I realized then, I pass it on to you, how important it is that you keep hope alive in the people's hearts, no matter how difficult things are, whether in war or peace. As Paul said in his Epistle to the Corinthians, the 13th Chapter: "Now abideth faith, hope, and love. And greatest of these is love." But without hope there can be neither faith nor love.[395]

Douglas recognized that Paul was speaking about human psychology. Specifically, he was arguing that it is possible for human beings to have faith and love one another when there is hope in people's lives. Conversely Douglas found that "[w]here people have no dreams and no hopes and no aspirations, life becomes a dull and meaningless wilderness."[396] Accordingly, at its extremes, this is a world without room for love or faith. This was the theological foundation of Douglas' insights into the possibilities of social good and evil. Unlike Reinhold Neibuhr,[397] Douglas did not devote his career to refining the insights of Christianity into a relevant and intellectually coherent body of thought. But Douglas' recognition that the Christian tradition had something say about the human situation was not simply a theoretical statement. This evidence supports the proposition that he saw these ideas at work in his political activities. In the next section, I will argue that pragmatic scholarship had a profound impact of Douglas' general understanding of human history.

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[394] T.C. Douglas, "The Highlights of the Dirty Thirties," in D. Francis, & H. Ganzevoort, (1973), 171.

[395] Ibid.

[396] Ibid.

[397] White, 226-7.

T.C. Douglas and Charles Beard: Irony and History

T.C. Douglas used the historical principles of the great American Pragmatic historian Charles Beard to describe his own understanding of human history. Beard, a prolific scholar, who managed to write books that landed him at the centre of public and academic controversy, used pragmatism as a philosophical framework to understand the past and his purpose in writings about it in the present.[398] At least one of Douglas' instructors, probably Arthur E. Holt, presumably through a mutual involvement in Hull House,[399] knew Beard personally.[400] As well, this individual recounted Beard's principles of history to Douglas. The fact that Douglas could recount them years later, at least on two different occasions, suggest that they made an impression upon him.

As a pragmatic historian, Charles Beard maintained that historical reflection must be fundamentally ironic. It was an effort to create a plausible interpretation of the past, using culturally relevant constructs, while knowing that the past cannot be understood with certainty.[401] The historian makes assumptions about history that he thinks will allow people in the present to act in an effective manner which precipitates success.[402] Thus, it is not surprising that Beard's principles of history address concerns of social reformers wishing to sustain hope in the face of adversity. According to Douglas' account, he heard

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[398] Marcell, 261.

[399] Ibid., 258-321. Beard was involved in Hull House and Holt was deeply involved in surveys of the vagrant settlements beside the Chicago railroad tracks. It seems likely that these individuals would have met at least once in their social activism or at least they shared the same "air" of the University of Chicago.

[400] Lovick, 116; for a discussion of Beard's impact see Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 154. Other intellectuals in these groups included John R. Commons, E.R.A. Seligman, Thorstein Veblen and the social gospeller Richard T. Ely, in economics, Arthur F. Bentley and J. Allen Smith in political science, E.A. Ross and Lester Ward in sociology, John Dewey philosophy and Roscoe Pound in law. See Hofstader, 154. For an account of the influence of these ideas among Canadian intellectuals in the League for Social Reconstruction see Horn, 74, 100, 123, 150.

[401] Marcell, 302-3.

[402] Ibid.

these principles from a University of Chicago faculty member who witnessed Beard's spontaneous creation of them.[403] Douglas cited them, with considerable aplomb, on November 28, 1940, in Parliament, as Canada entered World War Two, and on May 30, 1969, as he publicly reflected upon the United State's involvement in the Vietnam War and the civil unrest that plagued its cities.

The first two sayings, that I will examine, describe the ironic nature of human hope. Douglas recounted Beard's saying that "[s]ometimes, if it is dark enough, you can see the stars."[404] Then he argued that this meant that even in the shadow of the greatest evils, some people will understand the concept of human worth and "dignity".[405] This expresses an implicit doubt in the persistence of historical manifestations of human evil. In the mid-1950s, on the tenth anniversary of J.S. Woodsworth's death, Douglas articulated the following statement. He said,

> If your cause is just and right, sooner or later you will win. It must triumph because it is part of the warp and woof of the universe. ... No matter how many setbacks there may be along the road, you can be sure that some day the right and the just will prevail. It will prevail simply because it is right and just.[406]

This passage indicates that his sense of doubt about evil and its influences over the human situation was strong, but he did not think that it was utterly pervasive. Thus he could assume that there are great possibilities for human beings to defeat its influence. There can be no doubt that Douglas' irony, like Beard's and Dewey's, was optimistic. Unlike Niebuhr,[407] Douglas did not have a pessimistic concept of human nature which would

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[403] T.C. Douglas, "The Challenge of a World in Revolt", (30 May 1968). Lovick, 216.

