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The Broad and the Narrow:
The Development of Religious Community
in *The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters*

by

Jeff Dykstra 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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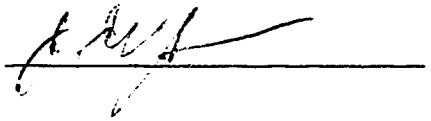

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Broad and the Narrow: The Religious Perspectives of Thomas McCulloch's The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters" by Jeffrey R. Dykstra in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the religious perspectives displayed in Thomas McCulloch's The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters. Focusing on McCulloch's changing religious perspectives enables us to see that as well as satirizing values and behaviour that did not conform to his own middle-class view of the world, McCulloch also constructed a subversively ironic critique of the use of religion for purely social purposes. The first part of the book displays the two religious perspectives which will be implicitly critiqued in the second and last part of the book: the religion of conventional prudence (directed toward earthly needs), and the narrowly sectarian religion of evangelicalism (directed toward spiritual retreat). The second part of the book demonstrates the narrowness of both perspectives, by satirizing the narrator's own spiritual confusion and establishing, artistically, the religious community that the first part's polemical rhetoric undermined.

Acknowledgements:

This thesis could never have been written without

**my initial encounter, in a class taught by Dr. R. G. Moyles,
with the work of Thomas McCulloch,
a writer too little read and truly appreciated even less;**

the help and patience of my wife, Evelyn, who gave up her husband for a year;

the criticism and guidance of my supervisor, Dr. David Jackel;

**and the talents, such as they are, granted me by the God whose Providence is
"great matter o' thankfu'ness, that" I and Alexander Scantocreesh
"hae been spaired to be what we are."**

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CHAPTER I

THE EFFECT OF THE MISSING LETTERS

In Arthur Conan Doyle's short story "Silver Blaze," Sherlock Holmes speaks of "'the curious incident of the dog in the night-time[,]'" and when informed by the archetypally unimaginative Scotland Yard Inspector Gregory that "'[t]he dog did nothing in the night-time[,]'" replies that "'[t]hat was the curious incident'" (*Works*, 211). Like the great detective, I too will insist in this thesis that Thomas McCulloch's variously titled *Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure* will bear the most fruitful investigation precisely in that part of the text which did *not* happen, the part that remained unpublished and, within the realm of critical study, nearly invisible for more than a century: the section of the 1990 edition headed "Book Two."

Admittedly, I have a vested interest in making such an assertion, since my thesis concerns the changing religious perspectives exhibited and critiqued in the *Letters*. Because the *Letters* were originally published in *The Acadian Recorder* from December 22, 1821 through March 29, 1823--roughly 15 months--with a break of 7 1/2 months between Letter 17 (the end of Book One) and Letter 18 (the beginning of Book Two: see Gwendolyn Davies' notes in the 1990 *Letters*, 324-332), any thesis based on a perception of change between the two sets of letters will fall pretty flat if the second set is omitted from consideration. I have another confession: Book Two has far more relevance than Book One to a consideration of religious concerns in the *Letters*.

I am not unsympathetic to those who, even having read Book Two, would still rather concentrate their critical analysis on Book One. Book One is more suitable for teaching in

the college classroom, for being excerpted and anthologized: the first selection I read from McCulloch, in a university course, was from Book One. Book One has a fairly simple narrative line, while Book Two, with only half as many letters, has three narratorial voices spinning out from three to six (depending on how you reckon it) different narrative lines.

Book One has a single simple premise: Mephibosheth Stepsure--a sardonic orphan whose lameness has, ironically, made him prosperous by keeping him working on his farm--observes the foibles of his more mobile neighbours who spend all their time showing off (and so dissipating) their wealth and roving the countryside trying to find quicker ways to get rich. The variations are many, but for the most part Book One is a series of get-poor-quick stories. Though Stepsure does take other moral concerns under his consideration--swearing, bundling, frolicking--he limits his interest in them mainly to their temporal consequences. The other main speakers of Book One, whose moralism has a more explicitly religious basis--Saunders Scantocreesh and Parson Drone--are nearly as liable to be viewed sardonically by Stepsure as their immoral neighbours or the crackpot religionists whose inconsistent profession and practice are also the object of Stepsure's satire. No matter who speaks in Book One, however, Stepsure always has the last word.

Book Two does not grant Stepsure the same unquestioned narratorial authority. The series starts with a letter from Saunders to the editors of the *Acadian Recorder* hinting at letters to come from Stepsure. Saunders' other letter in Book Two is not even (ostensibly) addressed to the *Recorder*, but to an entirely different audience--his old friend, who stayed back in Scotland, Willy Whooshlicat--and concentrates on the decayed moral state of the people in his new country of residence. When Stepsure himself writes to the *Recorder*, his

first one and a half letters first tell us about his preparing for, and setting out on, a mysterious trip to Halifax. While in the capital, he hears (and relates, without any significant commentary, to the readers of the *Recorder*) from an old gentleman--the third independent speaker of Book Two--about a Scottish immigrant who has strayed spiritually in Halifax. This tale takes up the remainder of his second letter and continues over two other letters. Finally, Stepsure writes two more letters in response to a "Censor" who criticizes the physical realism of Book One.

Anyone who considers the hodgepodge complexity of Book Two not worth the trouble of close critical examination has, as I have said, my sympathy--but not my agreement. For the purposes of this thesis, I need Book Two both because it shows a change in McCulloch's attitude toward varied religious perspectives, and because it simply gives more attention to religion. Such are my avowedly 'biased' reasons for focusing on the 'missing *Letters*.' I can only defend myself by noting that the very fact of Book Two going 'missing' argues powerfully that biased selectivity has been around longer than I have.

"The Hale Kintra Laughin'"

Which is not to say that the original popularity of Book Two was suppressed by a Canadian critical conspiracy. Davies' introduction to her 1990 edition of the complete text of the *Letters* makes it clear that Book Two's reception as a distinct series of letters was uneven at best.

The hostile response, for instance, of one "Censor," who wrote (among others) at least three letters to the *Recorder* critical of the missives of Stepsure (McCulloch's narratorial persona), seems to refer only to the first seventeen letters. Stepsure's replies to Censor in

defense of artistic integrity (another reason to focus on Book Two) do not widen the scope of the argument to include a consideration of the other letters of Book Two. For his own artistic reasons (which I shall explore in Chapter 5), McCulloch makes sure that Stepsure himself keeps this narrow focus on Book One. The first Book remains the focus even despite the fact that by the time Censor had published the last letter from which Mephibosheth drew material for his satire of Censor's moralism, Stepsure had already had published in the *Recorder*, to begin the second series, a letter from Saunders, his 'stage Scotsman' neighbour; and despite the fact that by the time Mephibosheth had first replied directly to Censor, he had already detailed in the *Recorder* his trip to Halifax, and nearly finished the 'prodigal's tale' (see Davies' introduction and notes: xxvi, 329).

Censor was not the only one to respond to the sketches, however. Davies quotes the judgement, five years later in the *Novascotian*, that the sketches had "'set the hale kintra laughin'" (xvii)--at least an implicit reference to Saunders' literary brogue, which is exhibited most fully in Book Two. Other 1820's responses after the sketches were finished included "a series of thirteen 'Stepsure in Town' poems than ran in the" *Recorder* from January 1, 1825 to June 17, 1826, and an approving letter to the *Recorder* published on February 18, 1826 (xxxiv). The title of the former implies a link to Stepsure's trip to Halifax, but more contemporary responses did not make those kinds of links to Book Two.

One early evidence of Stepsure's popularity was a letter by a David McDonald printed in the *Recorder* of November 2, 1822--which Davies implies, from its "[s]ounding suspiciously in accord with McCulloch's design" (xxiv), may have been written by or for

either McCulloch himself or the editors of the *Recorder*. McDonald's letter, of course, because of its timing, could only praise the *first* series--while also, admittedly, asking for more (xxiv), a request answered by the editors' promise, prefixed to the letter, that McDonald would receive a reply "'in a short time... both more agreeable to ourselves, and much more satisfactory to the public" (xxv). Even when the second series was under way, however, and other correspondents leapt to Stepsure's defense against Censor's criticism, most of the resulting letters, articles and editorials noted by Davies still avoided any important reference to Book Two. For example, both an editorial in the *Recorder* of January 18, 1823 and the letter of "'AN OBSERVER'" published in the *Recorder* on February 1, 1823 (xxvi) seem to refer only to Book One. Some later writings in another Nova Scotian paper, the *Free Press*--a column "'To Correspondents'" on February 11, 1823; an announcement, published March 4, 1823, of a "'*Extract of a letter from Pictou, dated Feby. 27, 1823*'"; the extract itself, published March 11, 1823 (xxvi-xxvii); and a note from "'S.'" and the editorial speculations of Edmund Ward, both published on the same date (xxvii, xlviii)--all revolve around the identity of Censor without mentioning Stepsure's replies. Only a letter to the *Recorder* of March 22, 1823, by "'A REAL F.-----.'" (431), mentions Book Two in making a link between the dispute with Censor and Stepsure's otherwise mysterious trip to Halifax: Stepsure's desire to find and wreak vengeance on Censor "and thus show that he has not steel capped his club shoes for nothing" (437).

It is even possible that McCulloch may have written this letter himself, judging by the detailed consideration it gives to Stepsure, and some of his characteristic language, and

the fact that it was published in a week in which no other letters from McCulloch were forthcoming (331). Either way, however, neither this letter, nor Stepsure's brief reply to it in his last letter to the *Recorder* (in which he avers only that his "writings never extended a line beyond my letters in the Recorder" [275]), refers to any other part of Book Two than the replies to Censor and the two letters describing the preparation and execution of Mephibosheth's plan to visit Halifax. Both ignore Saunders' letters and the prodigal's tale.

Davies' introduction lists a number of other writers' more creative responses to Stepsure's work, which, occurring as they did before the publication of any the letters from Book Two, promoted only the general knowledge of Book One. These responses include schoolmaster James Irving's calling a student "'Shad,'" based on the character Shadrach Howl from Book One; a mock review in the *Halifax Journal*, on May 6 and 15, 1822, of "'PARSON DRONE'S SERMONS'"; a "comic poem in the" *Recorder* of May 11, 1822; a "poetic '*List of Publicans and Sinners throughout the township of Mephibosheth Stepsure*'" in the *Recorder* of July 13, 1822; and a poem from "'X.,'" in the *Halifax Journal* of January 20, 1822 lauding the social effectiveness of Stepsure's satire (xxxiv).

Stepsure: The Next Generation

Despite the relative critical obscurity of Book Two, William's tale was considered promising enough to be published separately by a Scottish publisher without the narratorial mediation of Stepsure, as part of a later work by McCulloch: *Colonial Gleanings. William, and Melville* (xxxviii). As well, the subsequent publication of extracts from "Melville," starting in the September 21, 1826 edition of the *Novascotian* was accompanied by a reference to the earlier popularity of "'William... from having appeared

in the well-known letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure'" (xxxix). It is nonetheless clear that neither Stepsure nor his contemporaries attached any great artistic importance to Book Two as a whole. Perhaps it is thus only logical that the 1862 edition of the *Letters* should include just the first seventeen letters of Book One (actually sixteen, since one was omitted, about which more later). However, two factors other than respect for the judgement of the 1820's public may also have played a part.

The first, though less likely, is more intriguing: did the fact that the 1862 edition of the *Letters* was published in Halifax (335) rule out printing both the chronicle of Stepsure's trip to that town and William's tale, both of which are more directly critical of life in the capital than anything in Book One? As plausible as this speculation may be, Book One also has some pretty sharp words for Stepsure's neighbours on their return from the corrupting influence of Halifax, beginning already in Letter 1 with the case of Solomon Gosling's wife Polly, who "by seeing the fashions, had learned to be genteel" (8); and continuing in Letter 4 with the profane Steer, who "[b]eing often in Halifax" and "supposed to know more of the world than some of us... would... say that he used the language of a gentleman" (45), and the deleterious acquaintance of Peter Longshanks with the Halifax dancing master "Seignior Caperini" (47), which ultimately leads to Peter's bankrupt stay with "Mr. Holdfast" (48), the sheriff. Other problems with this 'conspiracy theory' are that it does not explain why the letters from Saunders or the replies to Censor were not published--letters in which the strongest link to Halifax is only the apparently mistaken identification of Censor by *other* writers with a legal personage in Halifax (xxvi-xxvii)--or why either Book's criticism of Halifax would have been *more* easily

tolerated during the *original* printing of the letters in the *Recorder*, which, was, after all, also printed in Halifax, as Douglas Lochhead's "Bibliographical Note" to the 1960 edition of the *Letters* makes clear (156). Even if Stepsure's criticism had become a sore point in Halifax at any time up to McCulloch's death in 1843, it stretches credulity to see the omission of Book Two's letters in an edition almost 20 years later yet as anything more than accidental.

Which brings us to accident, the second factor in the 1862 omission of Book Two. It is important to remember that the twenty-five letters were published not as a single sequence, but as two series separated by a break of 7 1/2 months. The break between the two series was actually longer than the six-month period over which the first series was published (324-332). Perhaps, therefore, the title page's notation--"Reprinted from the Acadian Recorder Of the years 1821 and 1822"--simply reflects the publisher's mistaken belief that the first series was all that McCulloch wrote. Even if the editors had examined all the 1822 issues of the *Recorder*, they might have failed to recognize the beginning of the second series, since the second series involved only one letter in 1822 (on December 28): a letter not from Stepsure, but from his neighbour, Saunders. Nothing in the editors' introduction indicates that they even knew of the letters of the second series and one comment implies that they did not.

The editors note that "[t]he following letters... are now fast fading from the recollection of the public" which "must be the fate of all literary productions... which are confined to the columns of the periodical press." William's tale, however, as I have noted, was not so "confined[,]" having been published as part of *Colonial Gleanings* by "William Oliphant of

Edinburgh" (Davies' notes, 322). It seems, then, that the Halifax publisher of the *Letters* (H. W. Blackadar) did not even know of Book Two, and certainly not of the three letters which included William's tale. Even if Blackadar knew of the second series, his intent to print *The Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure* may have caused him to see the second series as simply too unwieldy and polyphonic--with letters from a man named Scantocreesh, and letters by Stepsure but relaying at length someone else's story (William's tale) or responding without any background information to a man named "Censor"--to fit within the Halifax publisher's means or interest.

Twenty years after the Blackadar edition of the *Letters* came the 1882 printing of Letters 1-4 over a period of four months in the *Eastern Chronicle*, a periodical published in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. That the *Chronicle*'s selection has been simply taken from the Blackadar edition (rather than from the original letters in the *Recorder*) seems to be indicated from the similarity of the initial "introduction to the letters" (336) on April 20, 1882 to the 1862 introduction. The *Chronicle* "acknowledges the author as 'the late Rev. Dr. Thomas McCulloch, Minister of Prince St. Church, Pictou, a gentleman of whose versatile talents Nova Scotia, as the country of his adoption, is justly proud'" (336). Except for adding the information about where McCulloch preached and changing the Blackadar edition's spelling of "Novascotia" to the modern version, the above passage is taken verbatim from the 1862 *Letters*. Over time, then, the editions of the *Letters*--first the 1862 edition, which Davies asserts "carries no textual authority" (liii), and later the 1882 edition--diverged progressively farther from the original letters published in the *Recorder*, which themselves were, according to McCulloch, "inaccurately printed" (liv).

"'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time'"

I am less interested in the various versions' "textual authority," however, than in the effect of not only the omission of the letters of Book Two, but of the seeming disappearance of any knowledge of (and certainly of critical concern with) those letters. It is in relation to these missing letters--"'[t]he dog [who] did nothing in the night-time"--that subsequent critical evaluations of McCulloch take on a new cast.

Probably the most frequently quoted critiques, both of which are partially reproduced in Davies' 1990 introduction (xlviii, xvii), come from V. L. O. Chittick's 1924 *Thomas Chandler Haliburton ("Sam Slick") A Study in Provincial Toryism* and Northrop Frye's introduction to the 1960 edition of *The Stepsure Letters*. Chittick claimed that Haliburton had, in the satire of his own sketches (entitled *The Clockmaker*), had a

> distinguished predecessor, from one notable production of whose extraordinary wit he learned many of the lessons he subsequently undertook to reteach his fellow colonists.... the Rev. Dr. McCulloch.... During the years 1821-22 Dr. McCulloch published... in the... *Recorder* a number of anonymous sketches, long afterwards... reprinted[50] ["50. By H. W. Blackadar, Halifax, 1860" (sic, Chittick's footnote)] in pamphlet form as the *Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure*, which for downright funniness as an exposure of the follies of Nova Scotian rural life quite transcend anything... attempted in *The Clockmaker*. (378, underlining mine)

Chittick's praise seems, then, to be based on the Blackadar edition, and on the assumption that, as that edition implies, the only letters of McCulloch's published by the *Recorder* were those in the first series of sketches (which, unlike Book Two, concern mainly "rural Nova Scotian life"). Given that narrowed basis to judge from, Chittick's insight in noting that Haliburton and McCulloch shared significant moralistic concerns (in addition to their shared pragmatic or economic concerns) is impressive:

> In whatever Haliburton there [in *The Clockmaker*] essayed in the humorous delineation of his countrymen as... drunken, ...as engaged in smuggling..., as indecent, immoral,

> ...irreverent and irreligious, he but followed the lead of one who for subtlety and skill in the good-natured indictment of popular skill was easily his master. (378-379)

However, I believe that Chittick's concluding comparison and contrast between Haliburton and McCulloch betrays his lack of knowledge of Book Two, and has thus misled subsequent critics:

> Every one of the social, economic, and agricultural truths which subsequently had to be reimpressed on the easy-going Nova Scotians in Sam Slick's... vernacular... was clearly anticipated... in the elucidation of his neighbours' unnecessary misfortunes by Dr. McCulloch's... oddly named cripple. Only in his political philosophy... did Sam Slick hold forth... independently.... (379)

Chittick's probably inadvertent omission of, for instance, any consideration of Book Two's more narrowly and religiously moralistic tale of the prodigal or Saunders' more prosaic and judgemental letters--along with Chittick's own deliberate (and obviously legitimate) focus on Haliburton rather than McCulloch--led to two distorted views which eventually influenced critical opinion about the *Letters*, at least as exhibited in the secondary material in the 1960 edition. The first is that the major difference between the two is Haliburton's greater interest in politics--a perspective which fails to come to grips with the importance of McCulloch's changing religious concerns from Book One to Book Two (the major focus of Chapters 4 and 5). As well, to see McCulloch as the apolitical forerunner of Haliburton ignores, for instance, McCulloch's examinations of the effects of patronage on Caleb Castup and his family (*Letters*, 41-45), and the purely monetarily motivated granting of liquor licenses (34, 200)--both of which are as pointed as, and more detailed than, any of Sam Slick's laments about Nova Scotians' reliance on the Assembly.

The second distortion involved in the reception of Chittick's favourable judgement of McCulloch is the perception that the essence of McCulloch's satire was seen as Stepsure's "elucidation of his neighbours' unnecessary misfortunes[.]" Chittick's influential (both Frye

and Davies quote part of it) judgement of McCulloch's achievement would make the later inclusion of Book Two's letters--different as they are in format and content and therefore seemingly 'untypical' of McCulloch (itself a judgement based on the ideal of artistic unity)--problematic.

Fryed McCulloch

The heirs to this problem of the missing letters were Frye and those who worked with him on the 1960 New Canadian Library (NCL) edition of the *Letters*. This edition did include, in addition to the sixteen letters from Stepsure in Book One, the most important letter critical of Stepsure from the pen of Censor, and Stepsure's two letters in reply. The inclusion of these three letters--including the letter of another writer--when others of McCulloch's linked letters, one from Book One and six from Book Two, did not make the cut, is in itself significant. The focus has shifted from Chittick's moderate judgement that the *Letters* surpassed Haliburton in "downright funniness as an exposure of the follies of rural Nova Scotian life" (378) to some rather larger claims on McCulloch's behalf, partly motivated, no doubt, by the pressure to justify the inclusion of McCulloch in the (then canonical?) NCL series. Frye, for instance, exalts McCulloch as "the founder of genuine Canadian humour... based on a vision of society" (Frye, ix)--a judgement quoted by Davies in her introduction (*Letters*, xvii)--and Thomas Irving's biographical sketch for the 1960 edition claims that "he shaped the character of humorous writing in Canada for a century after his death" (NCL, 150), while the same edition's back-cover blurb claims that his *Letters* "provided the beginnings of that unique brand of humour which culminated in Leacock." McCulloch's artistic status has thus been greatly upgraded.

Because the dispute with Censor was mainly over artistic principle, letters from and to Censor could thus be added to demonstrate that McCulloch was as concerned about artistic issues as modern critics were (whereas it is my contention, in Chapter 5, that McCulloch returned the debate to more narrowly moralistic terms of reference). Of all the letters excluded up to 1960 from the *Letters*, the ones dealing with Censor also maintain best the *illusion* (as I also hope to demonstrate in Chapter 5) of artistic unity. Stepsure does not leave his farm (except in imagination) and he remains the sole writer of the letters bearing his name. The dispute with Censor also concerns none of the other excluded letters, whereas at least the first letter from Saunders and the other letters from Stepsure in Book Two refer to or foreshadow the other excluded letters, making it awkward to print any one of them without printing at least five others (Saunders tells the *Recorder*'s editors, "I dout ye maun gie him some heartnin' afore he sen' you ony mae letters" (202), and the four earlier letters from Stepsure form a pair of linked narratives--Stepsure's trip to Halifax and William's tale, which Stepsure hears in Halifax--and refer back to Saunders' letter: "The importunity of my neighbour Scantocreesh has induced me to drop you a few lines" (205).)

It seems, then, that the editorial selection for the 1960 edition was as "deeply conservative" as Frye describes the "tone" of McCulloch's and "Canadian humour" (ix) generally as being. The NCL editors were faced with the fact that the 1862 edition had, after all, ended with a letter foreshadowing more, as Stepsure wrote: "I have arrived at the end of the first book of the chronicles of our town; and... winter must return before I enter upon the second" (Blackadar, 139); and, sardonically, about Squire Grub, who is forced to

mend his only pair of trousers in bed: "[H]e is, in many respects, as I may by and bye [sic] show you, a pattern of industry and economy, worthy of imitation" (Blackadar, 140).

Perhaps they could have simply ignored Stepsure's hint of more, since neither the reference to Squire Grub, nor an earlier promise--"What instructions our clergyman occasionally gave me respecting education, I may probably at some future period put upon record in the chronicles of our town (Blackadar, 134)--is ever followed up on, in either Book. Though they were, however, willing to add some letters, they were evidently unwilling to turn the *Letters* into a seemingly ramshackle (and therefore fairly typical for the time, and certainly for the mode of its original publication--think of Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*) mess, with a second Book introducing two new narratorial voices (Saunders and the Halifax gentleman who tells William's tale). Instead of taking this dilemma by the horns, they simply broke one of them off--the unartistic one (but also a horn of plenty, with its multiple narrators: how's that for a mixed metaphor?).

Though this thesis is partially designed to show the importance of the excluded letters, their omission certainly suited at least some of the critical biases which Frye's introduction, Irving's biographical note, and Lochhead's bibliographical note reveal. Though Frye devotes a paragraph to "[t]he kind of religious culture that McCulloch assumes in his readers" (vi), he does not make the religious concern so evident in Book Two a basis for his comparison of Haliburton and McCulloch. Rather, following Chittick's lead, Frye begins by comparing the writers' political and economic views (vii). He continues with praise for McCulloch's greater charity in the portrayal of his characters (vii-viii), and ends,

as a good critic in the modernist age should, with a consideration of the two men's characteristic styles (viii). At least in this comparison, form is stressed more than content.

If Frye's stress on formal criticism makes clearer why the Censor letters, which disputed not meanings, but the means, were *included*, then Irving and Lochhead's notes hold clues as to why specific letters continued to be *excluded*. There does seem to be one essentially innocent omission: the stranger's letter from Book One (Letter 7 in the 1990 edition) Though Lochhead alludes to McCulloch's manuscript version of the *Letters* (NCL, 158) in which the stranger's letter was included (see Davies' notes, *Letters*, 320), he also writes that "[t]he present edition of *The Stepsure Letters* is based on the text published by Hugh W. Blackadar in Halifax in 1862" (NCL, 159), which did not include that letter. It is unclear whether Lochhead knew of the letter, since he refers to the "sixteenth, and last of the [first] series" of "Stepsure letters" (156), seemingly excluding the stranger's letter through mere ignorance of its existence. However, even if he had known of it, and of its authorship by McCulloch, he might have excluded it on the grounds that it was not a "Stepsure letter," but one written under the persona of an anonymous stranger, a letter, moreover, that fit poorly within the overall framework of the *Letters* and was rather dull, to boot. (However, the letter was promised by Stepsure in Letter 6--"According to promise, I have herewith sent you the first [no others were published!] of the stranger's letters" (*Letters*, 62)--and the stranger, if not his missives, is an integral part of the story of one of McCulloch's main characters, Parson Drone, as I shall show in Chapter 3.)

Beyond this apparently innocent omission, Lochhead and Irving's exclusion of other letters may be best explained by their rather perfunctory glances at the then (and still?) less

fashionable aspects of McCulloch's writing. Irving, when speaking of *William* and *Melville*, writes that

> [t]he first of these novels was published as a newspaper serial in 1824 [actually 1823: see Davies' notes, *Letters*: liii, 330-331] and both were published at Edinburgh in one volume in 1826. These tales combine interesting descriptions of the... conditions of the eighteen-twenties with moralistic warnings to those... who founded their hope of happiness upon the acquisition of wealth in foreign lands. Like many other writers, McCulloch resolves the seemingly insolvable problems of his characters by killing off all of them. (NCL, 155)

McCulloch does not just kill his characters; he kills them off--an unoriginal strategy ("[l]ike many other writers" who, presumably, have also written themselves into a corner) designed simply to resolve "seemingly insolvable problems." The mildly flippant tone (mea culpa?) of Irving's summary is, I admit, not an attack on McCulloch. Rather, it is part of his appreciation of McCulloch's "lighter touch" (154), which, as he shows, was demonstrated even in his disputes with Catholics, including a defense of "'sprightliness'" in "'refutation'" (quoted on 155) in the preface of *Popery Again Condemned* and a humorous verse in an advertisement for that volume (155). However, Irving's jocularity obscures the fact that William's death, at any rate, means much more than the resolution of intractable difficulties (something I will discuss in Chapter 4).

Irving's is not the only rather shallow approach to McCulloch's 'lost letters.' Lochhead refers briefly to Saunders' two letters, which, as he tells us, "were written in backwoods dialect and appeared under yet another virtually unpronounceable pseudonym 'Alexander Scantocreesh'" (159)--a minimal reference which does not even allow for the possibility that the letters may figure importantly within McCulloch's plan for his epistolary series.

Obviously, for instance, the foreshadowing of Stepsure's later letters is an effective bit of self-promotion on McCulloch's part. However, Saunders' letters, along with the other

letters of Book Two, also undercut and illustrate the shallowness of a pragmatic framework for ethics (the very framework which, under Stepsure's narration, dominates Book One, as I will show in Chapter 3). More importantly (as I will discuss in Chapter 5), all the letters of Book Two also set Mephibosheth's originally pragmatic moralizing within a larger moral community of independent but ultimately harmonious voices (the very variety of which is an implicit reply to Censor's criticism of Stepsure's limited artistic range).

Throughout this chapter, I, like McCulloch, have been dropping hints as to what is coming up. Let me now be more explicit. I have looked in this chapter at the excluded letters and their reception as a special case of my general point--that, by considering aspects of McCulloch's writing that are normally ignored, we can get a better understanding of McCulloch's satirical purposes, targets, and methods. To ignore either specific sections of the *Letters* or the changing religious perspectives which informed them is to fail to appreciate McCulloch's development of both artistic and Christian (as opposed to sectarian) moral understanding. Only by examining the change in religious perspective(s) between Book One and Two can we see his artistic achievement in Book Two in constructing a subversively ironic, and ultimately self-critical, attack on the use of religion for purely social purposes.

Book One's purpose is more straightforward: the promotion, with the support of Parson Drone's religious authority, of a middle-class ethic of work and thrift. Obviously, however, McCulloch was not the first writer to link religion and resourcefulness, nor to

use satire and stock characters to make his point. The next chapter will both look at some of Stepsure's literary ancestors and point out McCulloch's uniqueness.

CHAPTER II

MCCULLOCH IN CONTEXT AND CONTRAST

Nothing I have read in or about McCulloch suggests that originality was an important value in his artistic philosophy, and, as I shall show in later chapters, he felt free to borrow other authors' plot structures to make his own points. This chapter will not examine that kind of direct allusion (of which the most prevalent source is not English literature anyway, but Hebrew and Greek--the Bible--a source which is dealt with extensively in Davies' notes and in chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this thesis). Rather, I want to show how McCulloch's artistic strategies and thematic concerns were broadly in line with various of his predecessors, and wherein, nonetheless, McCulloch's uniqueness lies.

The Shape of Things to Come

Probably most obvious on first reading of the *Letters* is McCulloch's creation of a typical rogues'19 gallery. Fiction that focuses on a cast of varied characters who reveal their strengths and weaknesses through what they say and do in the presence of a less than sympathetic narrator is as old as, for instance, Chaucer's fourteenth-century *Canterbury Tales*. Of course, McCulloch does not allow the objects of Stepsure's satire to tell their stories at any length, and at least in Book One, does not allow Stepsure to become the object of satire himself--as Chaucer does when he "represents himself as the one unable to hold the attention of his hearers" (Wain, 15).

To call *The Canterbury Tales* a rogues' gallery may be stretching the term, but much of the fiction of the century of *McCulloch's* birth *is* concerned with a protagonist who may be himself flawed, but who is nonetheless morally superior to the rogues he meets on the

road. One of the earlier masters of this form is Henry Fielding, whose 1742 novel *Joseph Andrews* is alluded to by McCulloch, and whose 1749 novel *Tom Jones* is one of the most famous road novels in English literature. The Norton Critical Edition of the 1771 epistolary novel *Humphry Clinker*, by a fellow Scotsman (NCE, 337)--Tobias Smollett, a writer of numerous picaresque adventures--notes that Smollett's book concerns itself largely with the reactions of a misanthropic "valetudinarian" (NCE, 339) Scotsman to the vanity of the social scene in Bath, England.

At least Matthew Bramble, the main protagonist of *Humphry Clinker*, has the excuse of poor health for his presence in Bath. When *The Stepsure Letters* finally hit the road, in Book Two, Stepsure never gives his reason for visiting Halifax, as I have noted before, and the trip itself becomes mainly a frame, at Stepsure's expense, for the hearing of William's tale. Stepsure definitely does not need to wander to meet the rogues he satirizes, so let me move from considering the picaresque to considering Mephibosheth's greatest predecessor in the use of satire.

Jonathan Swift is significant, in the context of this thesis, for a couple of reasons. *Gulliver's Travels* (published in 1726), and Swift's satire generally, became the benchmark for the criticism of scatological description in satire. Just as *Humphry Clinker*'s publication was greeted by the attacks of at least two critics (NCE: 330, 333) for sharing Swift's interest in physical grossness, so Swift's indecorous writing was a focus for critics of writers to the *Acadian Recorder*. As I shall discuss briefly in chapter 5, a writer named James Irving had been criticized for, ironically, his immoderate language in criticizing Swift in the *Recorder*--just before McCulloch began writing the sketches which would, in

turn, bring down the wrath of Censor for his own indiscreet writing. As well, when McCulloch's manuscript of the *Stepsure Letters* was rejected by a Scottish publisher, William Blackwood, one of the reasons given was that, as Gwendolyn Davies quotes in her introduction to the *Letters*, "'[t]he humour and satire have all the pungency and originality of Swift with I am sorry to say too much of his broad & coarse colouring'" (*Letters*, xliv).

The second significant relationship of Swift to McCulloch pertains to the end of *Gulliver's Travels*. Lemuel Gulliver's disgust for the brutish Yahoos which he sees on his travels is exceeded only by his horror at realizing that they are (in some sense) ***human beings***--and that therefore he is one of them. McCulloch similarly subverts his own narrator, though without Stepsure's realizing it. As I will discuss especially in chapter 4, Stepsure is eventually shown to be as vain (by the end of Book One) and morally inconsistent (in Book Two) as his fellow townsfolk--an ironic shift also like Smollett's self-criticism (as noted by Lewis M. Knapp on NCE, 342) through the portrait of Matthew Bramble in *Humphry Clinker*.

The final sources of artistic inspiration for McCulloch that I want to discuss are two that he would almost certainly have read, because both would have been approved reading for the time. The first is only probable as a source: *Aesop's Fables*, which were published in London at least as early as the seventeenth century. As I discuss in chapter 3, McCulloch may betray some familiarity with them in the remarks of Saunders Scantocreesh. More certain, because of at least one explicit allusion McCulloch makes to it--noted by Davies (*Letters*, 314)--is his having read John Bunyan's 1678 allegory

Pilgrim's Progress. Both books, but primarily Bunyan's, could have spurred McCulloch's use of what Davies calls "stock characters" and "type names" (l), and especially the attachment of moral significance to such names.

Inside the Covers

When we move from form to the content of various earlier fictional treatments of the relationship of work and religion, we can see some more significant parallels between McCulloch and earlier writers. One book that I will deal with in Chapter 4 is the first volume of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (published in 1719), which integrates religion and resourcefulness in much the same way as the *Letters*, as Crusoe's island conversion experience becomes additional, but not fundamental, support for his work ethic. A similar (and similarly incomplete) linking of religion, work, and prosperity occurs in Defoe's 1722 novel *Moll Flanders*, as Moll eventually becomes prosperous after her prison conversion. Material prosperity is, much more than spiritual contentment, the main lasting consequence of her (rather shallow) change of heart. However, that prosperity is even more closely linked to her intelligent use, upon being transported after her conversion, of the ill-gotten money she has kept hidden while in prison--hardly a case of virtue rewarded.

The most notorious example of a novel linking virtue and material success in English literature is probably Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, published in 1740. Whether McCulloch would have approved of Richardson's linking of the *sexual* restraint (rather than industry and *material* restraint) of his heroine Pamela Andrews with the personal prosperity that results from her marriage to her would-be seducer and rapist Mr. B is a

moot point. However, one writer closer in time to Richardson than McCulloch *was* clearly disgusted by the resolution of Pamela's struggle.

As Martin Battestin notes in his introduction to the Riverside Edition of *Joseph Andrews*, that novel was Fielding's second response to *Pamela*--the first being the parody *Shamela*, published a year earlier, in 1741 (v). While *Shamela* simply exposes what Fielding believed were the ultimately calculating and materialistic motives behind Pamela's sanctimoniously virtuous behaviour, *Joseph Andrews* has fun with the ideal of *male* virtue in the person of Pamela's brother Joseph. Both the latter book and Fielding's later novel *Tom Jones*, despite important differences, feature a presumed orphan (like Stepsure, who is, however, genuinely parentless) who is eventually rewarded for his superior character, despite opposition by morally inferior antagonists, with material prosperity--a pattern which recurs in Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* as the title character discovers his father, Matthew Bramble.

A less direct relation to the *Letters* is Jane Austen's 1814 novel *Mansfield Park*. Though it too features the semi-orphaned (with no father) Fanny Price, the novel's protagonist, a more significant similarity to the *Letters* lies in its consideration of the utility and value of the religious vocation of Fanny's eventual husband, Edmund Bertram. Austen sees religion as serving mainly a social function, a view that does not detract from the secular importance of Edmund's choice to become a clergyman, but does limit the passion and specificity with which religion is spoken of in the novel. Avrom Fleishman points out in *A Study of Mansfield Park* that "Fanny's 'Enthusiasm,' as Edmund calls it" (30) is less

for religion than for "Romantic ideals of nature, tradition, and love" (35)--ideals that partially motivate the familiar elevation of the country over the city (31).

Fleishman also notes that Fanny alludes to Sir Walter Scott's 1805 work *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which "would link Fanny's attitude to" Scott's "conservative Romantic attitude toward landscape, architecture, and history: things acquire value not merely by being old but by being connected with the organic life of the nation" (32). Scott's historical novels--especially *Old Mortality* (published in 1816) and *The Heart of Midlothian* (published in 1818)--portray the religious passion of Scotland's Covenanters as merely one of the forms of cruel and dangerous fanaticism in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Scotland, and so underlined the need for the kind of moderate religion which Scott (and Austen, though not the same religion) personally favoured. *Old Mortality* is chiefly important, as far as this thesis is concerned, for stimulating McCulloch to write a fictional response--*Auld Eppie's Tales*--that would put his Covenanter heritage within a more favourable light (an impulse which Davies explores in an essay called "Penetrating into Scott's Field: The Covenanting Fiction of Thomas McCulloch"). *The Heart of Midlothian*, on the other hand, does also paint a less than sympathetic portrait of the fanatical Covenanter Davie Deans; however, the novel concerns itself more with the protagonist Jeanie Deans, his daughter, who, due to her brave quest to free her sister from unjust execution for child-murder, is providentially rewarded with tenancy on the Duke of Argyle's lush farms--an occupation which, like Stepsure, can only be made successful by applying herself consistently, with the rest of her family, to her agricultural duties. Davie Deans is also mellowed by the circumstances of the move to Argyleshire, enough to

accept his daughter's new husband, Reuben Butler--a man willing to subscribe to an oath of ordination which forbade hostility against the hated Jacobite Pretender to the throne (see Editor's Notes, 552 in *Heart of Midlothian*)--as his spiritual leader.

McCulloch's Uniqueness

More significant than the above-mentioned parallels between the concerns of McCulloch and those of other writers are the differences. For instance, although McCulloch's worldview was in general much closer to that of the beginning of the eighteenth, rather than the nineteenth, century, his attitude to Defoe would have been ambivalent. As I discuss in chapter 4, McCulloch's alludes to and echoes *Robinson Crusoe* extensively, but he would have been sceptical of Defoe's soteriology, of Defoe's confidence that religion can exist and sustain itself even outside of spiritual community. McCulloch might therefore find *Moll Flanders* more convincing than *Robinson Crusoe*, since, keeping the kind of company she does, she fears for the persistence of her spiritual life away from the minister who first brought her the gospel--a fear demonstrated as logical by McCulloch's tale of the prodigal.

As for *Pamela*'s material reward for her virtue, McCulloch would have found it no more convincing than Fielding did, and no more than the narrowly moralistic ending of *The Heart of Midlothian*, not because virtue is rewarded, but because the reward is not inherent in the deed, because prosperity is not a logical and necessary consequence of chastity, loyalty to kin, or honesty. At least in Book One of the *Letters*, Stepsure's life is closer to that of a Horatio Alger hero than that of a Biblical saint. Material rewards, for Stepsure, come less through endurance than through industry.

McCulloch's concurrence with Fielding on this issue would not mean that he would approve of Fielding's method (and also Smollett's, on at least one occasion) of resolving his heroes' difficulties: the discovery of the lost father. Neither Stepsure nor William respectively regain or return to the father each has lost or abandoned. In McCulloch's world, an orphan has the resources--whether material or spiritual--of the community available to him, but it is his responsibility to use them wisely and diligently.

Of the all books I have considered above, only *Joseph Andrews* comes anywhere close to McCulloch's detailed (and often tendentious, at least in Book One) appeal to Scripture. McCulloch would have been equally disapproving of the religious moderation of Austen and Scott as of Austen's confidence in landscape to sustain the life of the spirit. However, he would have found common ground with Austen and Scott in seeing the value of nature combined with human effort (a point demonstrated in William's tale), and with Fielding, Smollett, and Austen in his agrarian exaltation of country over city.

I have already mentioned that McCulloch perceived Scott's works as a slight upon the former's heritage--a perception that might have promoted McCulloch's more sympathetic portrayal of the religiously fervid Saunders in Book Two. However, McCulloch might have appreciated Scott's reconciliation of the dogmatic Davie Deans and the moderate Reuben Butler. As I shall discuss in chapter 5, Book Two of the *Letters* also attempts to reconcile varying religious viewpoints artistically, but by allowing each to raise its own voice in greater overall harmony, rather than through plot or character development.

I cannot claim that I have looked at all McCulloch's precursors in form and content. However, I hope that I have touched upon enough to intrigue you as to just exactly how

he is different from earlier writers. Seemingly, what makes McCulloch unique is mainly negative: his scepticism about individualistic religion, about the Romantic trust in the guidance of nature, about the possibility of direct rewards for virtue; his disapproval of moderate religion. The next chapter, however, will look at the tension set up between McCulloch's explicitly spiritual understanding of the world (as embodied in Parson Drone) and his construction of a purely pragmatic (and religiously moderate) narrator to bring his satire home.

CHAPTER III

DRONING AND ROARING: THE RELIGION OF AFFECT, NOT EFFECT

If, as I am claiming, McCulloch is attempting to yoke religious authority to the promotion of his middle class work ethic, why does he apparently subvert his most authoritative voice by labelling him Parson *Drone*? The parson's name does not seem to dignify him any further than the names of Book One's other "labourers in word and doctrine": "Mrs. Sham[,]" "parson Howl[,]" and "young Yelpit" (*Letters*, 170). However that may be, the "worthy gentleman" (7), as Stepsure calls him, is certainly not a drone in the parasitic sense of living off the community like "[t]he male of the honey-bee" (O.E.D.), since he has to raise pigs (*Letters*, 73) and feed cattle (74), just to make ends meet.

If Drone's name does not describe his status within the community, what is left is a meaning based on the *sound* of droning. Could it be a self-apologetic appellation, on behalf of the author? After all, McCulloch was a 'parson' himself, and perhaps was defensive about the monotonous (droning) moralism that was (and still widely is?) assumed to infect the profession: Stepsure himself notes both how "long" (122) and how "longwinded" (141) Drone's discourses could be. However, on each occasion, the description is qualified by the circumstances. The parson's advice to Dorothy seems "long" to Stepsure mainly because "I knew [it] to be the education which my spouse had been all her life receiving from the Widow" (122), and, despite its length, Mephibosheth still considers "the advice" worthy of "setting down... that you might see what our parson was like when he was young and spry" (123). As for Drone's sermon on economy, it may have been called "longwinded," but it is evident that Stepsure is ironically speaking in the voice

of the congregation, for whom moralism is only interesting when it applies to someone else. For instance, the men, "though we men folk had not been invited... were there" for the "week day's sermon for the female part of his flock" (137), and "[t]he wives of Tipple's customers all looked at their husbands" (139) and "[w]ith this part of the discourse, ...seemed wonderfully pleased" (140)--the part that is addressed to Tipple's customers. The customers themselves "began to yawn a good deal" (140) at this point, much as "the most of our females now needed to be cooled" (141) when the subject turns to female domestic economy, a reaction that Stepsure implies is foolish by contrasting it with the favourable judgement of the model women in the community, who "agreed that Parson Drone had given us a solid and sensible discourse" (142). Boredom, like more 'heated' emotions, is thus shown as simply another defensive reaction against personally uncomfortable moral truth.

Ironically, this view of boredom is not only a moral judgement on the majority of the listeners, but also a rhetorical strategy that implies that readers who do not appreciate the narrator's own moralism are as foolish as Stepsure's fellow townsfolk, who also have rejected Mephibosheth's read sermons, by which at least "the young people profited so little under my ministry, that none of them ever came back a second time" (96). Stepsure's strategy puts a sharp double edge on his earlier seemingly casual acknowledgement of his reader's feelings about Drone's "rather long" advice: "Many of your readers... will feel very glad that they do not belong to Mr. Drone's congregation.... [E]ven among ourselves, when he formerly discussed topics of this sort, which nobody cared about; the sermon always required a great deal of sleeping, in order to get through with it" (123). Both

Stepsure and his readers confront the moral force of Matthew 7:1: "Judge not" a sermon as overlong, "that ye be not judged" as morally shallow. No wonder the pastor counsels patience--even, ironically, having once "prepared a long discourse upon patience" (14-15).

If "Drone" does not then apply particularly pointedly to the "young and spry" parson's moralism, what more serious purpose might be behind the humour of naming a *Scottish* minister after a musical term associated with *bagpipes*? To be more specific, when exactly *is* Drone most like "[t]he bass pipe of a bagpipe, which emits only one continuous tone" (O.E.D.)? If we focus on the sound of a "*bass* pipe," perhaps it relates to the younger parson's religious authority which Stepsure uses to back up the melody of his satire, the running thread of a social ethic of work and thrift. If we focus on the parson's drone as being "*only one continuous* tone," it cannot be simply the young parson's moralism counterpointing the 'melody' of either Stepsure's own narrative or his moralizing, since, as I will show, the parson's moralism is originally *richer* (though likely still flawed, from McCulloch's perspective) than Mephibosheth's own.

What the *derogatory* signification of Drone's name ultimately points to is his similarity, but only in his *declining* years, to those whom Saunders typifies as tumblers and roarers (*Letters*, 116), the female religionists whose religion is meagre in its *fruits*. Like them and the other evangelicals whom McCulloch targets, the older Drone's reduced religion is concerned more with exhibiting the right attitude than with creating a situation in which positive attitudes are the inevitable result of right personal and communal action. The first sentence of the *Letters* both identifies the parson as Drone and shows the appellation as a logical one: "I found him administring [sic] his old standard consolation" (7). The

identification of the older Drone's counsel as, in effect, cliched implies that he has lost even the hope of actually changing anyone, after repeatedly proclaiming the ethical implications of the Gospel to a largely uncomprehending and hostile audience. Indeed, Drone's doctrine as a *young* man is an early version of Arnold's "muscular Christianity," a gospel concerned with effect; on the other hand, the "*old* standard" parson's preaching is concerned with emitting "only one continuous tone": the restricted message about the need to develop (or at least exhibit) patience in intolerable situations--the right affect.

I want to use the remainder of this chapter to follow several threads through the decline of the younger Drone's moralism. First of all, there is a tension between seeing *Christian* ethics as a natural development of moral growth and communion with God and His saints, and the need to justify a *social* ethic based on work and thrift as universally visible to anyone with common sense (but still backed up by steadying religious authority)--a conflict between class loyalties and religious belief. Second is the community's rejection of the younger Drone's attempt to integrate daily life and the Gospel; third is the older Drone's consequent lapse into a defeatist pietism paradoxically similar to his religious rivals. Fourth is Stepsure's own narrow application of both the older and the younger Drone's moral counsel, and his further restriction of it to an almost entirely earthly frame of reference--an avoidance of its transcendent implication (an attitude which will be later satirized). Lastly, there is McCulloch's demonstration that whatever Drone's weaknesses, the religion of his evangelical competitors is, in its failure to even *seek* practical fruits, even more ludicrous.

The Tension Between Common Sense and Scriptural Conscience

The seeds of the older Drone's eventual belief that "for the wants or troubles of other persons, there can [never] be any remedy but patience" (7) lie in his own experience. He has not actually failed to apply the Gospel to daily life; he simply has not convinced others that such application is important. Stepsure sums up the "brisk young" parson's preaching, as well as its general reception, as follows: "[H]e tried to persuade us, that a person's general habits grow out of his occupation. But almost the whole town laughed at him" (24). The history of Drone's sermons begins with Stepsure's quotation of the younger Drone's discourse as "an active, observing gentleman":

> "The duties of this life, also, are a step to a better.... It is my duty now to impress upon your minds, that you now belong to this world, and ought to act consistently with the present stage of your existence. I shall, therefore, ascertain your circumstances, and then direct you to those actions which every case requires." (39, underlining mine)

As well as couching the appeal in philosophical rather than theological rhetoric--"direct you to those actions which every case requires"--the younger Drone initially invokes the "better" life simply to gain religious authority for his ethical prescriptions for *this* life, and so shifts to the need for right action in the "present stage of your existence."

The parson's first 'topical' sermon (at least the first that Stepsure remembers) relates to "'the duties of matrimonial life'" (40). The rationale for carrying out these duties is mainly pragmatic. Admittedly, Drone indicates the possibility of moral improvement and degradation in speaking of "'a feeling of duty'" which will "'exalt the mind and give it exalted pleasures'" and noting that "'the person who is often from home... is in danger of returning a worse man...'" (40). However, it is clear in this context that to "'cultivate the duties of the matrimonial life... by the help of...'" not the Spirit, but rather the merely

human agencies of "'a little mutual good nature and exertion,'" leads to a state, not of heavenly bliss, but simply of marital felicity: "'as much happiness as human beings have a right to expect'" (40). Furthermore, Drone's appeal to the moral order does not explicitly invoke God, but rather, in an appeal to common sense, speaks of "'Nature [having] established a relation between male and female, which constitutes a basis for duty'" (40). When Drone does invoke the authority of scripture, his bible-thumping--literally, as "he gave a rap upon the bible, which made many of us start"--climaxes Stepsure's quotation with a reference to earthly, not eternal, pleasures: "'I tell it to you from this sacred book, ...that the person who is often from home... is in danger of returning a worse man and to fewer enjoyments'" (40)--which refers simply to domestic enjoyments. As for where the "sacred book" warns against being "'often from home, whether upon business or from any other cause,'" it is not in the text under consideration--"*It is not good for man to be alone*" (quoted on 39, italics in text)--which, though it is part of the scriptural revelation about marriage, is not a proverb about *how* to preserve domestic harmony.

Of course, it would be extremely unlikely for McCulloch, the author of *Popery Condemned...* and *Popery Again Condemned...* to have much sympathy for the Roman Catholic sacramental understanding of marriage, but it is interesting that Drone's unspecified reference to scripture gives no hint of appealing to, for instance, Ephesians 5:25, which commands husbands to "love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church," or indeed, any of the frequent Biblical references to the church as Christ's bride. The reason relates to the younger Drone's stress on practical ethics over abstract

devotion--effect over affect. Even if one granted the symbolic nature of marriage, this understanding would not tell you *how* to have a good marriage, but only *why*.

The parson's next memorable public discourse "in his younger days" relates to economy. The links between practical ethics (in this case the work ethic and the value of thrift) and spiritual communion are more frequent than in the sermon on marriage, but they are also often somewhat gratuitous. The parson alludes to the Fall into sin as the reason for the curse of work, but insists that "to man in his present state, industrious exertion is one of heaven's best gifts" (139). Drone also asserts that, but does not *explain* why "[a] life without care would not satisfy man" (139). Why work is such a great gift, however, is explained, but in mainly pragmatic terms: "It is the wise arrangement of a merciful providence, to curb his vices and protect him from misery. It is the means to collect around him an abundance of individual and social enjoyments" (139). Though the prospect of moral improvement is implied by "to curb his vices," the rest of work's effects are both temporal and visible to anyone with common sense.

The parson's explanation of the necessity for work is the clearest integration of spiritual and earthly concerns in his sermons: man "'would not limit his activity to the service of his creator: now, his duty arises from his sin; and his activity arises from his own wants'" (139). The curse of work is presented as the result of a broken relationship with God. Gwendolyn Davies notes the explicitly biblical terms (302) in which the healing of the relationship is pictured, when she quotes Isaiah 35:1-2. However, the text quoted does not refer, as Drone implies, to man's "'labour'" bringing about "'the restoration of beauty and fruitfulness to the face of nature'" (139) but rather to the agency of divine grace. Similarly,

the text does not imply that being able to "'see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God'" is at all dependent upon man's "'activity'" (139). Thus the reference to scripture is basically superfluous and even somewhat deceptive. The parson also fails to make clear exactly how work brings about the sought-for state of grace, except in its material products: "'Do you wish the excellency of Carmel and Sharon to adorn your fields? Arouse activity to labour...'" (139). Though the language is biblical, the moralistic prescription requires not Christian belief, but, as with the earlier sermon, mere common sense.

The parson's continuing comments, now on the subject of thrift rather than work, have even less to do with an all-encompassing religious view of life, even though Drone again unites the authority of scripture and of common sense to justify the female domestic role. His third reference to the Fall in this sermon explains the role's origin: "'By the misconduct of a female, labour and sorrow have become the portion of man: hers, therefore, is the duty of sweetening his toil and soothing his sorrow'" (140). However, he also gives as much attention to proving the role's existence by means of what is visible to every rational person (again invoking nature rather than God): "'[N]ature itself marks out the sphere of [woman's] activity. With the rugged toils of the fields, the strength of man coincides; and for the delicate frame of the female, there are domestic labours, in which prudent management is more availing than strength'" (140).