[404] T.C. Douglas, Debates in the House of Commons, Canada, (26 November 1940), 504.

[405] Ibid.

[406] Quote in Leo Zakuta, A Protest Movement Becalmed : A Study of the C.C.F. (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1964), 12.

[407] For a discussion of the assumptions behind Niebuhr's tragic view of human

have supported a tragic perspective of human history. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Douglas' understanding, of efforts to perpetrate good, lacked irony. He found an expression of this doubt implicit in Beard's statement that "[t]he mills of the gods grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small."[408] He believed that this statement illustrated the reality that human beings have always faced "opposition and betrayal" in their struggle to build a more "righteous" and just social order. Yet this effort has had continual incremental success.[409] This optimism, tempered by doubt, is reflected in his assessment of how the Kingdom of God on earth would be built. In 1985, he expressed some of these reservations in the following statement. He said,

> The Kingdom of God is a society where moral values predominate, ... You're never going to step out of the front door into the Kingdom of God. What you're going to do is slowly and painfully change society until it has more of the values that emanate from the teachings of Jesus or from other great religious leaders.[410]

Douglas' statement, expressing the pragmatic view that Christianity could be just one version of a plurality religious truths,[411] underscored the sense of moral struggle that is in Beard's view of history. Yet ultimately Douglas' view of history was triumphant. This is how he interpreted Beard's saying that "The bee fertilizes the flower that it robs."[412] Accordingly, the great efforts to perpetrate evil are often inadvertently the taproot of good. Although humanity's conquerors victimize people, they often inadvertently foster forces that better civilization.[413]

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history see the discussion on sin in Lovin, 139-57.

[408] T.C. Douglas, (26 November 1940), 504. & (30 May 1968), 216.

[409] Ibid. Here he emphasized that social reform was a long-term project that is rife with obstacles.

[410] T.C. Douglas interviewed by Ian McLeod, (29 Jan.1983), cited in McLeod, 18.

[411] Lovin, 54.

[412] Douglas, (26 Nov. 1940), 504.

[413] T.C. Douglas (30 May 1968), 216.

Within the intellectual strictures of Christian Realism, the denial of doubt is portrayed as a prelude to tragedy.[414] Douglas found a similar concept in his recollection of Beard's proposition that "[w]hom the gods would destroy they first make mad."[415] Douglas recounted "I think of all the megalomaniacs from Alexander to Hitler who sought to conquer the world," ironically, "only to be conquered by their own folly."[416] Overwhelming confidence in one's ability to conquer the world, while ignoring any doubt about the obstacles in one's path, is a denial of irony. Douglas' analysis might leave one with the mistaken impression that he only thought that it applied to people who aspired to conquer the world. In 1950, during the Fireside Chats, Douglas used Robert Burns' poem "To a Mouse" to explore people's tendency to deny the irony of their condition. Douglas recited,

> But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
> In proving foresight may be vain;
> The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
> Gan aft anley,
> An' lea'e nought but grief an' pain
> For promise'd joy!
>
> Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
> The present only toucheth thee:
> But och! I backward cast my e'e
> On prospects drear!
> An' forward, tho' I canna see.
> I guess an' fear![417]

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[414] Niebuhr, 1964, vol. I, 228; For more indepth discussion of the effects of pride in the human community see Lovin, chap. 4 "Politics". As well Niebuhr's Moral Man and Immoral Society, (1933) remains his most famous comment on the effects of pride in the human condition.

[415] T.C. Douglas (26 November 1940), 504.

[416] T.C. Douglas (30 May 1968), 216.

[417] T.C. Douglas,"The Poet of the Common Man," in The Fireside Chats, Saskatchewan Archives, Tapes, C.K.C.K Radio, Regina, (22 January 1950).

The preceding verse describes a field mouse's reaction to its nest being destroyed by a plowman. Burns compared the existential anxiety of the mouse to humanity's *angst* in the face of the caprice of the universe. Christian Realism portrays this as the contingency that defines irony in the human condition.[418] Douglas, through Burns' poetry, understood this concept. Thus it is plausible to suggest that he also understood the concept in Beard's final saying. In summary, T.C. Douglas, parallel to the norms of Niebuhr's pragmatic Christian Realism, understood the human situation in history to be ironic.

The Contradiction Between Social Gospel Theology and Pragmatism

So what does Douglas' pragmatism mean for his interpretation of social gospel theology? Fundamentally, at a philosophical level, it meant that he was not willing to accept many of the moral certainties of social gospel theology and preferred a pragmatic portrayal of the human condition. But at the same time he was not willing to give up his association with social gospel theology.[419]

It is almost a cliché to say that in the early 1930s, Douglas began to seriously reflect on social gospel theology. He was studying this theology in its new Christian Socialist manifestation that was in currency among some theologians in the Britain and Canada. True to this tradition Douglas concluded that "[i]f you had the application of Christian principles, [in society] you'd almost have to eliminate the whole form of Capitalist society and the Capitalist philosophy of life."[420] Yet, despite this resolute language, Douglas' interpretation of this new rendition of social gospel theology, Christian Socialism, was marked by conscious doubt.