Thus the younger Drone does rely at least partly on scriptural authority to justify the restricted (even physically restricted, as woman is to be a "'*keeper at home*'" [140]) domestic role for women. However, his further remarks on economy are hung on no

stronger scriptural hook than the rather laboured interpretation of the three words from (as Davies notes on 302) 1 Timothy 5:14- *guide the house*'" (quoted on 138, italics McCulloch's). Drone stresses that "'[b]y economy I do not mean that niggardly disposition which grudges the very comforts for which labour is expended[,]'" what he later calls "'the real comforts of life'" (141), again valuing labour not for any intrinsic rewards, but for its material products. This is the Puritan ethic of "Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can" minus the giving--minus both the charity which Frye's introduction to the NCL edition of the *Letters* attributes to McCulloch (viii), and the consequent possibility of community which Janice Kulyk Keefer, in *Under Eastern Eyes* (41, 43), sees as not so much a theme, but rather as a given, in both McCulloch and Haliburton.

To qualify, and justify, my quibble with two of the few critics who have addressed *The Stepsure Letters* at any length, let me begin with the possibility that I may simply be missing the point of Frye's observation: "McCulloch studies his people more carefully [than Haliburton]: if he tells us that a man is a drunk, he gives us a credible account of how he came to be a drunk.... There is, in short, some genuine charity in McCulloch" (NCL, vii-viii). Frye is clearly talking about 'writerly' charity here, about sympathetic understanding of his subjects--not about the physical charity, or lack thereof, of McCulloch's narrator. However, note that he is willing only to speak only of "some" charity in McCulloch. Both Frye and Kulyk Keefer quote Stepsure's motto (from Proverbs): "I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (quoted in NCL, vii; Kulyk Keefer, 41)--hardly an obvious indication of compassion. Can we really separate charitable understanding from charitable action in the life of McCulloch's

mouthpiece? Consider the irony of Stepsure's description of Trot, who "in his younger days... was a very good sort of man. Many a hungry belly he has filled ; and he has lodged many pennyless travellers, who have long since forgotten that he ever showed them kindness" (*Letters*, 143). Well, so much for the uncompassionate response of the former recipients of Trot's largesse. How does this relate to independent Stepsure? He has indeed been economically independent since his original start in life courtesy of Squire Worthy, but he has never been independent in thought. Rather, he has gained insights from the experiences of others so as to avoid their "calamity." Trot's situation is no exception: "Trot had warned me that the summers are short. I, therefore, concluded that not a day must be lost" (145). Both the advice and, as Stepsure admits, "the experience of my neighbour Trot afforded me a useful warning" (143) to direct his "curiosity... beyond the occurrences of the day" (144). However, Stepsure expresses neither gratitude for this warning, nor compassion or concern for Trot or "[h]is large family... [who] are mere strolling vagabonds" (144).

Even if McCulloch does indeed, insofar as he speaks through his narrator, have little concern with charity (at least, as I claim, in Book One), that does not necessarily mean that community is not the given used by McCulloch to further his social ethic--to summarize my quibble with Kulyk Keefer. Her distinction between McCulloch's and Susanna Moodie's attitude to community (in *Roughing It in the Bush*) illustrates McCulloch's greater "concern for community":

> [W]here Moodie is preoccupied with preserving those distinctions of social caste and class which assure her very sense of self in a foreign land, McCulloch labours to preserve the moral character of a community in order to ensure its economic survival.... [W]here Moodie works to keep her psychological distance from her neighbours, McCulloch's Stepsure knows his neighbours even as he loves himself - steeped as he is

> within a common set of traditions, habits, and values he turns his neighbours' best pretensions and illusions inside out for us without ever presuming that anything other than superior moral fibre distinguishes his identity and fortunes from theirs. (43)

The power of McCulloch's satire, then, derives from the measurement of personal conduct against "common... values", and its very purpose is to maintain those common values. But community in the text itself is a double-edged sword indeed. As I have earlier mentioned, and will show in detail later, the community closes ranks *against* both the Parson's advice and even his livelihood. Stepsure himself rejects the community's involvement in his rise to prosperity, even when it has at least the appearance of beneficence--if the offer does not come from those with the *right* "common values." He turns down the offer of a frolic to help "clear up my few chopped acres" because its "profit... would be dearly purchased" (97), but accepts "the help of the Squire's team" to get "the logs upon the spot" (101) for his house and barn. Furthermore, he in a sense exploits the very weaknesses that he excoriates: "for, as you know, I lately bought Bill Scamp's farm for my son Abner" (119), through the agency of the repossessing sheriff (82). McCulloch, then, uses community values, but his narrator does not greatly value community--except possibly for his willingness to lend his farming articles to, and *only* "to a poor settler beginning the world" (163). Though in this case he rejects the material help of the community, his lack of understanding of sp[illegible] community is what will be satirized in Book Two.

The parson, too, devalues community by stressing, in the sermon I have been discussing, work's material value for the individual--"the comforts for which labour is expended"--rather than the material welfare of the community as a whole. Thus he, in a sense, contributes to the lack of community concern which ultimately turns against him. His further remarks on the comforts available through female economy also ignore its

potential spiritual benefits. The parson promises, for example, that "whether she have the management of little or much" (an echo of Jesus's parable of the steward (Luke 16:10)), "economy is the parent of permanent comfort'" (140). However, his advice that economy "'squanders not upon transient pleasures'" (141), does not imply that his listeners should, for instance, "[l]ay not up for yourselves treasures on earth... But lay up for yourself treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20). The "permanent comfort" of which he speaks is simply the "solid and permanent comforts of domestic life" (141). The parson's final diagnosis of domestic *dis*comfort can be summarized by his reference, not to a lack of religious obedience, but to "'inattention to'" the (in this context) purely economic, rather than metaphysical, categories of "'time and place'" (141). This understanding of the situation is stated in terms very close to Stepsure's materialistic and individualistic explanation of his own success--learning "that keeping everything in its own place... is a great saving of time and labour" (90).

The end of this discourse does lean toward religious moralism: "To your elegant appearance and feasting, as far as they are consistent with a christian deportment, I do not object" (141). However, Drone still makes sure that "elegant appearance and feasting" are also condemned by their temporal, material effects: "[F]or the sake of fine clothes and frolicking, either to involve your husbands in debt, or to be deprived of the real comforts of life during the greater part of the year" (141).

The younger Drone's final public discourse quoted in Book One mixes the listing of temporal and spiritual effects in its condemnation of the vice of "frolicking" (172): "What are those whose youth has passed away in frolicking amusements? Have they arrived at

religion? at respectability in life? at the enjoyment of happiness?" (173). Furthermore, the last sentence, and particularly the last phrase, of this passage makes clear that Drone is more concerned with the latter--respectability and happiness--and their opposites, than with religion: "They are the idle, wandering, drinking, bundling part of the town; in youth, characterized by their follies; in old age, loaded with contempt and misery" (173).

The Rejection of Practical Religion

The cause of the sudden end to the younger Drone's sermon on female economy signals a turning point in the reception of the parson's counsel by the community, as, "just at this part of his discourse, an alarm was given, that the pipe of the stove had caught fire, and kindled the roof" (141). The fact that the stove pipe becomes superheated at the same time as "the most of our females [who] now needed to be cooled" (141), cutting off Drone in mid-sentence, has at least the strong implication of sabotage. Whether or not this effect is deliberate on McCulloch's part, it certainly is true that this latest sermon has "kindled" a reaction best described as derisive hostility, quite unlike the mere bewilderment that greeted the parson's first topical sermon. The latest sermon encounters, besides the boredom and indignation I have already mentioned, the barely smothered laughter of "the young ladies of the Trotabout connexion" of whom "none of them believed travelling about the town to be a journey of sorrow" (139). As well, besides the more generalized apathy of his fellow parishioners, there is the fact that "Trot, who for several days before, had been running every where and asking every body, what Mr. Drone was going to preach about, fell fast asleep" (140). Compare this reception to that of the earlier sermon, because of which "some of the old people went away with melancholy faces" (41).

Though their reactions are skeptical, the only reaction *during* the service is to look "very grave" or "assume a [great] length of visage" (40). What has thus *progressively* undercut the younger Drone's attempts to impart practical counsel to his congregation is an increasing lack of confirming spiritual community, culminating in the reaction of the Sippits, who "when Mr. Drone preached upon training up children, ...improved his doctrine by a tea party and frolic, which usually concluded with a bundling" (174), once their "anger set all disposition to nod" (in sleep) "at defiance" (175). For the Sippits, Drone's sermons lead to the exact *opposite* of their purpose. The town as a whole may not be as extreme as the Sippits; however, it is probably at least as stubborn as Jack Scorem who "cared for" Mr. Ledger's advice "as little and minded it as little as one of parson Drone's sermons" (25).

Even in his fearsome younger years--"[i]n those days" (137), as Stepsure nostalgically puts it, indicating his preference for the pastor's earlier moralism--even then, the pastor's strength is not found in the support of the community, either implied or explicit, but rather in personal confrontation: "The visitation of parson Drone was a season of much solemnity among our religious people, and of no less quaking among transgressors" (137). In his visit to Soakem, though ineffective in its aim to dissuade Soakem from opening a tavern, Drone's demeanour and rhetoric implies at least some measure of the spiritual power which Drone still then had: "he thundered in his ears, that where one's sin is another man's gain, the judgement of God is the amount of the profit" (34)--though the comic overtones of one man thundering in another's ears (i.e. shouting in his face) are an example of Stepsure's debasing the seriousness of Drone's spiritual mission (about which more

later). Soakem's answer, though evasive, also shows that the "then young and spry" parson compelled consideration of moral as well as material consequences: "Mr. Soakem was not convinced: Houses of entertainment... might be very decently kept by religious people" (34).

The modicum of spiritual influence which Drone still wields in the community through personal confrontation is reduced even further in later encounters. For example, when he visits the jail, his presence is initially enough to cause the inmates to pretend repentance--"Immediately, they all expressed their gratitude and readiness to hear"--and to dampen Jack Scorem's anger: "[R]ecollecting that the parson was present, he again sat down" (55). However, when the stranger who first arouses Jack's ire reveals that the inmates are drinking and gambling in the prison, "Mr. Drone's presence commanded less respect" (56). In other words, the social power of the younger Drone's office is enough to compel outward conformity, but not genuine *shame*. The case of Miss Sippit also illustrates the dilution of Drone's influence even when the one he counsels *has been* driven toward shame: "When matters were in this state; though the Sippits do not like the parson, they were glad to send for him: and indeed, I may say, that, in our town, all who revile Mr. Drone, are very anxious to enjoy his presence, when adversity or death visits their families" (176). However, when "complete health returned, and with it the absence of all those gloomy thoughts which had alarmed her mind[,]" Miss Sippit decided "to have a large tea party and frolic, to celebrate her recovery" (177). Drone's rhetoric here is probably his most explicitly spiritual: "'[A] great deal of frolicking and a life such as human beings ought to lead, are utterly incompatible. Those who give the heart to pleasure, are

not lovers of God'" (174). In the same way, however, Drone's influence does not extend beyond the conventionally religious confines of his office: the domain of the spiritual. When Miss Sippit leaves that domain, and returns from the edge of the afterlife to 'life proper,' she cheerfully abandons the promises made in her "death bed repentance" (176).

Demonstrating the danger of such shallow spiritual understanding is one of the purposes of the prodigal's tale in Book Two. McCulloch keeps his touch much lighter here, with no greater consequences stemming from Miss Sippit's frivolity than Drone's derision and a "tea party and frolic" that does not live up to expectations. Even Drone's condemnation has a comic touch, as his biblical rhetoric is somewhat debased by too direct and moralistic an application to this situation: "*...though frolickers should live an hundred years, and rejoice in them all; let them remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many*" (177, italics McCulloch's). Compare this to the biblical original: "But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many" (Ecclesiastes 11:8). The crudely moralistic substitution of "*frolickers*" for the more universal "a man," and the implicit judgement that the Bible is too mild by substituting "*an hundred*" for "many" indicate Drone's eagerness to condemn roundly in an almost reactionary fashion. His rhetoric in this case thus subtly undercuts his own authority (another example of Stepsure showing the older parson's pietistic religion as somewhat overblown without its common sense foundations). The consequences which common sense would expect must therefore be demonstrated by Stepsure himself, since (in distinction from what he hears in the tale of the prodigal), Mephibosheth does not allow eternal consequences to become the issue here. The need to demonstrate the purely

temporal consequences of frolicking is thus met by the farcical account of Miss Sippit's party in Stepsure's next letter (Letter 17).

The visits of Drone to both the sheriff's prisoners and Miss Sippit indicate why Stepsure (and ultimately McCulloch) felt the back-up of common sense so necessary. McCulloch portrays a parson with virtually no spiritual influence at all--only the social power of religious convention in the case of the prisoners, and only temporary influence over such deathbed penitents as Miss Sippit. Saunders (more about his barbaric rhetoric later) summarizes the state of much of Drone's congregation: "the whole seed and generation of them are under the delusions of satan" and under the influence of "erroneous doctrine" (170). Both McCulloch and the younger Drone feel that they have no choice but to appeal, not to the spiritual understanding of their readers and listeners respectively, but simply their common sense. McCulloch undoubtedly hoped that common sense--"the gift of heaven" as Scottish Common-Sense philosopher Thomas Reid put it (Newell, 46)--was more prevalent among his readers than among Drone's congregation, since, to quote Reid again, "where heaven has not given it, no education can supply the want" (46). Stepsure thus becomes the ideal example of common sense allied with the proper practical "education," but also shares the lack of interest in spiritual matters of his fellow townsfolk. McCulloch creates what for him would be a flawed narrator because of his own need to work around the perceived spiritual shallowness of his readers (and his medium, *The Acadian Recorder*, which never preached to its readers "any sermons" (*Letters*, 39)). It is exactly this rhetorically necessary flaw which will be satirized in Book Two.

The material symptoms of the parson's lack of confirming spiritual community are both financial and legal. The link between his raising swine and the poverty in which his congregation leaves him, mentioned above, is later made explicit by Stepsure: "when our folks starve him, necessity has no law; pigs must be reared; and, of course, the feeding of the town restricted to the remnants and husks of his time" (186). As well, not only does the younger Drone's attempt to build a library meet mainly with abuse, but the donations he does receive come with strings firmly attached. Many simply believe it is "needless to throw away money upon parson Drone's nonsense," but "[e]very man who gave any thing , was determined to have a book to his own taste" (94). The identities of the donors and their choices illustrate two types of the religious dualism against which Drone originally fought, and to which he eventually succumbed. "Deacon Scruple, who had found the benefit of hymns when he was smuggling, [and] insisted upon getting a great many hymnbooks" is an example of simple hypocrisy, but "Mrs. Grumble's husband Job [who] voted for the Crook in the Lot" (94) is closer to the narrowed vision of the older parson. Job, who has married into the lazily and discontentedly pious Whinge family, would probably be familiar with the propositions of the first of the three linked sermons that comprise *The Crook in the Lot* (first published 1737):

> Prop I. Whatsoever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.
> Prop II. What God sees meet to mar, no one shall be able to mend in his lot.
> Prop. III. The considering of the crook in the lot as the work of God, or of His making, is a proper means to bring us to a proper deportment. (quoted from Davies' notes, 299)

The more obvious humour is the aptness of such a sermon from a man called Job, whose biblical namesake's patience is proverbial already by New Testament times (see James 5:11). That Job's last name is Grumble (though more applicable to his wife) leavens the

aptness with irony. The title also serves as a useful catch-phrase to typify Mrs. Grumble's later dissatisfaction with Stepsure's success: "[T]here had always been a crook in Job's lot and hers; ...if providence had been as kind to them as to Meph, they would have had a very different life of it" (100). Since we later learn that Job's failure is as unique to himself as Stepsure claims his success is *his* own, this is another example of Mephibosheth showing religion as being even a possible stumbling block to material success. Most importantly, however, the theology behind *The Crook in the Lot* is a challenge to the younger parson's spiritual backing for the work ethic he proclaims, and foreshadows the affective religion of the older parson, particularly in Proposition II, which is practically a paraphrase of his "standard consolation": "What can't be cured must be endured."

Besides the above-mentioned financial problems (with, indeed, spiritual ramifications), the younger Drone's isolated position is also evidenced by his legal troubles, both with the magistrates and with the sheriff. For instance, "[w]hen Mr. Drone found his arguments" against Mr. Soakem's desire to begin a tavern "ineffectual, he applied to the magistrates" (34) to prevent Soakem from getting a license. The magistrates invoke the same kind of religious dualism that will govern Drone's preaching in his declining years when they explain that "[t]hey were... not well pleased that parson Drone should interfere, and pretend to instruct them in their official duties: They never meddled with his preaching, and he had no right to interfere with them. Hence, ...partly from opposition to the parson, the license was granted" (35). This restriction of Drone's 'jurisdiction' is similar to the attitude which causes Miss Sippit to seek, and later to reject, Drone's counsel: "The most of our people keep Mr. Drone, not to instruct them, but to preach to them upon sundays;

and except when they are sick or dying, they take special good care... that he attend to his own duty, without interfering with any part of their management" (177).

What is also significant in this episode is the progression of Drone's argument, from initial appeal to the magistrates' moral sense--in strong spiritual, and expressly biblical, rhetoric--to (after his spiritual authority is rebuffed by their temporal authority) the enumeration of temporal consequences, again those visible to anyone with common sense. When Drone first applies to the magistrates, he threatens them with the possibility of sharing Soakem's guilt:

> He told them that taverns are at best but necessary nuisances.... He bid them... see how many had been ruined by living in their neighbourhood.... he told them that... if they placed temptation in the way of the unwary, they were the partakers of other men's sins; and might assure themselves that the wormwood and the gall would be shared between them. (34, underlining mine)

The first underlined phrase recalls the apostle Paul's admonition "that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way" (Romans 14:13, italics in text), as well as his exhortation in 1 Timothy 5:22 that Timothy should not "be partaker of other men's sins," a text from the same chapter as Drone's sermon on female economy. (Is McCulloch being *deliberately* ironic in alluding to this text from Timothy, since the next verse tells Timothy to "[d]rink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities"--thus undercutting, as Stepsure also does later, the purely spiritual justification for temperance?) The pairing of "wormwood" and "gall" occurs three times in the Bible--in Deuteronomy 29:18, and Jeremiah 9:15 and 23:15. The first biblical reference links wormwood and gall, appropriately (in the King James version), with drunkenness, when speaking of the confident idolater:

> 18 Lest there should be among young man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go *and* serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;
> 19 And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: (Deuteronomy 29:18,19; italics in text).

The occurrences of wormwood and gall in Jeremiah refer to divine wrath, reserved for, in both cases, as in Numbers, those who walk "after the imagination of their own heart" (Jeremiah 9:14, 23:17). The parson's phrasing thus also serves as an implicit condemnation of those whose moral insight has been dulled precisely by the dualism that confronts him in the persons of the magistrates, who feel they do not need him "to instruct them in their official duties."

Since the magistrates "walk after the imagination of their own heart," in rejecting the younger Drone's spiritual guidance in their legal deliberations, he is driven to substitute for his primarily spiritual rhetoric the common sense understanding of the temporal effects of the magistrates' decision when he speaks of it later to Stepsure. Other than the mention of the loss of "all personal and family religion" (37)--of unspecified content--when the Soakems set up as tavern keepers, his summary of their future misfortunes concentrates on their final *earthly*, rather than *heavenly*, disposition:

> In short, Mr. Soakem, between tasting at home and drinking abroad, will become a mere sot. His fine family of children will become the prey of ill example and idleness: And Mrs. Soakem, poor woman, who dreams of being rich, will come upon the town.... those who... are always travelling about... halt at the sheriff's. (37-38)

Again, Drone's rhetoric shifts from the primarily spiritual to the primarily secular under the pressure of the community's resistance to his moralism.

This resistance is further shown, more ambiguously but possibly also more lethally, by the sheriff's seeming sabotage of the younger Drone's wishes in the matter of the "poor

gentleman in confinement" (56). The stranger's sudden appearance in the sheriff's 'lodging-house' has the effect, ironically, of exposing Drone's lack of influence when the poor gentleman "turned up the bed which concealed the bottles and tumblers; at the same time assuring him [Drone] that, if every man's pockets did not contain a pack of cards, he would retract what he had said" (55). The parson's attitude and speech evokes the divine judgement of the world just before the Deluge. Compare "Our worthy old clergyman, lifting up his hands, declared that he did not think there had been such wickedness upon the earth" (55, underlining mine) to the Biblical "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth" (Genesis 6:5, italics and caps in text). The parson's despair is parallelled by the fact that his presence suddenly "commanded less respect."

In spite of this humiliation, Drone becomes fast friends with the stranger. Gwendolyn Davies' note (290) makes clear how congenial the economists they discuss would be to McCulloch's emphasis on the economic importance of agriculture, but Adam Smith has a particular importance in the context of this thesis. His concept of the "invisible hand" parallels the synthesis between religion and common sense that Drone has been attempting to create. The invisible hand is reminiscent of Providence, but ultimately, Adam Smith's use of the term is purely metaphorical: the free market works *as if* it were directed by an invisible hand. If the term ever had religious connotations, they have been lost in the attempt to justify an ideology (laissez-faire capitalism) through 'objective' Enlightenment methodology, in which utilitarian considerations are at least on par with 'purely' moral or spiritual ones. This is exactly the risk that the younger Drone runs with his own blend of

religion and common sense: preaching himself out of the picture by making religion unnecessary for morality.

Two details of the stranger's story indicate how spiritually far gone Drone's charges are. First of all, his very imprisonment results from Deacon Sharp's finding him unable to pay the fine for breaking the Sabbath day, with Drone's implicit disapproval--"The parson... thought it a hard case, and promised to speak to the magistrates about him" (56)--again indicating the rift between the younger Drone and the community. That a deacon, whose function was to help the poor, should throw a man in jail because he did not have enough money is ironic enough, but the fact that his willingness to serve his "oath" is based on pragmatic considerations indicates the corruption possible in a utilitarian approach to ethics (an ironic insight given what we shall see is Stepsure's own pragmatic morality): "[R]ightly judging that this was neither a Halifax gentleman, who might be affronted and injure the town, nor any of the neighbours who regularly travel from necessity upon the Lord's day, he resolved to make him a warning to others" (56).

The stranger's untimely end may also show the decline of the younger Drone's influence, as McCulloch at least implies foul play. Stepsure initially both opens and closes this can of worms: "I was... surprised to find that the stranger was dead. Had he remained with the sheriff's other lodgers, I would have been disposed to think that he had not received fair play; but as things were, I was at a loss to account for it" (57). While this seemingly absolves the sheriff of blame, it does not address the issue of motive. Presumably the stranger's dramatic exposure of the other inmates' vices is as embarrassing to the sheriff as it is to Drone. As well, the potential alliance between the moralistic parson

and the stranger--who, through his letters, "upbraids every class of the community with so much boldness, and at the same time, with so much justice" (74)--would undoubtedly be a source of alarm for the sheriff, who like the other gadabouts of the town, "is a very genteel man... [who] is forced at times to be abroad in the evening" (60). Thus it is striking that it is after "Mr. Drone took the sheriff's promise to give him something to eat" (56) that the prisoner died, as the jury considers putting it, "*by the visitation of the sheriff*" through the sheriff's lethal cabbage, a verdict that would lead to the sheriff being "brought in for manslaughter" (57, italics McCulloch's). The jury's eventual verdict, "*Died, because he could not live any longer*" (58, italics McCulloch's), is not a reassuring contrast, since it is brought forward mainly due to the influence of "Mr. Gawpus, who is the sheriff's cousin" (57).

(It is significant in itself, in the context of this thesis, that one of the stranger's letters is reprinted in Book One, and none in Book Two. Its only mention of religion is in the context of the "large sums" which Great Britain "expends... upon our government, education, and religion" (72), without, then, any reference to religious understanding (or the lack thereof) as a cause of the Province's "state with which almost every man is dissatisfied" (68).)

The Retreat into Patient Resignation

Whether or not the sheriff was indeed one of the younger Drone's opponents, the fact remains that in general, the parson's efforts at reform through moral suasion and common sense meet with failure. The final result of the pastor's failed attempts to integrate the Gospel and daily life is his surrender to a religious dualism which turns Christianity into

nothing more than a source of consolation. Stepsure's initial reference to Drone's "old standard consolation" is soon followed by the implicit judgement of such consolation as being the work of a "quack at comforting" (7). McCulloch indicates the insufficiency of the older Drone's affective religion by the impatient (but also factually flawed, from McCulloch's point of view) reply of Mr. Gosling to

> the reverend old gentleman's standard consolation: *What can't be cured must be endured: let us have patience.*
>
> "I'll tell you what it is, parson," replied my neighbour, "patience may do very well for those who have plenty; but it won't do for me.... The truth is, parson, the country does not deserve to be lived in...." (11, italics McCulloch's)

McCulloch thus shows that those who lack the common sense to see the province's physical possibilities are just as unreceptive to genuine spiritual counsel. He further indicates that the older Drone's counsel to Stepsure to "exercise a little patience" is not so much an appeal to virtue as it is merely a platitude conditioned by the parson's accommodation to his own circumstances--"by poverty and depression, so completely shut out from society, that he has become almost an entire stranger to the ways and even language of the world" (52). Another irony of the older Drone's affective religion is that it too, like the Deacon's self-righteous performance of his duty with the indigent stranger, is limited by pragmatic considerations (even if those considerations are less selfish than the Deacon's). Speaking of whether to publish the stranger's letters, "[t]he parson says, that what can't be cured, must be endured; and then patience must be exercised: but, that no man ought to subject himself to reproach merely for the sake of showing patience under it; and, therefore, he will take time to consider" (74).

The final example of the older Drone's standard consolation illustrates exactly how great a social defeat his pietism was. The magistrates, "who were not well pleased that

Parson Drone should interfere, and pretend to instruct them in their official duties" and the "townsmen" who "take special good care... that he attend to his own duty, without interfering with any part of their management" would presumably be delighted with the practical ineffectuality of his "doctrine of patience" which, Stepsure notes with concern, Drone now

> prescribes even in cases which appear to need immediate relief. When Tubal Thump's young daughter in law came, the other day, with black eyes, to Drone, complaining of her husband; he only told her, that what can't be cured must be endured; and that, even though her husband should beat her frequently, the best way was to stay at home and take it; for patience might bring a blessing along with it, which would do her good in the end. (123)

Certainly Tubal Thump's son cannot complain of the impotent parson's "interfering."

The parson's reduced religion may seem irrelevant in a narrative written by and about Stepsure, but it is precisely Stepsure's limited understanding of Drone's original common sense moralism that is the basis for the implicit satire of Stepsure in Book Two. Stepsure is the only person who seems to have actually patterned his character after the younger Drone's counsel. Even Saunders, though generally approving of Drone's "doctrine," does not seem to feel the need of it himself. Saunders is not so much instructed by Drone's discourses as affirmed in what he already believes, and indeed believes more strongly (or at least more crudely) than the parson himself. He demands both that the cursing Steer be put "to death for his blasphemies" and "that parson Drone should cast him out of the church" (45) something which Drone is neither prepared nor, given his lack of influence in the community, likely to be able to do. While Drone is content with the general warning against Peter Longshanks' dancing school "that dancing frolics did harm without good,"

Saunders warns Peter Longshanks to be "considering what account he would give of his legs on the day of judgement" (47).

By the time the pastor has given in to pietism, and confined the societal application of what Saunders calls his "true and plain" doctrine to the consolation "that when the state of society gets wrong to a certain extent, it then begins to get better of itself[,]" Saunders describes the getting better with an earthy, self-righteous specificity that the older Drone's truism lacks:

> He says that the calamities of the ne'er do well villains, are the dawning of a bright day for Nova Scotia; when every... running about vagabond will be driven into the woods; and a race of decent, industrious folk like Stepsure will inherit the land. (123)

Of course, there is also considerable irony in Stepsure's quotation of Saunders' praise of him, particularly when the last clause echoes the third Beatitude: "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5, italics in text), which itself implicitly quotes two verses from Psalm 37--verse 11: "the meek shall inherit the earth"--and verse 22: "*such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth" (italics in text). Stepsure's quoting Saunders in this instance hardly befits a meek man, but it does fit "the shift from vanity to modesty" (li) that Gwendolyn Davies notes. The more direct biblical source for Saunders' commendation of Stepsure, however, is a later verse from Psalm 37--verse 29: "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever." The promised dwelling of the righteous in the land "for ever" fits in nicely with the eschatological implications of Saunders' hope for "the dawning of a bright day for Nova Scotia," and like Drone's rhetoric, identifies the province as a promised land. The fact that Saunders' praise alludes more directly to the Old Testament than the New also rings true to Saunders' view of the

consequences of wrong moral action, as I will discuss later when I look at Saunders as a contrast to Stepsure.

The last item on the list of Saunders' radical extensions of Drone's rhetoric is his fantasized plan to bring the Attorney General's criticism of Nova Scotians' "extravagance in dress" (187) to Stepsure's fellow townspeople. Saunders wants to bring the Attorney General's criticism to their notice because he claims that his "speech.... is as good as one of parson Drone's best sermons" (188), implicitly setting himself up as worthy to judge either discourse, just as he has earlier granted that his own minister "had some sense and religion" (117).

Thus it is that even Drone's most enthusiastic follower finds him wanting. Of course, this is precisely one of Saunders' functions: to underline Drone's lack of power and temperamental inability to effect change in his spiritual charge. However, Saunders is a less than credible speaker in Kulyk Keefer's *Eastern Eyes*: "One feels that McCulloch sets him up as Stepsure's straight man and also as a deflector for the queasy or revolted feelings that Stepsure's morality inspires in the average reader" (41). "One" might readily agree with the first part of this assessment, since Saunders' first appearance, in italicized Scottish dialect, paints him as almost ludicrously aggressive in his self-righteousness, as he "brandished a new axe handle" (*Letters*, 17) in the direction of the hypocritically moralistic Jack Scorem. However, the explicitly Biblical rhetoric in which Saunders' self-righteousness is habitually couched is not meant simply to take the heat off Stepsure, but to actually discredit a more purely spiritual (rather than pragmatic) basis for McCulloch's ethic of prudence--to discredit, as does Drone's later affective religion, the

application of mere religious feeling (even if correct) to ethical judgement. Where Drone originally mixes, largely unsuccessfully, spiritual and practical reasoning, Saunders uses an almost entirely conventional religious philosophy to condemn all those who stray from the ethic of prudence. His outrageous judgementalism is not meant merely to dissociate that aspect of Stepsure's reasoning from him, but to indicate that though the spiritually 'enlightened' might concur with Mephibosheth, their agreement is beside the point, since pragmatic considerations alone are enough to prompt morally correct action, at least for those with common sense. On various occasions, Saunders condemns his fellow townspeople as "the Philistines, or else the children of Ishmael" (29), as "Hittites and Perizzites, who... should be hunted out from Dan to Beersheba" (53), as "the last remnant of the Canaanites" (61), as those who "get themselves drowned in the Red Sea" (63), as "a generation of vipers" (75), and as like "the drunkards of Ephraim" who deserve to "be carried away into utter captivity" (82-83), and as "one of Solomon's women, who are clamorous and know nothing" (117, see Davies' note on 301). All but the third-last of these descriptions come from the Old Testament, and all of them are Biblical descriptions of the inhabitants of Palestine before and after the Exodus (thus implying that McCulloch's province is a kind of Promised Land). Even the one exception I have noted comes from the mouth of a typical Old-Testament-style preacher, John the Baptist (Matthew 3:5). Thus Saunders, more than either Drone or Stepsure, lives imaginatively in the Old Testament, a time in which it was widely thought that judgement for sin was direct, temporal, and divinely declared. McCulloch does not simply use Saunders to say what his creator dare not put in Stepsure's mouth. Rather, Saunders' rhetoric is useful because it

confirms both Stepsure's righteousness and his rationality. Stepsure accepts Saunders' praise, but he does not recommend moral action or condemn immoral action on the basis of either Saunders' implicit threats of divine judgement or the parson's promises of future bliss, but simply on the clearly visible temporal consequences of a given course of action. Ironically, then, Saunders' Old Testament moralism does undercut, but (and this is important) *ineffectively*, Stepsure's practical religion, and so portrays moral absolutes unsupported by experience or logic as somewhat 'barbaric.' Thus the contrast between Saunders' rhetoric and Stepsure's moralism is not merely between overt and covert self-righteousness, as Kulyk Keefer implies, but between two different threats against poor moral choices: externally imposed divine judgment and inherent consequences. Both are equally moralistic and judgemental, but Stepsure's emphasis is more consistent with secular common sense.

The Tension 'Resolved': Practical Becomes Pragmatic

That Stepsure himself mistrusts Saunders' rhetoric, and the potential for self-righteous action that derives from it, is evident from his ironic reportage of Saunders' affirmation of the need for Mephibosheth's writing:

> My word, he said, was not believed; because the country was swarming with a set of idle vagabonds like the sheriff's people, who were not willing to see themselves described: ...That... the good of the province required that all such ne'er do well vagabonds, whether in the possession of the sheriff or out of it, should be hunted out from Dan to Beersheba: And finally he concluded with saying, that, if I would not write; though he was dead ill at the spelling, he would... do it himself. When he was gone, my old woman observed that Saunders Scantocreesh was a solid, sensible man; and I resolved to continue my relation. (52-53)

The observation that Saunders is "a solid, sensible man[,]" significantly not Stepsure's own, comes after Saunders' less than solid, sensible tirade. Stepsure's resolve "to continue

my relation" is thus less a result of Saunders' encouragement than of Stepsure's fear that if "I would not write; ...he would... do it himself" and get into far more trouble with his threats of divine judgement (with human execution) that Stepsure's appeal to common sense could ever bring upon himself.

(A final irony of Saunders' self-presentation is his own probably inadvertent inversion of Christ's parable of the treasure found in the field, from Matthew 13:44: "'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.'" Saunders buys the earthly farm of Stepsure's neighbour Fairface, not with "all that he hath," but rather with money from "the leg of an old stocking tied at both ends, ...as many doubloons as satisfied the sheriff.... [and] tying up the remainder" (63). In a sense, he gives up the treasure to buy the field, since he tells "the jokers" that he has found the money "turning up his fields" (63). The fact that Saunders "therefore, advised us all to do the same thing, and perhaps we might be as fortunate" (63) is both, obviously, an exhortation to agricultural diligence, and very possibly an allusion to Aesop's fable about the dying father who advised his sons, for the same reason, to dig up the vineyard to find a hidden treasure, English translations of which were published in London as early as 1647 and 1651. For the sake of McCulloch's pragmatism, even the fiercely biblical Saunders gains a classical education.)

Ultimately, Stepsure (though not McCulloch, as Book Two will make clear) rejects both the rhetoric of development of spirit and character of Drone and the rhetoric of divine judgement of Scantocreesh Saunders. To the extent that Stepsure has profited from the younger Drone's advice, it has been less through religious *devotion* than through

practical *application* of Christian ethics to the restricted realm of the home. He acknowledges that (unlike most of his confreres in the town) "even I myself have been edified by the discourses of our worthy old parson" (39), but makes clear that his earliest edification applies to his relationship, not with God, nor even with the wider community, but with his intended wife: "As it is foolish to pay a parson to instruct us and not follow his advice, I married Dorothy" (41).

The last sermon quoted which changes Stepsure himself, the stricture against frolicking, also receives his typical pragmatically restricted application. While the parson, as we have seen, lists both spiritual and temporal effects of "frolicking amusements," Stepsure summarizes the results of following Drone's "advice about the management of youth" (177) in two essentially pragmatic ways. Firstly, as an exact converse of Drone's prediction of Soakem's eventual destiny, Stepsure explains what *earthly* destination his children have avoided--"My children... are strangers to those habits which have forced many of our people to accept the sympathy of the sheriff"--and secondly he refers to the satisfaction of successful parents: "[F]rom their general conduct, my spouse and I derive as much satisfaction, as reasonable parents should expect from youth" (177). Besides the fact that no spiritual progress is adverted to, there is also no indication that Stepsure is thinking of anything other than behaviour when he indicates his approval: it is prompted not by any deeper insights into character or values, but only by observation of their lack of adverse "habits" and their worthy "conduct."

Besides the change brought about through these sermons, any changes in Stepsure's life occur through Drone's ministry to him personally. Stepsure does, admittedly, acknowledge

the "'influence of external circumstances upon human conduct and character'" (37) of which Drone speaks, and gives as an example in his own life that "[f]rom experience I know it to be true, that an inclination to read, is an incalculable gain; that... it leads to those sober and steady habits which constitute character, and qualify persons for the duties of the social life" (93). The first phrase I have underlined is a bow to Drone's stress on character development, but the second, significantly, reflects Stepsure's characteristic need to back up Drone's judgements with evidence that the resulting change of conduct and character has practical consequences. In the episode to which the first quotation in this paragraph refers--Soakem's tavern-keeping--Stepsure, just as Drone has been driven to do, sums up the consequences with a description of Soakem's *earthly* destination: "And when I arrived at the sheriff's, I found Mr. Soakem, with eyes like collops, poring over the cards and the grog before him" (38). The drunkard's pathetic character is united to his pathetic destination.

A more consistent narrowing of the younger Drone's message to matters of material practicality occurs when Stepsure reports Mr. Drone's "solid and sensible discourse" (119) upon the occasion of Stepsure's marriage. The parson treats "affection" as at least a penultimate *end*, along with "domestic comfort," and makes its maintenance a moral concern with the word "willingly":

> [A] husband's house is the home of his wife; she clings to him, as the vine clings to the elm, and when he willingly gives her poverty for a companion, he kills affection by the roots, and domestic comfort dies along with it; so that even when they have something to eat, they eat it with bitter herbs. (120)

Stepsure's reaction, on the other hand, ignores the figurative vegetation of Drone's rhetoric to look at its concrete counterparts, and treats affection as a *means* to a material end:

> [W]hen I was slashing down the woods, ...my affection for Dorothy and the Widow, made the strokes fall thick, and made every stroke tell.
>
> By these means, fields and crops rose very fast about my little hut. (120)

Stepsure also 'materializes' the younger Drone's "serious advice" to Dorothy, Mephibosheth's wife, on "the connexion between female happiness and home" (121). The parson's usual connection between present earthly duties and future heavenly rewards still implies that the future is the more important: "Religion qualifies people to go to heaven, because it prepares them to do their duty in the mean time.... Our duty in this life is a trust from God; and whoever looks forward to the true riches must take care to be faithful in that which is least" (122). For Drone, "that which is least," even if it is "a trust from God," is simply the "duty" which we must do "in the mean time"--in other words, while we are *waiting* for the "true riches" of "heaven." Even in Drone's early ministry there is thus a touch of what Stepsure calls, in the paragraph immediately following this discourse, "the doctrine of patience" (123). When Stepsure, on the other hand, comments on the religion that "lived there" in the house of the Widow (Dorothy's mother), he describes not its content, but simply its effects: its "companions" are "industry and contentment" (124). This approval of the right kind of religion for its utility is closely followed by an implied critique, again on practical grounds, of religion whose companions are not industry and contentment: "...[N]either praying nor grumbling will pull the cart out of the mire" (125).

The same sequence of quoting the younger Drone and using his speech as a take-off point for the *condemnation* of a certain type of religion (rather than the commendation of

Drone's) occurs when Stepsure prints the parson's praise of Mephibosheth's wife Dorothy, and her economy, because, as Drone says, "'I am glad that you understand and practice the duties of religion so well'" (132). The younger Drone, as is his wont, links female economy and religion with a criticism of those guilty of "singing hymns in the midst of rags and dirt" and the observation that "where cleanliness and economy are wanting, there is... very little religion" (132). As well, he seeks Biblical warrant for his views in the account of the creation of Eve (Genesis 2:18) with the assertion that "[f]emales were given to be helps[,] and in a reference to Proverbs 11:22 (as Davies notes on page 302). Mephibosheth verifies the parson's words in secular and temporally experiential terms--"I, who know the wife of old Whinge, Mrs. Drab, Mrs. Slabber, and, indeed, the whole of the neighbours, know likewise, that he had just cause for all that he said, and for a great deal more" (134). Stepsure's support of the younger Drone's "discourse" is, of course, ironic, given that he has disclaimed responsibility for Drone's words--"If there be any blame, it is the parson's" (134)--but it is also merely prefatory to his own discourse on Mrs. Whinge's "very religious... uneasiness" about "what she calls the stinking pride of our young people" (134).

When Stepsure does quote Drone approvingly at one point in this narrative of Mrs. Whinge's slatternly religion, it is with specific reference to the practical religion of "his younger days" when "he would exhort us never to receive any kind of religion, which did not tend to make us wiser and better, to exalt human nature above the inferior creation; and particularly which did not draw us to home, and make it the abode of rational and religious enjoyment" (135). While Stepsure does describe the "character" of the slovenly

Mrs. Whinge in the paragraph prefaced by the above quotation, the major part of his description focuses not on the failure of Mrs. Whinge's religion to "exalt human nature", rather, Stepsure details the concrete *physical* effects of the religion which causes Mrs. Whinge to "mistake dirt for humility": "a mouse drowned in the milk, or hairs and other little straggling articles in food" (135), "a frog" that "was not, in the opinion of the old folks, sufficient to spoil good broth," and the verminous "bedfellows" which bred in Mrs. Whinge's never uncovered head, and which would make their "departure" (136) in church.

Stepsure's next quotation from the younger Drone, an extensive and detailed one--one-and-a-half pages, complete with at least six scriptural quotations, as noted by Davies (303-304)--is prefaced with the ironically modest qualifier that "as nearly as I can recollect, the following is the amount of what Drone said" (152). (Stepsure's recollection is undoubtedly aided by Drone's immediately preceding praise for Mephibosheth's industry: "*Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing*" [152, italics McCulloch's]). While Drone's advice mixes, in his typical way, sacred rhetoric and secular common sense, it is precisely this mixture that is ignored by Stepsure. Drone's statement that "[w]hether he be found prostrate at the altar of God, or rolling logs in his field, *Well done good and faithful servant,* will be the salutation of Christ" (153, italics McCulloch's), receives no acknowledgement in Stepsure's agreement: "Our parson seemed to me to speak very sensibly. I, therefore stuck to my farm, and sure enough, every thing turned out exactly as Drone said.... I, whose friendship both magistrates and militia officers are now very willing to cultivate, am/ Mephibosheth Stepsure" (154). Stepsure both omits any reference to sacred ritual--Drone's being "prostrate at the altar"--and

substitutes for the mention of divine favour--the "salutation of Christ"--an ironic reference to human favour.

Stepsure's response to Drone's discourse upon "curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, as philosophers term it" (156) also omits any trace of Drone's less timebound concerns. The parson claims that, among other causes, the unwillingness to satisfy one's curiosity through the "perusal of books" leads to a "wandering disposition" and even possibly to "a habit of drinking, which, in the face of reason and religion, and at the expence [sic] of true enjoyment and happiness in eternity" (156). He praises books for their potential to allow one to "converse with the living and the dead" (157). Stepsure, as he usually does, takes Drone's advice, as he tells us in the next paragraph: "For myself I can only say, that, having found a *home* and society there, I had no wish to wander. I gradually furnished myself also with a good collection of books" (157, italics McCulloch's). However, he gives no description of the contents or the intellectual benefits of his books. Neither does he link the fact that he has "never felt the least inclination to go to Tipple's" (157), with the avoidance of the loss of "happiness in eternity." Furthermore, the next four pages explain how the "wandering disposition" and its causes bring poverty upon their bearers, and conversely, how Stepsure's "domestic disposition" has *materially* enriched him.

Another example of Stepsure's narrowed ethical perspective concerns the remarks of the "old parson" on "the cards[,]" primarily addressing their spiritual and their wider social effects:

> [H]e has frequently told us, that, before a religious man admit them into his house, he should be sure that their admission originates in a degree of good sense and piety, superior to the principles of those who have reprobated cards, as an amusement unfriendly alike to personal religion and the sober education of youth: And, also, that, before any parent employ them as a domestic recreation, he should ask himself, if,

> along with them. He be willing to grapple with his share of that misery which they have entailed upon the world. (171)

Stepsure does indeed address the moral degradation that accompanies card-playing--"amusement and drinking, swearing and fighting" (172)--and thus illustrates how the cards are "an amusement unfriendly... to personal religion[.]" However, he does not address the wider moral issue that Drone implicitly raises, of whether it is ethical to use any amusement which has had pernicious effects on others--"that misery which they have entailed upon the world." Instead, consistent with Stepsure's narrower, more short-term focus, he details the immediate effects of card-playing upon the players themselves, in typical Common Sense rhetoric: "[T]he experience of our townsmen presents no encouragement to any rational man to be a great player at cards.... [L]osses beget ill humour; and some how or other, ill humour discovers successful gamesters to be rogues" (172).

Thus it is that Stepsure consistently narrows the spiritual bases and implications of Drone's ethics. He also clearly indicates that the affective evaluation of religious moralism is mistaken when he quotes the Sippits' irrelevant objection to Drone's condemnation of frolicking: "Religion, they would add, was not intended to make men miserable" (174). This is similar to Mr. Sippit's immaterial (in both senses) explanation of his problem with Bible reading: "[W]hen he was a boy, he had experienced that it always made him dull and melancholy" (175).

If others may have been misguided in their attitude to religion, and Drone has been unsuccessful, both philosophically and practically, in integrating doctrine and ethics, then Stepsure has been even more limited in not seeing the need to make the attempt. His

attitude can be summarized by his explanation for the urgent need for a new sheriff: "Our parson looks after the souls of his flock: but they have bodies too; and... in these times, the most of people's bodies cost them far more trouble than their souls; so that such a man as the sheriff, who kindly takes charge of them, is both very useful, and has a great deal to do" (62). Stepsure's corporeal focus, though it may have seemed necessary to reach an audience that McCulloch felt was as shallow as his narrator, would also make necessary a house whose link to heaven is more explicit than the "religion" and "gratitude" of "the Widow Scant's little hut" (124), a need fulfilled by what modern readers may feel is the parochially claustrophobic house of William's parents, in Book Two, but which unites spiritual communion with its concrete symbols.

One reason that Stepsure might be so unreceptive to, and even sceptical about, a spiritual framework for ethics is that, ultimately, Stepsure's mentor has been Squire Worthy, rather than Drone. The very origin of Stepsure's apprenticeship under the Squire involves his body costing "far more trouble" than the town's monetary contribution will make worth his raising (under the law which Davies describes on page 297): "[N]obody would bid for me; for who, it was said, would take the trouble of bringing up a creature that would never be worth its victuals?" (86). Though the Squire reproaches the townsfolk for their lack of "humanity[,]" he still tells "the overseers of the poor to allow him a reasonable sum" (86), and thus assigns a monetary value to the task of raising Stepsure. Stepsure's vindication against the lack of humanity of the town takes a strikingly material form as well, as "the very man who had declared me to be a creature not worth my victuals, tempted me with an offer of great wages, to get away from the Squire and to live

with him" (90). Though Stepsure's refusal is motivated by the fact that "I loved my master[,]" it is also true that self-interest is involved--"I must say for him, that he always treated me like a son" (90). Of course, he has not in fact been treated as a son, especially by the Squire's wife, who "frequently" reminds him of his material status, or lack thereof: "that I was a poor orphan, without parents to take care of me; and therefore, I must learn to take care of myself" (88). Stepsure leaves the Squire with a consideration of how to "consult his own interest as carefully as I had attended to his" in choosing between "the money which he [the Squire] had received from the overseers, or one of his wood lots" (95). Stepsure chooses the land, because it is "by far the best offer" (95). His apprenticeship, then, is depicted as a series of exercises in material valuation.

The Squire seemingly shows a charitable spirit superior to Stepsure's--"[A]s he did not seem to have a worldly wish beyond the desire of seeing every body about him comfortable, his family always enjoyed abundance; and the neighbours looked up to him in all their little straits" (87). Stepsure shows, however, that the Squire's situation is different than his own, since "he could afford both to live better and to show more hospitality than those around him" (87). In Book One, though, there never seems to come a point at which Stepsure's prosperity moves him to be as generous as the Squire (another flaw which will be addressed in Book Two).

However even if he ignores the Squire's *example* of generosity, Stepsure does follow, and remark upon, the Squire's *counsel* more faithfully than he does Drone's moralizing, as with, for example, the Squire's advice against becoming indebted to merchants (98). It is also striking that while Stepsure does not pick up on the title which Drone gives to

Christ--"Can he, then, who has disregarded the injunction of his master, say at his appearance, *I have been glorifying thee upon the earth*" (153, italics McCulloch's)--he continues to call the Squire "my master" (101) even after making his own start.

The Condemnation of Affective Religion Proper

Whether or not Stepsure has the excuse of his upbringing for his sceptical attitude toward supernatural comfort, that attitude, whatever its cause, still undermines Drone, and not only when Drone is the direct object of Mephibosheth's restricted vision. The same focus upon material practicality extends as well to his satire of, for instance, Whinge, who "in a strait, never thought of exerting himself and making his young people work harder: all his comfort was derived from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus" (127)--which, as Davies notes (301), refers to Luke 16:19-31. By using Whinge as the typical example of the wrong 'use' of religion--to evade personal responsibility--Stepsure, however, unwittingly denies the possibility of *genuine* comfort in the parable. For the parable, though Whinge misapplies it to himself, has much greater relevance to the older Drone. The parson, like Lazarus, lives upon the crumbs of a community, which while far from rich, is at least considerably better off than him: "he has the good wishes of us all," true, but he also "has hard work to make the two ends meet" (73). Like the skin-diseased Lazarus, who likely would have been, by Mosaic law (Leviticus 13:46), an outcast, Drone too is "by poverty and depression, ...completely shut out from society" (52). That, as in the case of Lazarus, no blame attaches to his poverty (as is not the case with Whinge) is shown by how hard Drone works: "[B]etween additional parish duty and killing some pigs for the winter, he has been very much hurried" (73). The final similarity is that the older

Drone derives little or no comfort from earthly pleasures, but rather from spiritual consolation (even if not yet, like Lazarus, the bosom of Abraham): "his principal comfort, he says, is derived from the Scotch and English divines" (52).

However, although Whinge's application of the parable of Lazarus to himself is dishonest, Whinge's religion *is* still much like the older parson's in one respect, the stress on affect: "every religious man must live above the world, and derive his comfort from his religious frames" (126). The difference, of course, is that while the older Drone is somewhat pathetic, though sincere, Whinge is simply hypocritical, and his religion essentially an excuse for laziness:

> though at home he lived, I believe, pretty much above the world; in his neighbours' houses, he never found fault with earthly things for being too many or too good.... Whinge... professes a great love of bible societies and other good institutions: but he has nothing to give them.... The work, he says, is God's... (127)

At the same time, Drone's counsel to Whinge is the only explicitly religious reference to work in Book One which includes the Puritan exhortation to charity I have mentioned: "I have frequently heard parson Drone tell him, that, though a religious man care nothing about worldly comforts, industry, as it affords the means of doing good, is an indispensible [sic] duty" (127). Ironically, unlike much of the advice that Stepsure takes to heart (whether intended specifically for him or not), this dictum never seems to motivate Stepsure's work ethic. Charity outside the sphere of his extended family is also outside the sphere of his interest or consideration (in Book One, anyway).

Ultimately, then, for Stepsure, the religious rhetoric of transcendence, because it stresses attitude over action, is often either irrelevant, or even actually opposed to practical ethics. Drone's counsel of patience is simply the result of a situation in which he

has no other choice, and Whinge's stress on spiritual comfort seems designed to conceal his self-serving wish to gain physical comfort at others' expense.

However, just as the older Drone's sincerity sets him apart from Whinge, so his earlier attempts to bring together practical and spiritual considerations distinguish him from the other 'preachers' in town. The difference, for Stepsure and those like him, between the parson and Sham, Howl, and Clippit is that, as Saunders puts it, "Drone's doctrine is both true and plain" (123). The parson has become so ineffectual primarily because his counsel, though correct, has not been effective--has not, to use a biblical phrase, met with faith in the hearers.