As a pragmatist, Douglas was clearly at odds with some elements of Christian socialism. Gregory Vlastos, while reviewing Niebuhr's pragmatic Christian Realist

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418 The best essay that highlights this implicit assumption in Niebuhr's thought is Schlesinger, (1956), 195-6.

419 For a statement of Douglas commitment to social gospel theology see Thomas, 1982, 65; Shackleton, 17.

420 Thomas, 1982, 100.

theology, concluded that the implicit element of doubt in this theology, which portrayed the world as morally ambiguous, would leave Christians without a clear ethic to battle evil in society. Vlastos, issuing a veiled quip against Niebuhr's pragmatic moral logic, that "less realistic" Christians or the exponents of Christian socialism who rejected Christian Realism, "will refuse to soil their hands with inferior ideals."[421] Although this may have been a credible theological stance among leading Christian socialists intellectuals, it had little relevance to Douglas. Douglas had concluded that Christians must be willing and ready to make morally ambiguous choices.[422] The discipline of liberal theology's Kantian moral logic and its dissonance with pragmatic ethical reasoning did not concern Douglas. Rather, true to the pragmatic tradition, his concern was with action. In his mind, this was the realm of truth.

T.C. Douglas did not address the contradictory intellectual currents in his pragmatic and social gospel orientations. True to the pragmatic tradition, he did not burden himself with types of inquiry that might stifle efforts to better society by replacing action with endless, fruitless and demoralizing reflections.[423] Douglas devoted considerable time and energy to refuting the Christian Socialist intellectual's morally "absolutist" position that war was wrong. Yet he did not produce a systematic and logically coherent theological position. One could argue that Douglas was probably too busy in political life to do this. There is considerable merit to this explanation. But there are also other reasons. Douglas, true to the pragmatic tradition, was suspicious of some forms of intellectual reflection because they "tend to weaken the drive of good social and economic reform movements".[424] Instead, he was interested in articulating ideas, and taking courses of action that promoted these movements. Fundamentally, he did not view

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[421] Vlastos, (1 Oct. 1941), 1202-1204; "The Impossible Possibility," in Christendom I, 2 (Winter, 1936) : 393.
[422] See chap. 4.
[423] For an excellent expression of this see West, 5.
[424] Thomas, 1982, 361.

Christian duty as hinging upon intellectual reflection. He believed that Christians were obliged to act. At a C.C.F. Provincial Convention in Saskatchewan, July 20, 1960, he said,

> There is an incident in the history of the children of Israel which always intrigues me. You will recall that when Moses led them out of captivity in Egypt they came to the Red Sea. It was at this critical moment that God said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward," Surely this is sound advice. When enemies pursue us and difficulties confront us the Divine command is still the same - "Go forward".[425]

Certainly, the imperative to "Go forward" is not necessarily one to construct sophisticated theological commentary. Although he was willing to admit that reflection may be a part of the effort, Douglas, true to the Chicago expression of the pragmatic tradition, saw action as the important realm of life. Christians must heed this. In this realm, the theological contradictions between his pragmatic position and Christian Socialism became secondary. Through this non-intellectual route, Douglas solved this theological problem.

In conclusion, there is a substantial amount of evidence to support the proposition that T.C. Douglas' theological reflections were influenced by pragmatism. Because his theological thought was composed of elements of social gospel theology and pragmatic influences, which spawned features that could be interpreted as contradictory, I cannot argue, categorically, that Douglas had fully developed an intellectually sophisticated and broad interpretation of the American pragmatic philosophical tradition. Nor can I maintain that Douglas was a pragmatist in the tradition of Christian Realism. Yet, there is a body of evidence that supports the proposition that his theological reflections were shaped by social gospel theology and pragmatic considerations. This is the most plausible way of characterizing T.C. Douglas' theology.

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[425] T.C. Douglas "Social Democracy: 1960" in Lovick,131-2.

Conclusion

What can be said about T.C. Douglas' theology? In chapter four, I introduced my proposition that T.C. Douglas was a pragmatist with the following quotation where he said, "I'm afraid I'm not an intellectual; I'm a pragmatist."[426] At the end of this study, I can say that there is considerable merit in Douglas self-assessment. I have shown that his theology does not conform to the strictures of social gospel theology nor to those of Christian Realism. Intellectually, he is a child of the traditions of Christian socialism, Walter Rauschenbusch, liberal theology, John Dewey, the University of Chicago and Reinhold Niebuhr. Although Douglas has relinquished the certain world of liberal theology and its underpinning Kantian moral categories, he did not give up the imagery and rhetoric of social gospel theology. Intellectually, Douglas walked in the morally uncertain world of pragmatic ethical reflection. Yet no one can disassociate him from social gospel theology.