To begin with the ladies, the tumblers and roarers have never been the least concerned about, as Stepsure terms them, the practical "fruits" (118) of their religion. In fact, since Saunders "wrought pretty hard, Mrs. Sham declared him to be in a natural state"--though Saunders is not "easily alarmed" by her judgement on his 'carnality': "he said that slothfulness in business is no mark of fervency of spirit" (115). Sham and Clippit are most concerned about how religion shows in one's demeanour (again affect over effect): "...these ladies at last became so acute, that, by looking into a person's face, they could ascertain his state precisely" (115). Their rhetoric and Stepsure's description of their activities turns his pragmatic vocabulary on its head in a way that brings affective religion to a *reductio ad absurdum*. Like the rational man, they rely on their "experiences[,]" (115, 117) but the context for each use of this word indicates how unreal these experiences are: "and how they felt" (115), and "long stories which they had learned from one another" (117). Though the ladies "by practice improve in religion[,]" it is clear that they *do not*

"improve in religion as well as in other things" (115). The ladies' religion is not linked to "other things," as Stepsure's ironic description of the effects of Sham's attendance at religious meetings indicates: "When Mrs. Sham... returns from her meetings; her girls, as they well deserve, receive both scolding and beating for their neglect of family affairs" (171). We are clearly to understand that the neglect is in reality Mrs. Sham's own.

Shadrach Howl does link religion to one's earthly fate, but only in a way that has no general ethical implications beyond adherence to his version of 'the' right doctrine: "[T]he Reverend Shadrach Howl... declares, that our calamities are a judgement upon the town for rejecting his doctrine" (28). Stepsure's account of Howl's self-ordination shows Shadrach's message to be as lazily self-serving as Whinge's, as Howl, "being tired of chopping down trees, converted himself into a preacher of the gospel" (28). The irony of the phrase "converting himself" indicates the self-deceiving nature of affective religion. This description is in the sentence after Stepsure has told us that "no man who can become rich by head work will ever submit to the drudgery of farming" (28). Howl's head work is the futile converse of the younger Drone's practical advice that "the property of the town at the time, could not make us all wealthy; and therefore, that, if we would all be rich; we must, by labour, add as much to its value, as would enrich us all" (28), an entirely pragmatic exhortation, with which Stepsure, naturally, agrees: "I am inclined to think that our parson told us the truth" (28).

Even Saunders' perspective on the affective religionists keeps their condemnation in the realm of the practical and material when, for instance, he speaks of "Mrs. Sham" and "sister Clippit," who "[i]nstead of minding their own affairs, and living comfortably like

other decent folks ...ran about the country in idleness, preying upon their neighbours the one half of the year, and starving the other" (117)--affective religion as an *economic* failure. Affective religion's baleful financial influence also works against true religion: "[W]hen a decent minister... happened to come among them; they soon starved him away" (117).

The rest of this passage is interesting as a contrast between Saunders' and Drone's uses of biblical authority. In Saunders' earthy rhetoric, the "decent minister's" replacement is certainly doctrinally, but even more *practically*, inadequate, as the end of the following passage indicates: "[W]hen necessity forced the poor gentlemen to remind them, that the labourer is worthy of his hire; his whole congregation would forsake him, to run after the like of Shadrach Howl, whom no careful man would trust with the feeding of his swine" (117, underlining mine). The *double* underlined phrase in this quotation comes verbatim from Luke 10:7, and implicitly from 1 Timothy 5:18--"The labourer *is* worthy of his reward" (italics in text). The first reference is to Jesus' instructions to His disciples, thus granting the "decent minister" (of which Drone is one example) an implicit commission direct from Christ. The second of these two scriptural passages is significant because it comes from the same chapter as Drone's text for his sermon on female economy, and thus offers us an opportunity to see the difference between the rhetoric of Drone and Saunders when working with the same biblical passage.

While Drone uses the admonition of verse 14--"I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house"--largely as a take-off point for a series of *practical* moral lessons, Saunders sticks closer to the text, particularly to the more judgemental

sections, in his attack on the female religionists. He criticizes Mrs. Sham for "running about the country," as well as those who "ran about the country in idleness, preying upon their neighbours" (117), echoing Paul's condemnation, in verse 13, of the younger widows who "learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house" (italics in text). His recommendation that "she had better show a little christianity at home" (117) echoes Paul's instruction in verse 4 to "let them learn first to shew piety at home[.]" Finally, in hoping that "every body... would, according to the bible, believe" Sham and Clippit "to be silly women who had turned aside unto Satan" (118), Saunders repeats almost verbatim Paul's warning, in verse 15, that "some are already turned aside after Satan."

While Saunders is thus significantly more judgemental, in the narrowly moralistic sense, than Drone in his use of the same scriptural passage, he still agrees with the parson's practicality in his assessment of the problems involved with the affective religionists' doctrine: "[Y]oung people, too, who follow them, get into a notion that they are converted, when they are only lazy, idle vagabonds, fit for nothing but singing hymns and cheating" (170). Even the religiously enthusiastic Saunders condemns "singing hymns" when it becomes an excuse for "cheating" and lazy idleness. It will be up to Book Two to describe a household in which hymns are not necessarily the accompaniment to either laziness, or, as with Deacon Scruple, smuggling. Saunders' proposed correction of Howl and Yelpit, as well, is as practical as Stepsure's description of the side effects of his own hard upbringing: "[A]s for Howl and Yelpit, ...he would send them to the house of correction; where, if they did not learn some sense, they would at least get the laziness

squeezed out of them, and be of some use in the world" (170)--a decidedly untheological and emphatically practical solution to doctrinal error.

Thus it is that Stepsure depicts religion either, in its misconceived form, as an actual opponent to practical ethics, or, even as orthodoxy, as merely an adjunct to the experiential method of gaining ethical wisdom. If hedonism can be seen as a mistaken focus on short-term pleasure, and religious and humanist considerations seem to focus on the long-term rewards of moral behaviour--heaven and the formation of good character and meaningful relationships with God and other human beings--then Stepsure sticks to, what for him, is the golden mean--the medium term, in which temporal, material consequences such as wealth and poverty figure large. He is supported, inconsistently, by Drone and Saunders, but ultimately he does not feel the need of their bases for morality--personal growth, spirituality, or the reliance on scriptural revelation--since practical consequences are (or should be) sufficient in themselves to motivate right action. The irony of this attitude is that, ultimately, religion becomes superfluous to the ethical system it purports to undergird, since natural good sense, without the need of supernatural revelation, would lead to the same moral conclusions, and secular, rather than spiritual, experience confirms them. As well, Stepsure ends up becoming simply a more restrained, temperate version of the sensualists his gadabout townsmen have shown themselves to be. He is as concerned about physical comfort as they; he is merely more practical in achieving it.

Would this materialistically focused ethic have been McCulloch's genuine aim? One clue is McCulloch's reply to Dr. William Cochran, Vice-Principal of the rival King's

College in Windsor, who wrote as "Pacificus" in the Halifax *Free Press* to defend classical education. Writing as "Investigator" in a letter to the Halifax *Acadian Recorder* dated February 28, 1818, McCulloch portrayed extensive training for students in the classical languages as merely "enabling them to display their pedantry by interlarding Latin and Greek phrases with the chit chat of life" (quoted in MacDonald, 63). In a letter dated April 25 of the same year, McCulloch opined that the classics were "'...cultivated to the neglect of other parts of learning which are really of much greater importance in the active employments of life'" and "'that a well-regulated education will be that which bears upon the active purposes of life'" (65)--a far cry from the ideal of the well-rounded man or the emphasis upon character-building that "Pacificus" extolled in his earlier letter of March 31, by attributing "much of the invincible courage and fortitude, the generous noble and expanded sentiments, and the devoted love of civil liberty... to that early and familiar intercourse which the sons of Nobility and Gentry have with Greek and Roman literature" (64). It is with reference to this controversy that the far more explicitly religious Book Two is not narrower, but broader, even in its spiritually judgemental focus, than Book One. In Book Two, McCulloch gets beyond the materialistic moralism involved in his original satirical purpose, and opens his narrative up to "expanded sentiments" in his tale of the prodigal, as well as to the "familiar intercourse... with Greek and Roman literature" in his defense of plain speech.

What I want to stress in the next chapter is McCulloch's opening up of religious considerations to examination on their own terms. Explicit spirituality, particularly when linked with McCulloch's characteristic doctrinal certainty, is now generally perceived as

narrower than less restrained secular morality. However, McCulloch portrays religious error as itself a narrowing of the range of meaning and communion in the life of William--and orthodoxy as itself broad, in allowing his parents to see both spiritual and temporal reality, and to engage their household in confirming spiritual community. McCulloch also relays their experiences through the mouth of a far more *broad-minded* speaker than either Drone or Saunders, in a situation which is itself satirical of Stepsure's own narrow moralism. The tale of the prodigal, though it narrates the fall of a wayward one, is McCulloch's way of getting back onto the broad path of genuine religious concern.

CHAPTER IV

MISSTEPPING ONESELF IN THE CAPITAL

The last chapter of Book One relates a couple of incidents involving "[t]he young gentlemen" (181) who attend Miss Sippit's frolic. The narration of these two events is implicitly flattering to club-footed Stepsure, by transferring his clumsiness to two young men who "exerted themselves mightily to find the best position for their legs and arms" (*Letters*, 181, underlining mine) without much success. Stot's son Hodge, for example, in his haste to correct for a bow which drew a "shriek from Miss Sippit" as "he had begun to scrape at her shin and was subjecting her slipper to an unmerciful visitation" was involved in a "violation of the order of nature" (182) as "the head goes one way and the feet another" (182, underlining mine), which nearly puts him in her lap. Since "no man can think of two things at once, ...in his haste to retreat, forgetting to take his legs along with him, he unfortunately overturned the tea table" (182, underlining mine). To account for his subsequent flatulent "apology," Stepsure hypothesizes that "this combination of accidents" may have "produced a sudden convulsion of nature" (182). The double underlined phrases both describe Hodge's clumsiness in a mock scientific rhetoric--which would have been familiar to McCulloch from the "class in Chemistry[,]", which as his son noted in his biography of McCulloch (*Life*, 64), he taught already by 1818 at Pictou Academy--and in their invocation of "nature" ironically echo the secular pillar of Drone's practical moralism. However, they also imply, more importantly, that clumsiness (like the noses of Mr. Gypsum and Trot) is a physical token of the frolickers' moral decline, as Hodge's affected politeness produces both "a violation" and "a sudden convulsion" of nature. It is also

significant that, as with Kickit, it is primarily Hodge's gadabout legs which get him in trouble, as can be seen from the single underlined phrases, a revelation that is also symbolically fraught with moral significance, as common sense--"the head"--pulls in one direction and one way and flighty hedonism--"the feet"-- pull in the other, unlike Stepsure's head and feet, which are united in practical action.

Stepsure's lame, stay-at-home legs also compare well to Kickit's lower limbs, in his professedly less than "scientific account" (*Letters*, 183) (Note again Stepsure's typical exaltation, at least implicitly, of the authority of secular rhetoric.) Stepsure ironically apologizes for his lack of first-hand knowledge with the 'admission' (in essence a boast) that "I am not very far seen in the dancing" and so "was not there" (183-184). His description of the dance shows that Kickit has lost control of at least one of his feet as "Kickit's foot, in one of its high leaps, thought of taking a look into Mrs. McCackle's pocket; and afterwards, like every other violent possessor, positively refused to renounce its claims" (184, underlining mine), the underlined phrases describing not Kickit's, but his foot's actions. The foot's 'alienation' from Kickit is heightened by its being described as a "violent possessor" and by Stepsure's off-hand description of Kickit's predicament: "Having parted with one foot..." (184). Stepsure describes Kickit's thrashing--as he has, like so many others, lost control of his lower limbs--with considerable irony, in terms of unusual industry, as without one of his feet, Kickit "was even anxious to make one foot do the business of two... and hopped about with surprising diligence" (184).

The fact that Hodge's clumsiness had led to the inadvertent punishment of Miss Sippit's shins and feet does not escape Saunders' notice. His reaction to Hodge's uncontrolled legs

and feet includes, predictably, a wish that they had been more deliberately used, and *against* other frivolously employed limbs: "[I]f his foot had been in old Stot's shoe, instead of kicking Miss Sippit's shins and tearing her slippers, he would have broken the leg of the brazen faced limmer" (184). Although Stepsure does not share Saunders' bloodthirstiness toward the lower limbs, his next paragraph but one keeps to the same topic, adverting to Squire Grub's vanity about "the covering of his nether extremities" (185). Further on, the letter illustrates Mephibosheth's susceptibility to vanity by describing his hope of making "a very respectable looking gentleman" by getting "myself seated in stile, with a table before me, covered with a green cloth reaching down to the floor, so as to keep my feet out of the way" (188). Though this quote does indeed fit "the shift from modesty to vanity" that Davies notes (li), it also implies that Stepsure is concerned, unlike the gadabouts of the town, with keeping his "feet out of the way." He is prevented from "reading the chronicles at every man's door" by the fact that "I am no great hand at the running" (188), and so, as the last sentence of Book One implies, will be, as he has been before, "well fixed... upon a wood lot" (190), ready "to make the ensuing summer the busiest in my life" (185). Thus it is that the stay-at-home Stepsure elevates himself above the flighty people of the town--who could only be induced to listen to the Attorney General "by advertising a cattle show or a town meeting at Tipple's" (188)--"at the end of the first book of the chronicles of our town" (185). This, at least, among much that changes, is a constant in the first letter by Stepsure himself in Book Two. He quotes Saunders' judgement that

> horny stumps like mine would never do for Old Trot or Peter Longshanks; but upon Mephibosheth Stepsure, they are the grandest thing in the world for treading upon the sore heels of the ne'er do wells of our town: and farther, that if I would only consent to

> go to old Tubal and be shod, they would strike such terror in our people, as would make them glad to stay at home. How this may be, I cannot exactly say; for, though Snout's pigs often get themselves lamed by their straggling about, nothing but the want of legs keeps them at home and from mischief (207).

In a passage that identifies our narrator by his full evocative name, his lameness is again identified with a sensible "stay at home" attitude which keeps one "from mischief," and for Saunders, with--what else?--the potential for direct and rough justice on "the ne'er do wells of our town."

A New Stepsure?

Of course, this is Stepsure's own account of himself. As I hope I have shown in Chapter III, Stepsure was undoubtedly a less than satisfying narrator for his author, in his rhetorically necessary secular pragmatism. Stepsure was not destined to stay "well fixed," either in the details of his character, or, more importantly--given his criticism of the town's gadabouts--in his very physical location.

In the almost eight months between the publication of the last Letter in Book One and Letter 19--the first of the second series in which Stepsure again shows his face, McCulloch would have had plenty of time to think about the 'side effects' of having such a generally secular narrator uphold the work and thrift ethic without any strong religious basis for morality, and for that reason, just as much incentive to both soften the edges of his narrow-minded ethic of pragmatism, and to undercut his unrealistically positive portrayal of himself. The fact that "[i]n April, 1822, the Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the University of Glasgow" (*Life*, 74) may also have contributed to a renewed appreciation of (or pressure to appreciate) spiritual matters.

Stepsure's preparations for his trip to Halifax (the motive for which I will examine later) have the effect of opening up his restrictive ethic of work and thrift to what will be a concern of William's tale: the elevation of what I will call domestic and neighbourly community over what Drone called, in Book One, "domestic comfort." Community and comfort are not strict opposites, but domestic community is broader in its inclusion of children and in being affective, rather than merely effective, though still within the sphere of the family; neighbourly community, at least as something positive, is almost entirely new to the *Letters*, having been satirized in Book One. Domestic comfort, on the other hand, as extolled by Drone in Book One, generally focuses on the relationship between husband and wife and its material effects. An example of the distinction is Stepsure's girls' willingness to take down their "web of homespun, which, they had resolved, should reach from the house to the barn" to get their father "rigged out from top to toe" for his trip, even though it had reached little over half of their goal. Not only do they give up their original plan for the sake of their father (an action which the former more pragmatic Stepsure might well have found wastefully impulsive), but it is done with "eager importunity" and "much anxiety" that it should turn out well. Perhaps even more importantly, Stepsure actually identifies his "eldest daughter Becky" (210), whereas up to this point in the *Letters* children have only been named when they have been a problem. The children's reaction to their father's new outfit is written of, not with Stepsure's usual irony, but with loving self-deprecation: "As none of my children ever thinl of the cut of my lower extremities, I was, in the opinion of the whole, a very respectable looking

country gentleman. They all agreed that at a distance my coat looked as well as Mr. Ledger's superfine" (210-211).

Stepsure's evocation of domestic community in Chapter 19 also includes the first hint of sentimentality in the *Letters* by including the description, not merely of domestic "comfort," but also of a specific examples of 'domestic sadness' (as opposed to the domestic *bitterness* of the warring couples of Book Two): "My journey to Halifax.... seemed to assume the solemnity of a burial[,]" since "[t]o see me go from home, was an event so unusual, that, among my children, it had linked itself with the idea of never returning; and... the pipes of my younger offspring were immediately put in tune" (211)--"a comfortable kind of calamity" indeed, which "leaves behind it recollections of endearing regard" (212), again a more affective spin being put on comfort than was generally the case in Book One. The emotive treatment of the idea of comfort, including, at least implicitly, the children, occurs again in the same paragraph: "At last, a little exertion enabled me to begin my pilgrimage, and enter upon the feelings of a domestic man; which, ...when he is going from home, are not very comfortable" (212).

If the domestic sentimentality of this departure seems like quite a stretch for the pragmatic Stepsure, then his neighbourliness is even more remarkable, in response to Saunders' promise: "Even our neighbour Saunders participated in the general satisfaction.... [H]e... declared that bating my shavely legs and ill made feet, he had never in his life seen any body so like the douce, bein goodman of Muckmidden" (211). This ironically qualified compliment brings out the best in Saunders' wife: "My wife, who has more respect for Saunders than for any half dozen of our gentlemen, having sent for his family

when we were trying on the clothes, insisted that he should spend the evening with us" (211). Inviting others to the tailoring of one spouse's clothes, and to "spend the evening" would normally have been resoundingly excoriated in Book One, but here it is a joyful part of the novelty of the rare occasion of Stepsure's venture into the wider world. What is equally remarkable is Saunders' response: "exacting a promise that, young and old, we should spend the evening with him" (211). This unusual festive mobility on the parts of both Stepsure's and Saunders' family can partly be *explained* by the rarity of the occasion, but it can be *justified* (though only partially) in terms of Stepsure's ethic by the underlined phrase in the above quotation. Though both evenings take people from their productive homes, they do not disturb either domestic comfort or domestic community, since on both occasions, the whole family is invited.

Though the warmth of the above-quoted passages still keeps some consistency with Book One's concern for domestic comfort, his generosity to "one of Jack Scorem's boys" is again a depiction of an instance of charity, that, in its sentimentality and concrete specificity, is totally absent from Book One. As Stepsure begins riding away from home, he is given "a spacious pork ham" (213) that one of his "little boys" (212) had managed to "smuggle away... exulting in his prize" (213)--a remarkable turn of phrase, given that Stepsure has, in Book One, described literal smugglers among the townsfolk. The warm fatherly feeling signalled by these figures of speech is also echoed in the phrases, "The little fellow" (212) and "this substantial proof of his affection" (213). The last phrase may still fit in with Stepsure's view (from Book One) of affection as a means toward material success (particularly in the use of the words "substantial proof"), and in the description of

the ham as an "offering of comfort" continues to define comfort materially and temporally. However, Stepsure also hints that since "one of Jack Scorem's boys happened to be passing, and seemed to me to view it with a wishful eye," his son's gift did not stop at himself, because "I would rather at any time make two human beings happy than see one miserable. No part of my stock, therefore, was more gladly received: and the rest of it put together... did not produce half so much happiness (213). The phrase "at any time" universalizes the applicability of McCulloch's conduct, making his generosity a moral example, and this anecdote of a piece with the moralism of Book One--but with a far different moral lesson. What is atypical is Stepsure's shyness about making his generous conduct explicit, and his willingness to help a not particularly deserving recipient (a son of the thriftless Jack Scorem).

While this glimpse of a "kinder, gentler" (Bush, c. 1988) Stepsure is a major shift in tone, it is not given much play beyond Chapter 19. Nor does it seem very original. We know that McCulloch must have been acquainted with Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (published in 1742) by the time the last letter of Book One was published, because in Letter 17, Stepsure defends himself against the charge of letting "my waggery overrun my judgement" by mentioning the parson's raising of pigs by insisting "that Mr. Drone is not even related to the Trulliber family" (186). "Parson Trulliber," of course--with his mercantile, rather than subsistence, pig-raising--is one of the many characters encountered by the wise, but unworldly, Parson Adams (*Andrews*, 137-138). This must not have been the only part of *Joseph Andrews* that interested McCulloch, however; Stepsure's new generosity may well be an echo of the repentant Mr. Wilson, who, after living a rakish life

in London, lives a 'homespun' life in the country--in, as Parson Adams says, "the manner in which the people had lived in the Golden Age" (193). Wilson says of his undecorated but fruitful garden that "here is the work solely of my own hands. While providing necessaries for my table, I likewise procure myself an appetite" (190). This early version of Stepsure's work ethic is followed by Wilson's reflections on his children. One instance of these reflections sounds very much indeed like the rough common sense of Book One, when Wilson praises his wife: "[S]ince my girls have been growing up, she is unwilling to indulge them in idleness; for... we intend not to raise them above the rank they are likely to fill hereafter, nor to teach them to despise, or ruin a plain husband" (191). However, only in Book Two does Stepsure show the genuine affection for children which Wilson identifies as a prime source for his own domestic bliss, as he makes clear in his conversation with Parson Adams: "Perhaps, sir, you are not yourself a father; if you are not, be assured you cannot conceive the delight I have in my little ones. Would you not despise me if you saw me stretched out on the ground, and my children playing around me?" (191) Adams is suitably impressed--

> charmed at the tenderness... of the husband and wife to... their children, and at the dutiful and affectionate behaviour of these parents. These instances pleased the well-disposed mind of Adams equally with the readiness which they exprest [sic] to oblige their guests, and their forwardness to offer them the best of everything in their house; and what delighted him still more was an instance or two of their charity: ...the good woman was called for to assist her sick neighbour, which she did with some cordials made for the public use; and the good man went into his garden... to supply another with something which he wanted thence; for they had nothing which those who wanted it were not welcome to. (192, underlining mine)

The first underlined clause may well have stimulated McCulloch's writing about Stepsure's entertaining the Scantocreesh family, and the incidents which exemplify the second

underlined clause may have motivated McCulloch to set the agriculturally proficient Stepsure within his own generous Golden Age, giving even to the 'undeserving poor.'

More important than the mere softening of the ragged edges of Stepsure's ethic, however, is McCulloch's undermining of Stepsure's self-assured holier-than-thou stance, For McCulloch, holier is exactly what Stepsure is not, at least in the religious sense of the word, in which holiness denotes the condition of being set apart and chosen by God. Since Stepsure has continually downplayed the sacred, as part of McCulloch's attempt to make Stepsure's efficiency ethic transparent to both those who profess and those who profane, it is consistent with McCulloch's shift in focus in Book Two that he portray Stepsure as not merely vain, but also--in his secularity--as shallow and morally inconsistent, even somewhat hypocritical.

Stepsure's vanity is not necessarily as blameworthy, in itself, in Letter 19, as Book One has painted it, since he treats his status as "gentleman" ironically: "[S]ince I became a gentleman, the troubles of high life have beset me sorely" (205). More noteworthy is Stepsure's new wanderlust, as an unspecified "necessity forced me in the course of last fall to visit your town" (210), the town being Halifax. Stepsure remains coy about the reason for his visit in this chapter:

> Thus... I... arrived safely in town. Some of your country readers will, perhaps, ask what I was doing there.... I can only tell them... that I saw a great deal, heard a great deal, and did a great deal of business... (213)

In Letter 19, the only hint is Stepsure's wife's knowledge "that her husband is respected in the very capital of the province" (208). Though Stepsure's Halifax admirers are shown to be a pretty shady crew, as Tug's attempt to drink "my health was unavoidably postponed" (209) by a riot among his cronies, Stepsure has already been called a "GENTLEMAN"

(capitalization McCulloch's) by a far more reputable Halifax personality, "the Honorable the Attorney General" (187), in Book One. McCulloch now leaves open the possibility that Stepsure's vanity is not confined to his writing, but even prompts him to become just as gadabout as "the ne'er do wells of the town."

Stepsure's continued account, in Chapter 21, makes his motives no clearer. He takes "up my lodgings at Mr. Guzzle's; who... keeps a house of entertainment" (226). While thus staying at the house of a *tavern-keeper*, he "anticipated the convenience of having an acquaintance to whom I could freely apply for information about places and persons" (227), a desire ironically like the curiosity which causes the "townsmen," as Drone has called them in a discourse from Book One, to "neglect their business and travel about the town, merely to learn what their neighbours are doing" (156). Is Stepsure really like those who "are often abroad, when they have really no cause" (156)? If not, he certainly keeps his "cause" mysterious. He also spends much of the next day doing exactly what the townsmen do: travelling "about the town." When only one of the "gentleman with whom I had [again undisclosed] business" is found in Halifax, Stepsure decides "to devote the day to a general view of" the town, since his unspecified "business was not of much consequence to any of these gentleman; and besides, could suffer nothing from the delay of a few hours" (228), the latter clause indicating an uncharacteristically low view of the urgency of industry. Stepsure refuses to tell us "[w]hat different courses I took," but it is only "[a]fter a great deal of wandering about" (228) after failing to prosecute his unknown purposes in town that he meets the stranger who is to tell him the prodigal's tale. Ironically, but appropriately, given Stepsure's moralism--as he has applied it to others--this

man who has come to Halifax for no reason that he is willing to describe "found myself upon the road which leads past the poors' house and jail" (228). Stepsure is quick to point their moral significance at others, reflecting that the two buildings are "in your town, wisely placed in the same neighbourhood; doubtless, that young people may at one glance perceive the different results of a life of thoughtless folly" (228), both of which--poverty and prison--have been the destination of those Stepsure has satirized in Book One. However, it is as he himself "was proceeding slowly along" (228)--with no practical purpose--that Stepsure perceives "at one glance" the building's moralistic message. Could that message, then, be directed at least partially at his own vanity and secular shallowness, particularly since, in the same letter, he has admitted that "[i]n going about, I have... taken many a crooked and unprofitable step" (225)?