As demonstrated in chapter one, social gospel theology and Christian realism are efforts to reinterpret Christianity so that it was relevant in the modern world. Social gospel theology persisted between 1890 and 1930 in Canada, because Christians, clergy and intellectuals could believe that the faithful could successfully battle sin in the social order. Furthermore, understandings of the nature of good and evil, in currency within intellectual and popular culture, portrayed these categories as clearly defined and easily identifiable within the human situation. Christian Realism can be understood as an effort to create an interpretation of Christianity that could contend with the atmosphere of uncertainty that pervaded the culture of the industrialized world in the late 1930s. Among Protestants in the United States, in the early 1940s, and later in Canada, in the mid-1940s, the shift from social gospel theology to Christian realism was prompted by the failure of social gospel theology to offer a credible interpretation of a Christian's role in the world.

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[426] Thomas, 1982, 361.

T.C. Douglas' coupling of social gospel theology and pragmatic moral logic was an effort to make the theology credible and relevant in the political and social circumstances that legitimized Christian Realism. At one level, his reinterpretation of social gospel theology was a tacit recognition of its inadequacy in the politics of the world after the late 1930s. On another level, Douglas resolutely argued that the moral imperative of social gospel theology to battle evil in society remains deeply relevant to the human situation. Although Douglas did not develop a theological position as systematic, nuanced or as pessimistic as Niebuhr's, both men were attempting to come to terms with a Christian's relationship with social evil as a relatively intransigent element in the human experience. On this level, Douglas, as a Canadian social gospeller during the 1930s, was one of the first Canadians in this tradition to begin reflecting upon this problem.

T.C. Douglas' theological reflections did not spawn a great scholarly debate among Christian socialists in Canada. The body of his thoughts does not constitute a great academic achievement. The significance of his religious thought is bound to his political success. Although intellectuals can disdain his lack of rigor, systematic writing and thought, they cannot deny his formidable political achievement. The history of the Canadian social gospel movement is not characterized by a chain of obvious successes. Its significance can be found in the subtle coupling of the moral prestige of the Christian Church with social reform, which legitimized efforts to ameliorate suffering in Canadian society.[427] Yet no figures in the history of the Canadian social gospel movement paralleled Douglas' success in capturing the imaginations of an electorate, forming a government and braving state-directed efforts to better society. Although other Canadian social gospellers, such as John King Gordon, Gregory Vlastos and even J.S. Woodsworth devised much more erudite, systematic, nuanced and intellectually respectable positions,

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[427] Ramsey Cook, The Regenerators : Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada (Toronto : University Toronto Press, 1985), 228-32.

none of them had the stellar political success of Douglas. In light of this, his theological reflections cannot be easily dismissed. Thus, in terms of the strictures of pragmatism, where the truth of an idea is affirmed by its viability and success, Douglas' theological reflections must be understood to have considerable veracity. In this sense, his union of pragmatism and social gospel theology must be seriously considered in any informed debate about the history of social gospel theology in Canada

T.C. Douglas' theology cannot be precisely associated with Walter Rauschenbusch's version of social gospel theology because Douglas was deeply influenced by pragmatism. This is why some of Douglas' ethical conclusions parallel the pragmatic logic of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Realism. Thus, T.C. Douglas cannot be uncoupled from social gospel theology or pragmatism. It is my contention that it is best to describe his theological position as an uneasy intellectual marriage of pragmatism and social gospel theology. He is a pragmatic social gospeller.

The assertion that T.C. Douglas was a pragmatic social gospeller has a number of interesting implications. Although Douglas was not a systematic theological thinker, in his own right he was creative, innovative and insightful. He devised a position unique within the theological landscape of Canadian religious thought. Furthermore, his theological position set him apart from the dominant interpretation of social gospel theology in currency within the C.C.F.. His ideas departed enough from the Christian Socialism of the party that he could accept a pragmatic moral logic paralleling that of Christian Realism. Certainly, in light of this body of evidence, scholars would be wholly remiss to describe Douglas as an ex-prairie preacher who simply espoused social gospel theology. If this thesis has accomplished anything, it has brought forward enough evidence to indicate that future researchers should be reticent to assume that Douglas' theological reflections were only shallow intellectual shadows of social gospel theology.

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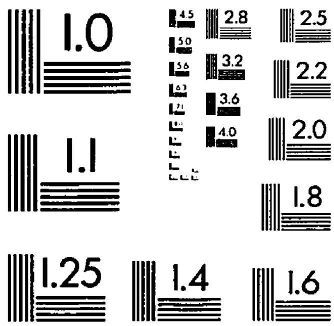

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