The last event to undermine Stepsure's narratorial authority before he hears the prodigal's tale illustrates the results of taking "many a crooked and unprofitable step" (much as did Hodge's earlier comically calamitous and morally significant clumsiness), as he fails to find "the decisions of my will and feet equally prompt" (229) in avoiding a horse and rider. Like Hodge, who was involved in "a violation" and "a convulsion" of nature, Stepsure is "overturned" (229). The latter may not be a prodigal himself, but the efforts of mind and body during this visit to the capital are no longer as strongly bound together as in Book One. Even if we assume the best motives for his visit and his "wandering," his thoughts make it clear that he is being dragged down by the town's "hard times" as much as the residents. He is no more able (in a town), than they are willing, to bring a "load of hoop poles upon his back" (227), as he recommends, to work on when his planned

business falls through. It is in this context--during the wandering and after the overturning of a strangely torpid Stepsure--that he hears of a prodigal who lost *his* way in Halifax, who did not know how to properly use *his* time. Since the industrious Stepsure has, possibly for the first time in his life, sufficient "'leisure'"--as the old gentleman who recounts the tale puts it--to listen to someone else's story, it is significant that he is seated upon the "brink" (230) of a river.

A 'New' Narrator

Stepsure's conversation with the "decent looking old gentleman" immediately indicates how, in McCulloch's eyes, Stepsure had lost his way long before he decided to go to Halifax. Stepsure has already spoken on the topic of "'Discontent'" (229), the first word quoted from the old gentleman's end of the dialogue. Stepsure's wisdom from Book One on this subject, focuses, as usual, on industry and its material consequences:

> Many of the ills of life are unavoidable; and wherever this is the case, a discontented mind bears the calamity and has the grumbling to the bargain. Others again, may be surmounted; but neither praying nor grumbling pulls the cart out of the mire: the sure way is to set a shoulder to the wheel. In most cases this brings relief; and even where it fails, it in the mean time frees the mind from its broodings of misery. A discontented disposition is an everlasting plague. It both kills comfort, and destroys the only means which could again bring it to life; as Job's wife Mrs. Grumble and all her connexions know. They are a large family in our town.... for somehow discontent never impedes the progress of population. (124-125)

Stepsure thus identifies discontent as the enemy of industry and its generally attendant material success (and ironically, also links discontent and fertility). Though he has earlier linked "religion" to "industry and contentment[,]... its companions[,]" the reference to praying indicates his scepticism about supernatural solace's practical utility, especially since true religion should lead to both contentment *and* industry. As well, by noting that "whoever finds a home has gained the grand point in the business of life[,]" so that "[i]t

will take very hard fare indeed to kill contentment" (124). Stepsure implies that his treasured domestic comfort is also a cause of contentment. Finally, Stepsure notes that "good nature... deals out contentment and cheerfulness with a liberal hand" (124). While he does indicate the insufficiency of simple material prosperity, Stepsure exalts not religious joy, but simple marital and temperamental contentment.

"[T]he old gentleman" cannot rely on much that Stepsure indicates is vital to contentment. "'I have no family,' said he: 'my partner in life I have laid in the grave; and I bless God, that when I shall be laid beside her, I shall have neither son nor daughter in this place'" (229). His "'means are small'" (229) as well, so he is not privy to domestic comfort in either the material or the emotional sense. He also implicitly undermines Stepsure's portrayal of "praying" and "grumbling" as equally practically ineffective in pulling "the cart out of the mire" by not addressing supply--"comfort" and "the means which could bring it to life"--but instead concerning himself with demand: "'Discontent and despondency are the companions of unreasonable desire'" (229). Of Stepsure's triangle of religion, industry and contentment, the old gentleman leaves out industry entirely, and he speaks of contentment as not merely the result of religion in the abstract, but as the result of living by specific Biblical revelation. Davies notes (313) that his direct quote--"His bread shall be given, and his water shall be sure" (229)--is almost verbatim from Isaiah 33:16. As well, his statement that "when my means are small, I have learned to be content" echoes Philippians 4:11-12--"...I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: ...both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (italics in text). The old gentleman thus fuses

the promises of both Old and New Testament--each the major source for Saunders' and Drone's rhetoric, respectively--to indicate to Stepsure the value of personal communion with God.

Note what he does not offer, however. He does not offer "domestic comfort"; he does not offer prosperity won through one's own thrift and hard work. He has faith in God's material provision, but his faith is that he will be sustained by what amounts to prisoner's fare: bread and water. He essentially repudiates Stepsure's secular self-confidence.

Is this old gentleman, then, merely a new Parson Drone, in his willingness to rely on scripture explicitly, rather than the implicit authority of religion in the abstract? Not really, since his reception is radically different than Drone's. Having no position or calling, as did Drone, to change the behaviour of his audience, he does not need to moderate his rhetoric toward the pragmatic, to appeal to spiritually unenlightened common sense. This seems to reflect a change in McCulloch's own priorities: not to spur agricultural production and greater consideration of the need for "domestic economy," but to guard against the urge for wealth--whether gotten by steady effort like Stepsure's or through ultimately ineffective get-rich-quick schemes like those of Stepsure's foolish fellow townsfolk.

It may well be that the old gentleman is guilty of the older Drone's pietism, since the parson's "What can't be cured must be endured" is fairly close to the old gentleman's "'Where the mind grasps at little, hope is easily cherished'" (229). However, McCulloch gives pietism more credibility in Book Two by refusing to allow Stepsure the critical last word, as he has had when he has narrated Drone's counsel and reception. The very fact that Stepsure has a conversation with the old gentleman at all is a change from Stepsure's

earlier relationship with Drone, in which Mephibosheth generally quoted the parson for religious support for the former's views or conduct, and ended with a secular summary of Drone's counsel, addressed not to Drone, but to the reader.

It is also significant that William's tale includes its own clergyman, one who, though rejected by William, maintains both his spiritual focus and his authority. His spiritual focus is easier to maintain than Drone's was, of course, partly because his subject is more narrowly spiritual, than Drone's generally was. Drone's concern was mainly with the unwillingness to use the proper methods to gain one's temporal ambitions. The clergyman critiques the "'ambition'" itself, that which makes William "'grasp at wealth'" (235), concentrating on the *inherent*, but still *spiritual* consequences of the search for "'riches'"--the "'vices'" which tarnish the "'character'" of the ambitious man, and which "'are productions of the countries where his wealth was gained.'" (235) This focus makes his final scriptural quotation (as Davies notes on 314) about "'the man... who gains the world and loses his soul'" (235) more credible than McCulloch allows Drone's quotation about the dangers of frolicking to be--a quotation that, as I noted in Chapter 3, is more judgemental than the scriptural passage that Drone is quoting, and comes closer to Saunders' conception of direct divine judgement than Drone's brand of practical moralism.

That McCulloch intends us to see in William's clergyman a pastor with greater authority than Drone ever had is clear from his treatment of community--a theme I will look at later in this chapter when I examine the relationship of William's tale to... Robinson's tale (But I digress.) William rejects the clergyman with "that sullen obstinacy which the determined mind feels, when conceives itself to be unreasonably opposed"

(235). However, this in itself unreasonable rejection (as the word "sullen" implies) is not seconded by any other specific figure in his Scottish village. Instead, when he leaves, his father (who, as I will show later, remains an authoritative figure all the way through the tale) upholds the warning of the clergyman with the judgement that "[y]ou are putting yourself in the way of evil" (235). This sense that the community collectively condemns William's decision is almost the exact converse of Drone's earlier predicament--a community that, as a whole, sabotaged his authority.

To return to the issue of *narratorial* authority, the specific details of the old gentleman's conversation--with Stepsure--that leads up to William's tale are also to the old gentleman's credit, and to the satirical detriment of Mephibosheth. When Stepsure refers to "'the numerous examples of the benevolence of its inhabitants with which I am acquainted'" which for him mitigate the evils of Halifax--where "'no unfortunate settler ever tells his distresses, and tells them in vain" (230)--it echoes, ironically, his earlier satirically faint praise of his neighbours (in Book One): "[T]hey are... very helpful to one another.... [M]y neighbours so often meet with bad land, hard labour, and poor returns, that they are obliged to spend much of their time in mutual visits, for the purpose of unburthening their minds" (101). The irony is that the quotation from Book Two is entirely serious, speaking of the "'much [that] is said to be done for the relief of the poor'" (230). Precisely at this point, when Stepsure turns toward the approbation of charity (in which he has not been previously very active himself), he is implicitly rebuked for his continued focus on material welfare by the old gentleman's reply. His response refers to "'the rewards of industry[,]'" but only obliquely (if at all) to material charity, in the mention

of "'men whose principles and deportment adorn society'" (230). It is far more concerned with those "'who, in the great day of account, will be adjudged worthy to walk in white'" (230)--which as Davies notes (314), is taken from Revelation 3.4--and with "goodness," and with "'allurements to vice'" before which "'youth fall[,]'" and the question of whether "'the integrity of any is preserved'" (230). Stepsure's ethic and its concern with economic efficiency is rejected in favour of an ethic of purity.

Though the old gentleman invites Stepsure to "'judge'" his insights by the "'example'"--William's tale--which he gives, Stepsure never takes the opportunity. Letter 21 ends with the last words of the first instalment of the tale, and no further comment by Stepsure (including the omission of even his customary signature). Letter 22 makes only one opening reference to "[y]our readers" who "will recollect that they left William in the possession of the parting charge of a father" (237), and then reports the old gentleman's words (verbatim, as the next letter will make clear), but does include Stepsure's signature. The same recapitulation begins Letter 24: "Your readers will recollect that William had succeeded to his father in law's business" (261). That the succeeding narrative is intended to be the old gentleman's own words can be seen from his own appearance, in the first person, in the tale:

> My own reiterated attempts to reclaim him, I have not mentioned. (269)
>
> When I overtook you upon the road, I had just been to visit him in the place of his sojourning.... He was not the William whom I had once seen.... (270)
>
> [H]e requested me to read to him the following letter from his father.... (270-271)

Aside from Stepsure's final signature in Letter 24, McCulloch, strikingly, avoids displaying Mephibosheth's presence in the tale's communication to *Mephibosheth's own* readers, so that his usual pragmatic evaluation (of the kind that Drone's counsel has routinely

received) of its explicitly religious moralism is evaded. The old gentleman is thus both more focused on moral purity than Drone, and less undercut by narratorial comment.

(The only irony in this second-hand method of transmission is that the old gentleman's voice, his diction, the rhythms of his speech, are not dramatically different than Stepsure's. McCulloch had essentially created a modified Stepsure to tell William's tale, without Mephibosheth's deliberate irony, and with an added religious seriousness. In this sense, the old gentleman is not truly a new narrator, particularly as he speaks of visiting William "in the place of his sojourning." That "place" is "one of the above mentioned buildings" from which the old gentleman was "seen proceeding" (229)--the "poors' house" or the "jail." If it be the jail which we are intended to understand as the place of William's sojourning, this fits in nicely with Stepsure's customary description of the sheriff's house as guest quarters for the debtors of Stepsure's town. However, it does not match the rest of the old gentleman's sober narration, especially as it treats somewhat ironically the biblical image of the sojourner.)

Thus it is that McCulloch distinguishes his 'new' narrator from the practically ineffective Drone and (less consistently) from the pragmatic Stepsure. Though the old gentleman lives in a biblically coloured world, he is also very little like the rough and ready Scantocreesh, whose rhetoric of divine judgement lacks the old gentleman's compassion. The old gentleman's first speech is couched in, instead, the rhetoric of faith in divine promises--"'the best security'" (229). The most important difference between him and Scantocreesh, moreover, is analogous to the difference between Stepsure and Scantocreesh. The first of each pair is equally as judgemental as Scantocreesh. However,

both Stepsure and the old gentleman rely not so much on any belief in direct divine judgement, but rather on the certainty of the rationally foreseeable consequences inherent in a given course of action. That Stepsure's focus is economic efficiency and the old gentleman's is holiness does not erase the fact of the latter's use of often mathematically or scientifically rationalist and business-style rhetoric in narrating William's moral decline--depicting the results of the moral bottom line, as it were. He speaks of "'rational enjoyments'" (230), and a paternal charge that "not calculated to produce lightness of heart" (237). He notes that "extravagant wages had produced their usual effects" (240), and describes "incentives to dissipation that fascinate the thoughtless" (241). He explains that in William's situation there was "against religion, an overwhelming odds" (243), and mentions the frequently poor disposition of William's father-in-law for which there was no "apparent cause," but for which William "could now account" (261) when he finds out about his gaming debts. He formulates the axiom that "in proportion to the intimacy of his [the immigrant's] new relations, there is a diminution of his longing for home" (264), and explains that, like an employee changing occupations, having "resigned his ideal happiness," William still finds "himself amply compensated by immediate enjoyment" (264). This "immediate enjoyment," however, has "produced an effect for which neither of the young people was able to account" (265).

The above quotations all exemplify a rhetoric which depicts moral action and its effects on *character* as predictable, governed by laws, and working with almost contractual regularity--just as Stepsure had earlier depicted the equally inevitable effects of moral decline on *material* wealth. It is probably also significant that the last ten pages of

William's tale are essentially free of such rationalist language, as the tale focuses less on the devolution of William's character, and more on his spiritual fate, and as William's father is allowed to make his voice heard. However, it is still true that the old gentleman generally focuses on the predictable inevitability of William's decline, given his initial flight from his father, just as Stepsure has shown how inexorable is the financial decline of his fellow townsfolk, given their short-sighted vanity and greed.

A New William?

If the old gentleman is essentially a modified Stepsure, with the same rationalist rhetoric, but using it both to criticize Stepsure himself and to focus on moral decline as a psychological rather than a material danger, is his story also a "calculated" modification of Stepsure's narrative(s)? In one case, certainly. Stepsure has already told us about another William in Book One--or rather a Bill.

The formalization of the first name is itself significant. In Book One Stepsure tells us about a *father* named William and his son Bill. Beyond the fact that "Bill" has the punning meaning of a financial drain on his doting father, the story also details how Bill is the diminutive result of William's child-rearing practices. William's *virtues* include being "eager upon the work[,]" and possessing "a strong affection for his son" (76)--the latter leading to "a feeling of satisfaction at the good management of his son" (77), and William's being "pleased with the improvement of his son" (78) and "proud to find such an old head upon young shoulders" (81). All of which, by excusing (to himself, anyway) William's failure to address Bill's peccadilloes, call forth the converse *vices* in Bill. The fact that it is

a Bill, rather than (as later) a William, who abandons his father's moral guidance suits the reduced stakes (in McCulloch's terms) involved in Bill's decline.

Bill's rejection of his father's moral understanding is both more calculated and deliberate than William's, and, appropriately (given Stepsure's materialistic focus in Book One), less serious. The complication in Bill's tale is primarily narrative, rather than psychological. Stepsure narrates not how Bill gradually strays, despite conscience, from his father's guidance, but simply how he steadily gulls his father into ignoring, and even denying, Bill's increasingly serious offences against his father's moral code--proceeding from laziness through hucksterism, vanity, drunkenness, card-playing, and snobbery, to the implied willingness to "cheat his father" (82). Bill's dubious *career* is in one sense worse than William's in its treacherous cynicism and its complete lack of moral compunction, but its ultimate *consequences* (at least those narrated by Stepsure) are confined to the material--and to his father: "William and his wife are likely to come upon the town" (82), the logical moral for a tale for "all fathers who have active young sons, with whom they expect to live comfortably in their declining days" (76).

The William of Book Two, on the other hand, both bears the consequences of his error himself and finds those consequences far more serious. The old gentleman's tale indicates how, as opposed to Bill, he does not mislead his father, but instead only deludes himself, and how, as well, temptation is an appeal to appetite which is only effective when met by ignorance and irrationality--with far more references to mind and knowledge than to soul and spirit (as the underlined phrases in this paragraph's quotations will show). When he chooses to leave for Scotland, it is because "the fairy dreams of ambition bewildered and

perverted his mind" (233, underlining mine). His resolve "that though, for the sake of peace, he might share the expences [sic] of his shopmates, their profligacy should be their own" is "formed without a knowledge of himself and of the nature of vice" (241, underlining mine). When he begins to neglect the Sabbath, "he felt himself a good hearted man; and under all his deviations from religious practice, this consideration tranquillized his mind" (267, underlining mine). His "bloated and slovenly appearance" (267), as he sinks further morally, does not encourage greater humility, since "a degraded mind is not always prepared to meet disrespect with submission" (268, underlining mine), so that "[i]t was natural for William, therefore, to seek companions who would treat him with greater deference" (269). Even this point, where the pretence of seeking to act morally has been given up, his self-deception is not over. His belief in his own humanitarian goodness is contradicted by his lack of concern for his own parents, as "for a number of years he had ceased to ask for their welfare" (269). In the guilt occasioned by this neglect, as McCulloch ironically puts it, "he derived relief from the consoling thought, that two old people could need but little" (269). The old gentleman's "attempts to reclaim him" are "unavailing[,]" because "William had wandered from the way of understanding" (269; underlining mine, though the phrase is a Biblical one). As his life nears its end, he can not repent, because "[t]he witching smile of pleasure had beguiled him from the paths of virtue" and "vice with her soothings tranquillized his mind [so well that] because he wished ill to none, he cherished a persuasion that he was a good hearted man" (270, underlining mine). Ultimately, he is unable even to believe in his own impending death:

> Though he was evidently at the very threshhold of the house appointed for all living, he was eagerly looking back with the lingerings of hope. "I certainly do feel better;" said he: "In a few days, I shall be able to stir about: And then--" Here his glazed eye turned

upon the objects around, as if a proud feeling of degradation would have added, "I shall not be here." (270)

All the above examples of self-deceit both differentiate William from Bill in *his* trickery of his *father*, and in the underlined phrases merge McCulloch's pastoral and pedagogical experience in a view of temptation as a threat to the soul only when reason has been overwhelmed or ignored. This interest in reason's role in spiritual experience is consonant with the old gentleman's implicit belief that spiritual growth or decline can be rationally predicted. William's self-deceit is thus like the materially impoverishing get-rich-quick quackery of such fools of Book One as Jack Scorem, Gypsum, Mr. Soakem, and Mr. Longshanks, who all enter (predictably, given their initial error) the "house appointed for all" debtors--the sheriff's--rather than the house of death.

What makes Book Two's William different from any of the above, of course, is the severity of the consequences of his moral decline. Unlike Book One's Miss Sippit, whose deathbed repentance is rendered temporarily irrelevant by her recovery, William comes to understand that he faces genuine spiritual rather than merely temporal loss. The tale is more successful than any in Book One partly because of the very fact that its protagonist does not suffer merely one or the other at any time in his 'pilgrim's regress.' His moral decline is parallelled by his loss of both domestic comfort and physical and financial health. For example, "his frequent attendance upon meetings at the tavern" leads both to his becoming a member of "the club, where he would... conduct himself pretty much like rest of its members" and to a situation where "his return home did not always contribute to the peace of his family" (266). This "course of life" also leads to physical decline--William's "assuming a bloated and slovenly appearance" (267)--as well as financial ruin, as "through

growing inattention to his business, it had fallen into the hands of several young men who had begun trade for themselves" (268). In its turn, the temporal "misery from which he has fled" leads to his children seeking the "path of degradation" (269)--moral decline.

This last tragedy is part of what distinguishes William's tale from the tales of moral decline in Book One: the reversal of spiritual cause and temporal effect. Book One has, for example, Soakem choosing to run a tavern--a morally unwise decision--with his final destination a definitely temporal place of punishment. Though his family has suffered moral decline, their punishment--poverty and the imprisonment of their father for debt--is hardly a spiritual one. Even the most explicitly spiritual case of short-sightedness in Book One, Miss Sippit's fear of an uncomforted death, ultimately leads to the physical punishment of the disastrous tea party of Letter 17 (including her suffering under the dangerous clumsiness of Hodge), and the possibly symbolic, but still definitely physical, "violent rain" which "subjected the gumflowers and other finery of the town to a sweeping destruction" (184). (If this vaguely biblical reference to "sweeping destruction" *is* supposed to have a spiritual connotation, it is still striking that it is not until the last letter of Book One that we meet any significant description of the physical world that has transcendent implications.) Though immoral action is still a causative agent in William's tale, once he has made his unwise decision to leave his father's house, the temporal realities of Halifax and environs serve as metaphors for his spiritual decline--physical detail has a spiritual meaning. (The landscape's role in actually reinforcing this spiritual downfall I will look at later in this chapter when I compare William's tale to... Robinson's tale. But I digress.)

The sheer geographical specificity and descriptiveness of William's tale is absent from Book One. The depiction of landscape replaces physiognomy--as it relates to, for instance, the legs and noses of several of Stepsure's neighbours in Book One--as an indication of character and destiny. William's first view of Nova Scotia foreshadows his ultimate alienation: "From the immense solitudes of the forest, therefore, his mind shrinks within itself, and feels as if it stood alone in the midst of the earth" (239). That William is still comparatively spiritually healthy can be seen from his mental comparison of Halifax to "Vanity Fair: but he thought not of Yielding" (239-240--a reference to *Pilgrim's Progress*, as Davies notes on 314-315). The last statement is, of course, ambiguous: did William *resolve* not to Yield, or was he simply too naive (and thus vulnerable) to take the possibility of Yielding into his head (he just didn't *think* of it)? Its very ambiguity points to the fact that William's fate is still in flux.

(The fact that the spiritually naive William can yet take such a negative view of Halifax is, of course, implicitly satirical of Stepsure's unmotivated visit. However, William's perspective is also very close to McCulloch's own attitude to the capital. Writing of a visit to deliver a series of lectures almost a decade later (in 1830), McCulloch described the trip as

> not so bad as going to be hanged, but I found it by no means comfortable. I was going to the very focus of power and enmity.... In Halifax there, [sic] had never been any public exhibitions but of players and showmen and I really felt as if I belonged to the vagabond race. A bear and a few dancing dogs would have been suitable companions to the mood in which I entered into our gay and dissipated metropolis. (*Life*, 118-119)

The references to "a bear and a few dancing dogs" and "suitable companions" recalls Stepsure's report of Tug's plan to "put me on one of the trucks, and drag me through the streets like other great men" (*Letters*, 209) as well as his ironic note that he had no "want

of attendants and admirers... to come and see what funny feet a countryman had got" (213). The description of Halifax as "gay and dissipated" is, of course, equivalent to calling it "Vanity Fair.")

The attachment of spiritual meaning to landscape continues with William's later somewhat Romantic (or rather, counter-Romantic) "reveries" (243) upon the Sabbath. These take place in a "valley... which nature has doomed to perpetual sterility" (242)--much like "the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4)--"whose continuous accumulations of stony masses defy the labours of man" (242). When William's "mind turned to the place of his labour and its moral waste" (242), he is also concerned with "sterility," but spiritual rather than purely physical. In each case the progression is not, as in Book One, from spiritual (or at least moral) folly to temporal ruin--marital, physical and financial--but from physical symbol to spiritual reality. Though McCulloch still invokes "nature" as the cause of physical sterility in the landscape, the landscape itself has spiritual rather than temporal meaning as its narrative significance.

That McCulloch is reversing Book One's link between moral-spiritual error and temporal effects and showing spiritual destiny as of ultimate importance can be seen most clearly from his use of a concrete object to indicate William's spiritual regression and ruin: the Bible given him by his father. It is given with the charge to "'*Read your bible: obey its voice; and on the great day of account, take care to meet me at the right hand of Christ*'" (236, italics McCulloch's), and the repetition of this charge at the end of the tale is the clearest indication of the severity of William's spiritual loss.

In between the two occurrences of his father's charge are a number of other mentions of William's Bible. For example, William's 'pseudo-conversion' aboard ship is as shallow as it is precisely because "he had his bible, ...but its consolations were seldom" and so "more agreeable weather" exchanged "his feelings of remorse... for feelings of hope" (238). A more emotionally profound religious experience occurs in the "valley... doomed to perpetual sterility" when he actually *opens* the Bible to the "leaf which parental anxiety had doubled down upon these words 'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples'" (242). Though as William's "tear dropped upon the words of inspiration: he resolved that he would never forget his great grandfather's example" (242) of martyrdom, it is evident that he reads nothing but the single verse quoted. His "eye wandered over" not the page, but "the scene before him..." (242), and he immediately replaces "in its proper position the leaf which his father had folded" (242-243). The care with which he *shuts* (not reads) the bible (and implicitly closes the book on his communion with God) suits the way "the last gift of his father was preserved with a degree of care, which... [was] perhaps not an exact proof of its use" (264). McCulloch's tongue is as firmly in cheek here as anywhere in Book One, even when the subject is, from his viewpoint, a far more serious one than any he has yet treated in the *Letters*. The "degree of care" with which the Bible is treated is evidence that "[w]ith any thing which he possessed, he would have parted rather than with his bible" (264), a statement which is falsified as William's financial decline becomes extreme. Though the Bible is, "still as good as new" (as McCulloch notes with repeated irony), one of the "few remaining articles... seized and sold for his creditors' benefit" (269), the mere onset of

bankruptcy does not get William off the hook for its loss, since it is only "his consciousness of what he had become, and a feeling of shame" that "prevented him from soliciting a favour which had the bible for its object" (269). The implication is that the Bible's spiritual value is much greater than its financial value (what might the pragmatic Stepsure think?), and that William should have held onto it, even in financial extremis.

That William eventually feels its loss is evident from his reaction to his father's final communication (in a letter read to him by the old gentleman). His father commends him "to God and to the word of his grace. *Read your bible; obey its voice; and at the great day of account, take care--*" (273-274, italics McCulloch's), a charge which both identifies the Bible as the word of God's grace--giving, in orthodox Christian fashion, a physical object spiritual significance--and through the timely interruption of the last phrase, withdraws the assurance (and even the possibility?) of that grace. William's answering cry is similarly interrupted, and its interruption is also meaningful: "*My father, my bible, my Sav--*" (274). He calls out to the father whom he has rejected--and to God the Father? He weeps for the bible he has barely read, in disobedience to his father, and has lost--and for God the Spirit (remember, McCulloch has identified the Bible as the "words of inspiration")? Finally, he calls on God the Son, "but words failed him" in the same way as his "piercing cry" has not allowed the old gentleman to finish the charge--the italicized portion of which is repeated from the beginning of the tale-- to "take care to meet me at the right hand of Christ." Neither father nor son is allowed to finish their references to the Saviour, which leaves at least the assurance, and possibly the genuine status, of William's salvation in doubt. No easy deathbed repentance here!

As spiritually tough-minded as this tale seems to be, its spiritual focus and the possibility of repentance (though largely unrealized) moves William's tale closer than 'Bill's tale' ever comes to the Biblical tale of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. Given McCulloch's focus in Book One on the provision of physical comfort and the adequacy of secular common sense as a basis for morality, it is not surprising that only Book Two echoes a biblical source. Though both involve disobedient sons, only William has, as McCulloch puts it, "fled from the presence of his father" (238), experiences degradation similar to that of the prodigal son (who "would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat" [Luke 15:16]), and at least comes close to admitting that "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee" (Luke 15:18). Ultimately, of course, Bill's tale is addressed to the weaknesses not of sons, but of fathers. William's tale, on the other hand, even if it is unbiblically tragic, upholds, like Christ's parable of the prodigal son, the wisdom and authority of the father.

A New Father

The tale's gloomy ending does not undercut the authority of William's father. Instead, McCulloch grants William's father prophetic understanding, particularly in stating that "[w]e may never meet till the heavens be no more" (235). William's father is thus superior to William himself, who lacks "a knowledge of himself and of the nature of vice" (241). Whereas William assumes that "abroad, he would retain his integrity" (233), his parents believe that he is "about to launch into a world of snares" (232), and his father tells him that "[y]ou are putting yourself in the way of evil" (235).

Besides showing greater foresight than his son, William's father is also neither as arrogant nor as self-deceptively optimistic as Bill's father. Unlike Bill's father, who does not listen to Drone's advice that "when he was striving to leave a farm worthy of his son, he take care to leave a son worthy of his son" (76), William's father has "applied to the clergyman of the parish for his friendly interference" (233), thus admitting that he needs the clergyman's help.

The greater understanding of William's father is shown by the end of the tale, as William's father writes that though "[y]ear after year we have... waited in vain" for word from William, his parents have both "hope... that the visitations of the Lord have found you in the footsteps of your fathers" and "uncertainty whether our child continues in the path where it is good to... wait for the salvation of God" (271). Though cut off from his son, he is fearfully realistic about William's spiritual state, not knowing "whether our child continues in the path."

The William Scamp of Book One (named by both first and last name and hence given less respect even in his identification than the unnamed father of Book One), on the other hand, himself puts his son "in the way of evil." For instance, as Stepsure ironically puts it,

> knowing that too much hard work is hurtful, particularly to young, growing boys; when Bill was not steadily employed, he would say little about it.... He... could... go an errand better than any boy of his age. To the father this was particularly gratifying; as it both showed the activity of his son, and saved himself a great deal of time and toil. (76)

When Bill suffers, unrecognized by his father, a hangover, "his father recollected how much good a little bitters in the morning had done himself, when he was not very well. Bill was persuaded to try them, and they had a wonderful effect" (79)--which, though left unstated, includes the acceleration of Bill's slide into drunkenness.

The similar moral slide of Book Two's William could conceivably also have occurred under an equally negligent father. However, William's earthly father also has a symbolic role as the image of the heavenly Father. When William feels "that he himself had fled from the presence of his father, and he thought upon Jonah" (238), the reference is, as Davies notes (314), to Jonah 1:3--"Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, ...and he found a ship going to Tarshish... and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD." The double reference to the presence of the LORD links William's earthly and heavenly fathers. Why? One reason, certainly, is that this identification of William's father with God foregrounds the character of William's tale as a version of the parable of the prodigal son.

However, in McCulloch's work *Calvinism*, he depicts disobedience as not merely fleeing from God, but as forsaking His "household," in speaking of "the arrangements of the household of God... Wilfulness may forsake the comforts of a father's house, but the miseries of a far country are his discipline to bring his prodigals home" (170). He speaks as well of "[t]he engagement by which God has placed himself at the head of the household of faith" (*Calvinism*, 171).

The image of Christians as members of God's household links William's tale with McCulloch's concern in Book Two about community (and also more closely with the father in Jesus's parable, who has servants and another son besides the prodigal). Ultimately, William falls mainly because he cuts his ties with his supporting spiritual community in Scotland, including the household of his father. Unlike Daniel Defoe's

prodigal, *Robinson Crusoe*, William needs spiritual community with other human beings to maintain his spiritual communion with God.

A New Crusoe?

The fact that William's tale is a take-off on *Robinson Crusoe* would explain why McCulloch chose to make William's boat voyage so prominent--by including an allusion to the Old Testament (and to *Pilgrim's Progress* in his shipboard view of Halifax)--in a narrative which for the rest smacks so much of the New Testament parable of the prodigal son (in which the son's transportation is clearly by foot). McCulloch is thus simply following Defoe's lead (with, of course, a twist).

Defoe as the 'source' of William's tale also explains why the tale ends so soberly. Robinson Crusoe, though obviously portrayed much more positively, resembles the affective religionists whom Stepsure satirizes in Book One. Crusoe is converted in the solitude of his shipwrecked existence, like "young Yelpit, who lately converted and called himself to the preaching of the gospel" (170). His conversion happens as a result of a serious illness, like Miss Sippit's deathbed repentance. William's tale is simply a more sophisticated, and in McCulloch's terms, more spiritually realistic vehicle than the broad satire of Book One to critique the emotionalistic and individualistic evangelical experience of religion, and its unfortunate *effects*. As well, whereas Stepsure criticized "the religious instruction of youth" (169) in Chapter 16 of Book One, the lesson of Book Two is more about the necessity both of such instruction and of the religious community which Parson Drone has been largely unable to nurture, for true "comfort."

You may wonder what justifies my linking William and Crusoe at all. Obviously Crusoe's solitary efforts to make his island a civilized place resemble Stepsure's so strongly recommended industry. This apparent resemblance is strengthened by Crusoe's use of scriptural allusion to back up his moralizing about the need for wise planning in his labour. To give just one example, when Crusoe builds a gigantic canoe too far from the water to be launched, "[t]his grieved me heartily, and now I saw, tho' too late, the Folly of Beginning a Work before we count the Cost; and before we judge rightly of our own Strength to go through with it" (148, underlining mine). The underlined phrases echo Jesus' parable, as recorded in Luke 14:28-30, about the cost of being His disciple:

> 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it?*
> 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him,
> 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. (italics in text)

Crusoe's application (misapplication?) of Jesus' parable to his own inefficient labour is certainly similar to Stepsure's own frequent use of Biblical authority to back up his work ethic, but Stepsure specifically repudiates the connection: "I was not, like Robinson Crusoe, cast upon a desolate island; and forced to try shifts which nobody had ever tried before me. On the contrary, I was in a christian country, and in the midst of neighbours who kindly spent a great deal of their time, in preventing one another from being lonely" (96). Though Stepsure here, in Letter 10 of Book One, alludes to his critique of *neighbourly* community which undermines *domestic* comfort, Book Two shows the necessity of religious community--which Crusoe, of course, lacks.

The timing of the publication, in the *Acadian Recorder*, of William's tale, confirms the idea that it is a response to Defoe's novel. Davies notes that it had been sold in 1816 in

Halifax, and more importantly, that "it was also advertised as being 'on sale at the CHRONICLE PRINTING OFFICE' in Halifax in 1822"--in the "*Weekly Chronicle*, 22 March 1822, p. [2]" (*Letters*, 300). Since Letter 12 was published in the March 23, 1822 edition of the *Recorder* (327), six of the letters in the first series were published *after* the second advertisement noted above. As well, since the first letter which sets the stage for William's tale (by foreshadowing Stepsure's trip to Halifax), Letter 17, was not published until May 11, 1822 (329), almost two months after the *Chronicle* advertisement, *Robinson Crusoe* had been prominently circulating in the province well before McCulloch sought the opportunity to respond to its emotionalistic, individualistic theology of salvation with William's tale.

Stepsure's passing reference to Defoe's novel in Letter 10 shows that McCulloch already had at least a general knowledge of it before the advertisement in the *Chronicle*. The similarities between the two stories indicate what exactly his concern with *Crusoe* was. Whereas William's tale merely echoes the parable of the prodigal son, Defoe's narrator refers to it explicitly (as we shall see later). Like William's father, who warns him that he is putting himself "in the way of evil" (*Letters*, 235), Crusoe's predicts in "the last Part of his Discourse, which was truly Prophetick" that if Robinson "did take this foolish step, God would not bless me, and I would have Leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his Counsel when there might be none to assist in my Recovery" (*Crusoe*, 4). Like William, Crusoe experiences initial remorse when the ship he has boarded meets rough weather, as "my Conscience... reproached me with the Breach of my Duty to God and my Father" (7), and as easily, gets over it: "[A]s the Sea was returned to its... settled

Calmness by the Abatement of that Storm, ...I entirely forgot the Vows and Promises that I made in my Distress" (8-9). Even the reference to Jonah is not original with McCulloch. The father of one of Crusoe's companions speculates that the rough weather which the boat he has shipped aboard is experiencing has "*perhaps... all befallen us on your Account, like* Jonah *in the Ship of* Tarshish[,]" and implicitly links--as does McCulloch's narrator in William's tale--the authority of Robinson's earthly and heavenly fathers, as

> he... exhorted me to go back to my Father and not tempt Providence... told me I might see a visible Hand of Heaven against me, *And young Man*, said he, *...if you do not go back, ...you will meet with... Disasters and Disappointments till your Father's Words are fulfilled upon you*. (15, italics in text in both quotes)

The speaker's granting Crusoe's father the authority of accurate prophecy receives the same response from Robinson--"We parted soon after; for I made him little Answer" (15, underlining mine)--as the third-party intervention of the clergyman does from William, who "turned from the clergyman with that sullen obstinacy which the determined mind feels," so that "a few weeks after," William is standing with his father "upon... the quays... to bid him farewell" (235, all underlining mine). William's initial financial success, inheriting the "extensive business" (244) of his deceased father-in-law before coming to ultimate ruin, echoes Crusoe's "great Success in my Plantation" which he tells us about immediately after noting that "abus'd Prosperity is oftentimes made the very Means of our greatest Adversity" (*Crusoe*, 41). Crusoe (finally!) makes the voyage which will shipwreck him because he has "obey'd blindly the Dictates of my Fancy rather my Reason" (45), an explanation much like that of McCulloch's narrator, who asserts of William that "the fairy dreams of ambition bewildered and perverted his mind" (*Letters*, 233).

The similarities mentioned in the previous paragraph illustrate, I hope, how closely McCulloch used Defoe's novel as a model for William's tale. However, even more important are the differences. For instance, whereas William's tale merely echoes the parable of the prodigal son, Crusoe refers to it explicitly. His regret at having "forsook my Father's house" (*Crusoe*, 39) is the only indirect reference to the parable. His initial shipboard repentance results in his having "resolv'd that I would, like a true repenting Prodigal, go home to my Father" (7), and he later admits that "[h]ad I now had the Sense to... have gone home, I had been happy, and my Father, an Emblem of our Blessed Saviour's Parable, had even kill'd the fatted Calf for me" (14)--an almost verbatim quote of Luke 15:23,27,30, particularly verse 27: "...thy father hath killed the fatted calf..."

The reason for McCulloch's shyness about directly quoting this parable is probably that he does not wish to foreground it too strongly, because of its sanguine ending: "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32). Defoe has no such problem, of course, since his protagonist's spiritual crisis ends in his conversion. Both William and Crusoe experience this crisis during a serious illness, but only Crusoe is open both to a "view of the Miseries of Death" (103) and, because of it, to the understanding of the need for repentance. Both men recall the words of their fathers, but only Crusoe has the leisure to remember the entire quote from his father's prophetic discourse (104), and to read his Bible for the first time in years, leading to his "Deliverance from Sin" (111).

Why is, on the other hand, William's repentance made so difficult--possibly even unattainable--when William, is, if anything, in spiritually more hopeful circumstances than

Crusoe, with the possibility of public worship to set him straight, and his respect for his father's devotion (for "he really felt an inclination to the path of his fathers" [*Letters*, 263])? McCulloch here shows his scepticism toward the possibility of a 'Robinsonian' sickbed repentance, just as he has already done in Book One when Stepsure describes the naive view of Miss Sippit, who, having "formerly supposed, that dying persons have only to be sorry for their sins, receive forgiveness, and then leave the world, now, she was very sorry indeed, and yet a stranger to hope" (175). McCulloch also wishes to show both the difficulty of sustaining faith without spiritual community, and the corrupting effect of negative community.

William's clergyman has warned him that he is "hastening to parts where, perhaps, the testimony of Jesus has never been proclaimed" (234-235). Though this is not in fact the case, William does come to a city in which "the Lord' day was... at best, devoted to mere cessation from toil, an occasional attendance upon public worship, and the quiet enjoyments of what are termed the comforts of life" (242). (Note also the ironic use of the word "comfort," which has been so unironically prominent in Book One.) The "sober and decent family" with which "William lodged... contained none of" the things which had made Sunday

> [i]n his father's house... a sabbath to the Lord; a day... when the domestic circle was entertained... by a relation of the painful sufferings and triumphant exit of sires, who loved not their lives unto the death; when hearts thus warmed with the holy fire of religion, ascended to the Lord of the sabbath in the melody of praise. (242)

In a subtly anti-Romantic vein, McCulloch illustrates how nature's 'general revelation' is insufficient to maintain a relationship with God. Though William's "solitary walks and musings" help him "cherish religious sentiments and feelings," winter makes William's

'outdoor temple' too cold for comfort, as "nature resigned her sway to the fell blasts of the north and the return of spring found William prepared... to enter into the quiet conversations and amusements of his landlord's family" (243), prepared to give up Sunday as a time not just for "public instruction[,]" but also for "private enjoyment" (242).

William also fails to create sustaining spiritual community in his own "domestic economy" (262, note the spiritual twist on what in Book One was a primarily materialistic concept). "In his serious moments, he felt that his happiness did not identify itself with the sanctified enjoyments of his sires" (262), but "[i]nfluenced by a feeling incapacity, the youthful mind shrinks from the direction of social devotions" (263). William's spiritual isolation, having cut himself off from "the habitation of the just" and "the habitation of God" (262), leaves him unable to meet "the sneer of the thoughtless with the stern front of resolution" so that his "house contained none of the benedictions on the bounties of God in which he had united in the days of his youth" (263). The implication is that true unity is only possible through spiritual community.

McCulloch's narrator also describes the devastating effect of spiritually negative community. William's failure to make his house a spiritual community is only the beginning of the dissolution of domestic community, as "between visitings abroad and parties at home, the time passed very pleasantly away[,]" a "kind of life" which "inadvertently rendered their neighbours essential to their happiness at home" (265). As "between arbitrations, meetings of committees, and other kinds of public business, much time and labour were abstracted from the management of his own affairs" (265), and "[h]e was, also, abundantly gratified by his evening amusements, public dinners, occasional trips to

the country with a few agreeable companions, and... the other means which husbands in Halifax employ to separate their happiness and home" (266), his "mind engrossed by worldly business and pleasure, can spare no time for those serious communings with God and itself, which a religious life needs" (266). Public society replaces domestic and spiritual community, even the "public ordinances of the Church," as "the multiplicity of his avocations" made it "requisite occasionally to employ the sabbath in bringing up his books" (267).

Even spiritually 'neutral' community is not spared by McCulloch's narrator. William originally spent "his spare hours in the company of a few young men like himself, who abhorring the gratifications of profligacy, quietly amused themselves with a simple game at cards[,]" but "he was no gamester" (243). By the time he marries, however, he and his wife "would pop in upon an intimate acquaintance, and beguile the time with a simple game at cards" (265). This time, however, "the stakes never exceeded a triffle [sic], in order to keep up the interest of the game" (265). Though the narrator ironically notes that "[n]either of the young people, however, possessed a gambling disposition" (265), the progression from card-playing to gambling in fact vindicates his father's "aversion" to cards, which William had thought "one of those groundless prejudices, which religious men are apt to entertain with unreasonable obstinacy" (243). If William's isolation, both from genuine moral understanding and from spiritual support, makes him vulnerable to vice introduced even by young men who abhor "the gratifications of profligacy," he will fare much worse when confronted by genuinely spiritually adverse community.

A New Work Ethic

Both Defoe and McCulloch portray the morally disabling effects of the bad company that corrupts good character. I do not mean to use their treatments of this subject as a point of comparison. What is significant about McCulloch's treatment of morally corrupt community is the greater depth, compared to Book One, in the illustration of his work ethic. Stepsure has glorified solitary, practical labour and brought his satirical wit to bear on those who think that work is primarily a social activity--those who go to barn-raisings; those who, like Bill Scamp, run errands; those who seek work that will bring them prestige and authority in the community. His consideration of the effects of such work, however, has concentrated on its temporal, and especially its material effects--even when, as in the case of Steer and "his old servant, Peter Longshanks" (47), their decline is also largely moral, as well as practical.

Steer, like many of Book One's fools, goes astray, like William, because of his desire of "becoming suddenly rich" (45). As "a dealer in cattle[,]" who is "thus... exposed to a great variety of companies"--again like William--Steer takes to drinking and swearing, becoming "the most profane person in town" (45). Though Steer does conduct a successful cattle drive--like William's initial prosperity--his subsequent self-imposed retirement is not a happy ending, as "[t]he general report was that the devil haunted his house, for listeners on the outside heard strange noises, as if Steer were swearing, and his wife crying and calling out for help" (46). Unlike William, however, and like many of Book One's profligates, Steer's ultimate end is not spiritual ruin, but the usual ironically described temporal destination, as after the sheriff "assured him that all his cattle were... in excellent

order[,]" the sheriff, "to give him fair play, carried him along with him, that he might judge for himself" (46).

Peter Longshanks' decline, like William's, occurs when he accompanies "Steer's droves" to "Halifax, [where] indeed, their manner of living became considerably different[,]" and "the habits of the master became the habits of the man" (47). Learning to dance from "Seignior Caperini," and at the same time, as "the old religious people" put it, "taking lessons from Steer[,]" Peter comes up with the idea of a dancing school, but when his feet are frozen, "sympathy" is not enough to help, as Stepsure sardonically puts it, "a benevolent dancing master, who knows how much the grand interests of rational beings depend upon his labours" (48). Peter's "manner of living" and "habits" are ultimately less important than his "labours," or the lack thereof, especially when "Mr. Holdfast[,]" the sheriff, "begged him to try if he could walk as far as his house" (48).

Aside from the difference of Steer's and Peter's finales from William's, the common error of the first two, though it may lead to moral decline, is not a spiritual, but a material miscalculation. Both Steer and Peter choose an occupation--driving cattle--that is inherently morally dangerous (because it takes them "often from home"), but also economically unwise, since it removes each of them from his "snug farm" (45) where he can "live comfortably" (47). William's father, on the other hand, is "only a tradesman in ordinary circumstances" (232), whose "rude habitation" is "less remarkable for the splendour of its appearance, than for the worth of its inmates" (233). William is not abandoning *temporal* comfort. When the terms of industry are applied to his father, they have spiritual, rather than material connotations. His father's "conscientious deportment"

has not gained the family wealth, but it has "raised him to the office of an elder in the parish" (232), unlike William whose "correct deportment" aided his ambition "to be rich," particularly when "his master... made him foreman" (243). The term "ambition," too, which for William is connected with "fairy dreams," has no material content when applied to William's parents, "whose sole ambition was to exemplify that religious and peaceful life whose brighter prospects are beyond the grave, and to witness their son, the resemblance of themselves" (232). The vocabulary of the work ethic is here given spiritual meaning.

Actually, for the first time in the *Letters*, work is given a higher goal than mere domestic comfort. Though William's family is not rich, they are cultured, in the broader sense of feeling conscious continuity with the past. As William's clergyman, "one of those worthy men, who by their instruction and example, have conferred upon Scotland, riches more valuable than silver and gold" (233, another example of the diction of materialistic moralism being undermined) approaches William's house, he sees the "verdant memorial of the martyr"--William's great grandfather--"an ivy, whose tendrils, now spreading in every direction, supplied it [the house] with an unfading mantle of green" (233). The use of the words "verdant" and "green" cannot help but make the ivy a poignantly ironic reminder of the spilling of the martyr's "blood in the Grass Market of Edinburgh" (233). Though the ivy--with its attendant historical and spiritual resonances--was planted not by William, but by his great grandfather, the hut also has flora of more recent origin, including "a blooming honeysuckle [which] had been guided with care; while the spot of ground by which it was separated from the road, surrounded by a neatly trimmed hedge, had, by the taste and industry of William, became an emporium of flowery beauty" (234, underlining

mine) The underlined phrases above, which speak of horticultural labour, are linked not to long-term material prosperity, but to simpler, short-term sensual pleasure--"blooming" and "flowery beauty"--while at the same time linking William to the interest in earlier generations symbolized by the ivy. As William is "in the midst of his flowers[,]" he is commended by his clergymen for choosing "[t]o strew flowers in the path of religious parents" (234). William's resolution "that in a few years, his parents... should be shaded by groves... fine and lofty" (234) misses the Romantic point (which McCulloch makes clearer here than anywhere in Book One) that it is his personal service, not impersonal wealth, which makes "a flowery emporium" so satisfying to his parents. In this regard, William's tale is much like William Wordsworth's earlier poem "Michael" (about which more later).

William's respect for earlier generations has given his father "hope that you would at last mingle with the company of our fathers who are around the throne" of "the God before whom our fathers walked" (235), "the God of our fathers" (236). The diminishing of that filial respect, as partially illustrated by his fading memory of the symbolic foliage of his father's hut, is one index of William's decline. He begins with by "remitting home the greater part of his wages" for his "parents... to expend... upon their comfort and to fear no want" (240). Is there a deliberate irony in the fact that William seemingly mixes two phrases, to the detriment of their spiritual meaning, from Psalm 23--"I shall not want" and "I will fear no evil" (1,4)--at the same time as he identifies his substantial income with "comfort"? This would seem to undermine Stepsure's optimism about the connection of prosperity (even if gained more gradually) and "domestic comfort," and to implicitly point out Stepsure's main moral error in Book One (in McCulloch's terms): to fear want more

than evil. Anyway, William still sees the value of his heritage: "He spoke of his flowers, and... of the sheltering protection of his great grandfather's ivy; and concluded... that he would soon revisit the verdant covering of his father's abode" (240). The next time William sends money to his parents, he again "affectionately advised them to diminish their labours and add to their comforts.... but he spoke not of the flowery amusements of his youth and his great grandfather's ivy" (245), the diminished respect for tradition thus demonstrated again undermining Stepsure's characteristic concern about temporal "comfort." (Perhaps the orphaned Stepsure, with no family tradition to cling to, has more reason to set his sights on mere material prosperity.) The next time William's provision for his parents is mentioned, it is only to note that "for a number of years he had ceased to ask for their welfare" (269), and the plants on his father's property are not even mentioned--not, that is, until his father's final letter to William.

William's parents still cling to the "house that can give us the fond recollections of our son.... the house of your great grandfather's fellowship with God" (272). They have used the "comfort" he formerly offered them to, through their labour, "preserve the house of our fathers and our son's flowers" and to, through their memories, "talk of our worthy ancestors and of the love of our son." The failure, due to poverty and William's neglect, of their labour to preserve family ties is symbolized by the defeat of all they have planted:

> Nettles grow rank where our son cheered the heart of his parents.... There remains neither flower nor herb, but the slip of wormwood which our son has planted on the day of his departure. Bitter herbs need little cultivation: it has spread every where around the habitation of our fathers.
>
> In the days of your youth, William, the green covering of our house afforded to your mother and me, many a pleasing thought. We had planted no ivy: but we had planted you in the house of the Lord; and we hoped, that when our son laid us in the grave, we should have one to flourish in the courts of our God.... We think of the

sapless twigs and brown leaves of the ivy; and our hearts yearn for the soul of our son. (273)

Stepsure's concern about the "domestic comfort" assured by steady work and female economy is irrelevant in this situation. Whereas Stepsure ends his moral fables with temporal misery, William's father writes "not... to grieve you, but to show what a blessed portion religion is" (273). The work ethic of William's tale is not about the right way to get rich--through steady labour--but about the right goal for labour: the strengthening of the ties between the generations, ties that also draw men closer to God.

Depending on one's own religious sympathies, this motif of William's tale is either a deepening or a coarsening of a similar concern of Wordsworth's poem "Michael," written and published in 1800. The house of the shepherd Luke, his wife, and his son Michael is also a symbol of industry--the work which goes on indoors while their lamp burns late at night, so that "from this constant light, so regular/ And so far seen, the House itself, by all/ Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,/ Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR" (lines 136-139). There is a natural symbol of the love between Luke and Michael in "THE CLIPPING TREE," an oak where the sheep are sheared, and where "[w]ould Michael exercise his heart with looks/ Of fond correction and reproof bestowed/ Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep" (172-174). When Luke is forced to leave to repair the failing family fortunes by working for a prosperous kinsman, Luke's final act for his father is to lay "The first stone of the Sheep-fold" (420) that Michael had planned to build with him, again a sharing of labour between generations. Michael works alone on the sheep-fold even after Luke "in the dissolute city gave himself/ To evil courses: ignominy and shame/ Fell on him, so that he was driven at last/ To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas"

(444-447), but he never finishes it, and their cottage is ploughed under. However, "the oak is left/ That grew beside their door" (479-480). The sombre mood and fate of the son (even being hidden "beyond the seas") are remarkably similar to those in William's tale, but if McCulloch used "Michael" as a source for many of the images of his own work, he specifically repudiates Wordsworth's belief in the simple co-existence of man and nature in a state of harmony. We have already seen how, after having cut himself off from religious revelation, William is disappointed by, or even oppressed by, the power of landscape. There is no question for McCulloch, however, that within a sustaining religious community, nature, united with human industry, can glorify transcendent concerns. William's clergyman admits that "[y]our father's house... deserves the ornaments of nature" (*Letters*, 234), but only when specifically speaking of what William has done to "ornament" that house.

If, in William's tale, McCulloch has implicitly condemned Book One's concern with material prosperity, and sought to portray work's spiritual meaning, he has also created a far more credible account than Stepsure's narratives about Steer and Peter Longshanks of the potential for moral corruption inherent in any public workplace. William's shopmates work hard, but "with... merriment, less allied to wit than to obscenity and profanation" (241). Though "[t]o William, ...these things appeared in their true hideous forms.... for the sake of peace... he found it necessary to... without apparent dislike, to listen to conversations which his mind abhorred" (241-242). By the end of the following winter, "spring found William prepared to listen to the jests of the shopmates, in which meager attempts at wit were eked out by obscenity or profanation" (243). When William is made

foreman, "[h]is interest now lay not in quarrelling with the grog and conversations of the shop, but in maintaining good humour among workmen upon whom the success of his master's business depended" (244). From disapproval, through timid toleration and then the self-interested condoning of the shop's immorality, William proceeds finally to imitation: as McCulloch notes cynically, "in the course of conversation, he rarely used the sacred name, or indeed, any kind of profanity without a feeling of self-reproach" (267). What William says when not in conversation, and how often he swears when he *is* in conversation, are carefully left unstated.

Ultimately William's tale, and its introduction, is remarkable for McCulloch, because it balances so many of his concerns about religion simultaneously. While continuing and sharpening his satire of affective religion, he constructs a tale which is rife with similarities to works by both Defoe and Wordsworth with some sympathy for their positions, but also making his own fictional case for the necessity (tacitly denied by Defoe) of religious community, and (simply ignored by Wordsworth) of religious revelation. Just before deepening his understanding of work's meaning, he redefines and subverts the narrator, who has, so far, portrayed a purely temporal and largely individualistic work ethic. Both Stepsure and William misstep themselves in Halifax, but Stepsure's pratfall remains in the realm of comedy, perhaps because for all his shallowness and arrogance, he has never taken himself too seriously. If William's fall is a warning of the fate which overtakes the tragic hero, the other letters in Book Two, with which I shall deal in the next chapter--Saunders' letters, and the replies to Censor--confirm that Stepsure is far enough

from tragedy to have nothing to worry about. Stepsure lives in a big enough universe (unlike Censor) that he has room to fall without coming to harm.

CHAPTER V

A GREAT CROWD OF WITNESSES: POLYPHONY AND DECORUM

Stepsure's moralism has never avoided *censure*, and as we have seen, Book Two even raises the stakes on many of the moral issues of Book One. However, McCulloch himself seems to be extraordinarily sensitive to *Censor*, the aptly self-named writer to *The Acadian Recorder* who criticized Stepsure for his "offenses against delicacy" (*Letters*, 435) in the *Letters*. Why should a didactically moralistic author like McCulloch be so wroth when a moral standard is set up to judge his literary output--as when in the letter from which the above quote was taken (published, as Davies notes, on December 28, 1822 [431]), Censor proposes that "[n]othing... should find a place among moral strictures that is offensive to decency" (434)? Censor's problem, as Stepsure portrays it, is that his criticism itself violates a higher moral standard than "decency" or "delicacy": truth (and, not incidentally, the possibility of practically effective satire). For,

> had I been able like Censor to get upon Pegasus, and gallop to the top of Parnassus; our people might have been buried under heaps of blooming perfumes.... Decked with the flowers and scents of Parnassus, they would be so fine that nobody would know them. Indeed, I question if they would know themselves. (248-249)

McCulloch, Presbyterian minister, evinces here a belief in artistic realism as an absolute criterion which sets him in the unlikely company of, say, James Joyce or D. H. Lawrence. The difference, of course, is that Stepsure's "virtues" are, as Frye's 1960 introduction to the *Letters* describes them, "conventional" (v), that his creator has no quarrel with the social structure as such--at least not with the moral order society claims to uphold. McCulloch deals rather with those who refuse to acknowledge the legitimate claims of the moral order, which is a typical concern of socially conservative satire.

For all McCulloch's conservatism, however, Book Two is a much different piece of work than Book One in its concern for artistic realism. Though, in his quarrel with Censor, Stepsure defends his honesty as *didactically* necessary, McCulloch himself has already begun in Book Two, in a formal sense, to undermine Stepsure's authority as sole narrator (and thus to increase the *Letters*' artistic complexity and consequent realism) by distributing the job of narrator and critic of final appeal to other characters.

The Delegation of Narrative Authority: The Tale of a Halifax Gentleman

As I have already shown in the previous chapter, the occasion on which William's tale is first told to Stepsure effectively satirizes Stepsure's preoccupation with material prosperity, and the form of the tale also lends itself to the subversion of Stepsure's role as narrator which he has uniquely exercised in Book One. The fact that it is told both in the words of the "decent looking old gentleman" (*Letters*, 229) himself, and without the clearly marked mediation of Stepsure as the first hearer of the tale (unlike, for instance, Marlowe in Joseph Conrad's novels, who does make his presence known), means that the tale does not essentially 'belong' to Stepsure, but rather to its original teller.

Actually, in large part, the old gentleman does not even keep the same tight grasp on his tale that Stepsure has kept on his narratives in Book One. Whereas Stepsure's quotations of his major religious authority figures--Drone and Saunders--have generally been followed by his critical comments, the old gentleman allows the clergyman and William's father to *speak for themselves*. The clergyman's warnings to William are followed only by indirect summaries of William's responses. Significantly, the clergyman's last and longest speech is followed by a detail which does not in any way qualify his

warning, but simply indicates (with implied disapproval for William's stubbornness, as the underlined phrases indicate) William's inability to come up with any reply, even an implausible one: "William turned from the clergyman with that sullen obstinacy which the determined mind feels, when it conceives itself to be unreasonably opposed" (235, all underlining mine). The father's charge has an even stronger position in William's tale, ending Letter 21 without response either by William or the tale's narrator. The final letter of the father to his son is also followed by only five lines of narrative (274)--none of which comment on the content of the letter, in spite of the fact that it is the narrator who reads the letter to William.

Even the response to the letter of William himself, though it is interrupted (just as his "piercing cry" of despair interrupts the repetition of his father's injunction to him), echoes and thus also implicitly supports his father's spiritual mandate. "*My father, my bible, my Sav*--" (274) mentions first the paternal source of the command, next the first object mentioned in the command--"*Read your bible*" (273), and finally the ultimate object of the command--"'[*T*]*ake care to meet me at the right hand of Christ*'" (236).

Ultimately, the counsel directed to William and the tale's listener differs from the counsel of Drone and Saunders in more than simply its greater spiritual focus. Drone and Saunders have not only been rejected by the morally foolish community around them, but have also failed to form a morally wise community along with the sympathetic Stepsure--"[a] city that is set on a hill" (Matthew 5:14), in opposition to the town around them and the "Vanity Fair" that is Halifax. Their failure to establish spiritual community has happened partly because Stepsure has not valued community in his narration any more

than in his rise to prosperity. He has always felt free to critique the counsel of Drone and Saunders, just as Saunders himself has implicitly criticized Drone's discourses in ways I have noted in Chapter 3. The old gentleman who tells William's tale, in contrast, by allowing the clergyman and the father to speak for themselves, without his comment--but with his approval made obvious by the demonstration of their pessimistic prophecies fulfilled by William's fall--shows a spiritual community united against William's folly. William's final affirming response to his father's charge shows the power of a united spiritual community--even in its absence. The tale's very form, then, reinforces McCulloch's theme of the necessity of community which informs Book Two so much more than in Book One (and thus fits more coherently within McCulloch's Calvinistic theology, in which the stress on covenant would have made the ideal of community, particularly as it is manifested in the family, so important).

The Voice of God: Affective and Doctrinal Religion United in Saunders

Another way in which McCulloch delegates narrative authority to more figures--which paradoxically *augments* the authority of any given narrator by making him the representative of a wider community--is to print two of Saunders' letters. Giving Saunders his own voice, unqualified by Stepsure's ironic comment, also contributes to Book Two's renewed appreciation for less immediately materially practical consequences of both religious and more general moral consensus, those consequences which have been also the focus of William's tale.

For example, though in Letter 18--"[t]o the Editors of the Accaudian Recorder" (197)-- Saunders echoes Stepsure's faith in the power of inherent consequences to

eliminate laziness--by praising "hard times" for clearing "the toon o' a wheen o' the neerdoweels; and the lave of them are takin' to the wark, like their decent neibours" (201-202)--Scantocreesh also indicts those whose pride and dishonesty have no negative material effects, as after "ridin' in their shaises to the vera coorts, whar they hae been summoned for det, ...they'll stan' up afore the worthy gentlemen as bauldly as if they were their equals; and when they can jouk the peyment o' a just det, they think themsels clever fallows" (198). Saunders' revelation of this uncorrected moral corruption reveals the flaw in Stepsure's idea that moral failure carries within it the seeds of its own correction: a failure of moral community makes supposedly 'inherent' consequences unlikely. Suddenly Saunders' usual solution--to make "Wull Scamp" and his ilk fearful of finding "rapes about their necks" (198)--does not seem quite as eccentric as Stepsure has implied it was in Book One, except that the magistrates themselves betray their community by accommodating their granting of liquor licences to the fact that "the maist part o' our public revenue arises frae drinkin'" (200).

Though Letter 20, Saunders' letter to "Willy Whooshlicat" (215) is preceded by the introductory comment of Stepsure's immediately previous letter to the *The Acadian Recorder*, McCulloch's limitation of that comment to the bare fact that Scantocreesh's letter is one that he "has been writing to one of his acquaintances in Scotland" (214) means that this letter, too speaks with its own authority. It is thus significant that Saunders once again addresses a concern neglected by Stepsure in Book One--the breakdown of moral consensus, and the community that undergirds it, in the new land--and in doing so, shows (as McCulloch has already had Stepsure do) his own kinder,

gentler side. Saunders tells Willy what "great plesur" it gives him "in this strange lan'" to "learn... that auld neibours and acquantances haena forgotten me a' thegither" (215). The regard of his old neighbours and acquaintances in *old* Scotland points to a kind of community feeling unlikely to be found in *Nova* Scotia, where all that it takes to "mak a toon" is "a kirk, a changehouse, and a smiddy" (218). Saunders also notes a more religiously significant fragmentation of community: "In maist pairts o' the kintra, the people are sair dividit amang themsels; ...they canna gree about ae minister," so that "[t]he kintra's overgrown wi' lazy vagabonds, wha pretend veesions and revelashons" (222).

Saunders--far more directly than does Stepsure in his less sympathetic account of the parson's decline in Book One--shows the vagabonds' skill in holding "meetin's for prayin' decent sober fok into their fuleries" (222) as responsible for the older Drone's wordiness. The combination of "gangrels intrudin' into the office unsent, and his ain poverty" (222-223) have caused the older Drone, "whenever he holds furth," to be "sair fashed, which makes him lang o' tellin' his tale and no vera takin'[,]'" despite which, "when he does get his observes out; their aye soun' and sappy, and weel worth the waitin' for" (223). This commendation balances Saunders' earlier dig at Drone's longwindedness--"Firstly and lastly, and to mak an end for the sake o' breefness, and no to multiply words without meenin', as our minister aften says a long while afore he gies ower" (204)--from Saunders' first letter in Book Two, a quote which is more like Stepsure's usual irony. By the second letter, then, McCulloch gives Saunders freer rein in allowing him to comment on the town and its religion at length and without Stepsure's narratorial mediation--perhaps even in response to Censor's criticism that "the chief fault of our author... is the sameness of his

characters" (434). Saunders' first letter was published in the same edition of *The Acadian Recorder*--December 28, 1822--as Censor's critique, but the second, and longer, letter from Saunders did not appear until two weeks later--January 11, 1823 (see Davies' notes: 329, 330, 431). Saunders' implicit defense of Drone's prolixity may well be, therefore, an ironically self-deprecatory (on McCulloch's part) response to Censor's own rather verbose criticism of Stepsure's windiness:

> [T]his wordiness of diction connection connected... with a paucity of incidents and characters was a leading fault of the letters which are to be the objects of my present criticism.... I disapproved much of the length of Stepsure's letters, especially as the author obviously laboured to draw them out into unconscionable prolixity, and seemed to have tasked himself, not to stop when his materials were spent, but to fill up his complement of verbose chit-chat among his characters.... (431)

Even the fact that Saunders' second letter is the longest up to this point in Book Two may be McCulloch's artistic spite, especially since Censor had also complained, in reference to Book One's characters, that "[t]he language is never varied, nor rendered applicable to their parts. We are not let into the diversities of their tempers or views by appropriate diction" (434). Saunders' ten pages of often nearly incomprehensible dialect in his second letter is "appropriate diction" with a vengeance.

Saunders' letters, then, both foreshadow the focus on community of the narrator of William's tale, and implicitly reply, before Stepsure's own response, to Censor's censure of Book One. However, Saunders' first letter also contributes his voice--independent of Stepsure's--to the moral community which condemns William's moral decline, by focusing partly on the vices to which William falls prey: "kert playin'.... the destrucshon of youth'" (198) and "drinkin'.... bringin' our youth to destrucshon'" (199-200). Saunders' quotation of Parson Drone as a fellow advocate of community restraint of intemperance--with

nothing but contempt for the "magestrats [who] think themsels a' great men and dinna care a snuff o' tobacco for what the mi- -ter says"--draws the parson into that moral community, meaning that of the three original moral authorities of Book One, only the sardonic Stepsure--with his focus on inherent consequences--is excluded from the moral community of Book Two, even as Scantocreesh still approves Mephibosheth's attention to "the wark" (201).

Stepsure's secular moral philosophy forms no part of Saunders' view of Drone. When Saunders quotes Drone's judgement about the magistrates "'[t]hat the vices which they patronize, are marked in theirs in the book of remembrance; and that the groanings of wretchedness from... the town, with irresistible supplication against them, press into the presence of the Being who declares justice and judgment[,]...'" Scantocreesh not only refrains from the ironic commentary which is typical of Stepsure, but actually echoes the parson's dictum: "It's judgement like. I wiss that a' which bring drink in the kintra... would consider what accoont they hae to gie" (200).

The judgementalism of the last quoted sentence is of a piece with Saunders' condemnation of Peter Longshanks in Book One, whom Saunders felt "had better be... considering what account he would give of the use of his legs at the day of judgement[,]" but *Stepsure's* statement that Scantocreesh "declared" (47) this opinion is quite different than *Saunders himself* evincing a mere "wiss" that the guilty would listen to their conscience. McCulloch thus softens Saunders' rhetoric, and allows Saunders himself to express it, and to admit that he too has been guilty of "[t]he thochtless follies of youth"--being "ready .. to tumle ower a sweetie wife's stan'" at the fair, or being "far

readier to gie crackit crouns than gude advice to ither fules like oursels" (215). All these strategies grant Saunders more credibility than Stepsure has allowed him in Book One.

This augmented credibility makes Saunders' rather subtle and introspective evocation of Providence--"You and I hae great matter o' thankfu'ness that we hae been spaired to be what we are"--a powerful foreshadowing of the trust in Providence of the narrator of William's tale. This final link between Saunders and the "decent looking old gentleman" (229) is just one more way that McCulloch has used Scantocreesh's greater credibility and independent narratorial status in Book Two to undercut Stepsure's shallow moralism and create a cohesive broadly based moral community. That Saunders also implicitly responds to Censor shows how versatile a figure McCulloch's 'stage Scotchman' has become.

The Voice of the God vs. The Satire of Classicism

Of course Saunders is McCulloch's least important response to Censor. McCulloch does finally grant Stepsure a significant voice in Book Two through Letters 23 and 25, but that voice has apparently been chastened and broadened by the subversive critiques inherent in William's tale and Saunders' letters. Stepsure is, in these letters, more than simply an "industrious apprentice" as Frye's 1960 introduction to the *Letters* (iii) terms him. Though Frye notes that "McCulloch makes it clear that by simple living, he does not mean... a mode of life that excludes the cultivating of the mind" (v), he does not explore the irony of such a consciously dogmatic religionist and advocate of practical education as McCulloch using classical conceits, even if satirically, to answer the classical conceit (in the non-technical sense of the word) of Censor.

Because McCulloch's positive purpose in the replies to Censor is to uphold what, for him, would be the converse of 'classicality'--the plain speech of artistic realism--his negative purpose is to mock classical affectation. When Davies calls attention to the episode in which Stepsure, waking from his dream of mount Parnassus, finds the laurels with which he has been, in his own mind, crowned by Apollo to be his wife's knitting which she has hung upon his head to wind it into balls, she describes it as a "moment" filled with "bathos" (li). Bathetic it certainly is, but Stepsure's mistake also serves to mock both classical affectation and Mephibosheth himself. Firstly, the identification of Apollo's laurels with the materials--"worsted" (259)--from which Mephibosheth's homespun is made indicates that Apollo is also 'homespun': a made creature rather than a making creator. The honour which Stepsure bestows upon Apollo in capitalizing his title--"the God" (256, 258, 259)--is ironically undercut, by showing the God's own symbol of honour to be rather plain material for a classically elevated dream. Apollo's judgements are also received as only relatively, rather than divinely, authoritative by Stepsure when (as Saunders has done with Drone) he makes an ironically understated comparison between Apollo and Censor: "Apollo may be a critic nearly as skilful" (259). None of Stepsure's readers were likely to mistake "the God" for McCulloch's God.

The second function of this episode involves Stepsure receiving 'divine' honour in *his own* dream--honour which becomes the butt of Saunders' laughter, "enjoying the figure which I had cut when he entered the house" (259)--indicating that Stepsure's vanity is also being taken to task here, and implicitly reproved by Saunders, a reversal of the usual order of judgement in Book One. This implied admonition, just after the Saunders in Stepsure's

dream has rebuked Censor for daring to "meddle with that decent man, Mephibosheth Stepsure" (259), implies that Mephibosheth's earlier quotes of Saunders' praises of Stepsure (in Book One) may have been equally creative--another undercutting of Mephibosheth's narratorial credibility. McCulloch even puts the pretentious Censor in Stepsure's company, since it is the 'dream' Saunders' "hearty parting laugh" (259) at Censor that wakes Stepsure up--to the knowledge that Saunders' genuine laughter is at Mephibosheth's own expense.

If McCulloch is indeed being careful to distinguish God and "the God," why does he even use such a potentially confusing figure? This God of Parnassus, rather than the God of Sinai and Calvary, is the best god for McCulloch's purpose in his replies to Censor--to judge not morality, but taste--with the implication that Censor has been judged unworthy by his own (false) god. It may seem curious, then, that Stepsure allows the God to judge not only Censor, but also Saunders, who so explicitly condemns the God--Apollo--as false. However, although Book Two as a whole is more concerned than Book One with an explicitly religiously grounded moralism, the basic purpose of the replies to Censor is to distinguish morality and taste, life and art--a task in which both Saunders in Book One, and Censor in his evaluation of Book One, have failed.

That their respective failures are of different magnitudes and characters can be seen from the contrast in the God's reaction to each. When Apollo asks Saunders "what brought him there[,] [m]y neighbour replied that it might well be asked, what brought him to such an heathenish high place; he was no idolater.... It was not to give his countenance to pagan abominations, that he was catched neglecting his farm" (254). Stepsure tells us

that "I could easily perceive that Apollo was more amused than offended by Saunders' reply" (254). The fact that Stepsure foregrounds his own observation of the God's response underscores the fact that this "amused" judgement (in Mephibosheth's own dream) is also Stepsure's. Forbidden by his creator, McCulloch, to comment on Saunders' letters, Stepsure is given permission to, one last time and with far greater subtlety than anywhere in Book One, indicate the difference in their views of life, focusing this time not on judgement, but on the need for artistic openness. Saunders' urge to be "no worshipper of Baal himself[,]" and to be "determined that no heathenish abomination should enter the door of his house" (258) is also worthy only of "a smile" (259) from Apollo--again amusement rather than offence. Why is Saunders' horror of meeting a God in a dream, which is, after all, analogous to Censor's horror at what he calls "[a] filthy image, however true" (434), treated so gently? The answer can be seen in Saunders' request which accompanies the passage I have quoted above from page 258: "[H]e would be obliged to Apollo, and pay him beside; if he would allow him to carry away a huge pile of Peg's indigestibles[.]" Saunders is unafraid both of honest labour--an echo yet of Book One's work ethic--and (unlike Censor) of "indigestibles" (and perhaps because of this open-mindedness, is allowed to be the agent of Apollo's justice--just as he has often volunteered to be the agent of the Biblical God's justice--for Miss Sippit, dipping "her in a large vat of buttermilk" (254-255), setting "a spinning wheel upon her shoulder," and sending "her down the hill" [255]).

Saunders' favourable reaction to the indigestibles may be worthy of note, but it is Censor who has actually landed *in* the pile of indigestibles--among, as Apollo says,

"flowers that better become him"--after Pegasus, Censor's first classical critic, has "applied the sole of his foot to Censor's nether works" (258). Apollo has adjudged Censor's fate as reasonable precisely because, as the God says, "'he is one of your dealers in fine words [pretty plain talk for a God!] who conceal their want of sense under a garbage of fustian which they call the flowers of Parnassus, and with which they deck ladies and dung heaps with equal profusion" (258). When Saunders and Stepsure encounter Censor in the midst of Saunders' "bargain.... peeping out of its top" it is the believer in direct judgement, Saunders, who chooses to "keep him where he had lighted from his soarings" (259). *In the very paragraph which reveals the trip up Mount Parnassus as only a dream*, Stepsure chooses to 'let' Saunders be the one to directly inflict on Censor more punishment than he would otherwise inherently receive for what Apollo calls his "arrogant pretensions" and "folly"--not merely landing in a dung pile, but also, through Saunders' vengefulness, staying in it. This has, deliberately or not, the effect of showing that the distinction between Saunders' moralism of direct punishment and Stepsure's moralism of inherent consequences is of Mephibosheth's own creation--a further undermining of Stepsure's narratorial authority.

Nonetheless, whoever is responsible for it, Censor still gets the worst of the "bargain." McCulloch, however, was not the first Nova Scotian writer to deal with a censorious reaction to his writing. Gwendolyn Davies' essay, "James Irving: Literature and Libel," in her *Studies in Maritime Literary History*, is devoted to Irving's own difficulties over material he published, like McCulloch, in *The Acadian Recorder*. Irving's "Letters on the Present State of English Poetry" were criticized, as were Stepsure's letters, for having, in

Davies' words, "violated the laws of decorum" (*Studies*, 55), by writers for *The Free Press* in Halifax, in an ongoing war between the *Recorder* and the *Press*. Ironically, the attacks on Irving were partially motivated by his own censorious criticism of Jonathan Swift in 1820--whose characters he called, in a letter dated June 3, "'paltry, dirty, filthy, mean, and abominable'"; whose imagination he claimed, in a letter to the *Recorder* on June 24, was "'eternally rioting in filth and dirt'"; and whose writing's destination he specified, in a July 15 letter, as "the very sewers of Billingsgate" (55). In contrast, McCulloch was criticized precisely for having what the Scottish publisher William Blackwood later (in a letter to the bookseller John Mitchell dated December 31, 1829) called "'the pungency & originality of Swift, with... too much of his broad & coarse colouring'" (*Letters*, xliv).

Stepsure avoided, unlike Irving, any criticism of other writers' language until he was attacked by Censor on that point. McCulloch actually showed a certain amount of restraint in his response to Censor, as compared to Irving, whose escalating literary rows with Edmund Ward of *The Free Press* eventually led to Irving suing Ward for libel (*Studies*, 57)--though Ward's slurs against Irving's personal character made legal action understandably necessary (56-57). Whatever Irving's justifications, McCulloch did not respond to Censor's letter "On Mephibosheth Stepsure" for 6 weeks--on February 8, 1823--and not until after Censor had increased the critical stakes by writing in a letter to the *Recorder* dated January 4, 1823 of Stepsure's "'constantly wading in a dung-pit, bespattered with dirt and all the marks of vulgarity'" (*Letters*, xxvi), a phrase which is quoted verbatim in Letter 23.

However different in tone, Irving's and McCulloch's writings do share at least one common purpose: the defense of artistic realism. Irving's original criticism of Swift had compared his work unfavourably to what for many was the immoral, but for Irving the realistically moralistic, work of Lord Byron in "Don Juan," in "'painting to us, in characters never to be erased from the mind, the inevitable consequences of abandoning ourselves, unchecked, to its natural, or acquired impulses'" (*Studies*, 54). Stepsure, of course, is involved in a far more personal struggle, in defending the realism, through its satirical purpose, of *his own* writing. Stepsure dreams that Censor criticizes him for writing "without the least fiction or poetic fancy about me" (*Letters*, 255) about

> a subject which, above all others, requires the lofty soarings of Pegasus and the muses. I had shown that idleness is the parent of folly, filth, and wretchedness: And how had I done it? Instead of writing sublimely about folly and filth, as any ordinary farmer would have done, wherever I found it, I had called it plain dirt. A writer of sense, he remarked, who wished filth out of the country, instead of telling anybody to take it away, would have thrown a veil over it; or put into his pocket, and said nothing about it. (255-256)

Stepsure thus shows that like the religiously fervid but artistically obtuse Saunders, who treats a classical God in a satirical dream not as a literary necessity but only as "a pagan abomination," Censor cannot understand that the "filth" in Mephibosheth's writing is necessary to make it practically effective satire--to actually get "filth out of the country."

Stepsure's rather general, euphemistic reference to "filth" in the above quotation is not replicated in the rest of the letter (number 23). In mocking Censor's squeamishness and his love of classical affectation and versification, Stepsure literally rubs the faces of his characters, including Censor himself, in varied sorts of filth. In Stepsure's dream, Censor gives Mephibosheth's fellow townsfolk the odious task of drinking "the Castalian fountain to the mud," which, from Jack Scorem's reaction, we are given to understand contains the

same liquid that pours from the spout in "Jack's gable end, against which Censor showed a particular antipathy" (253): urine. "[O]ld Driddle" the fiddler, though, is so befuddled by the description of what they have drunk from as a "Castalian fountain" that he is more concerned about what for him was still "to come; for he never drank anything weaker than grog without being the worse of it" (253, underlining mine). Jack's gable end is badly abused in the response to Censor, especially as a vehicle for the satire of Censor's remark about the "language of the letters" that "after all its workings are read..., the most stupid poet could not cull an image fit for the humblest versification" (435). Stepsure notes that Censor's description of Jack's plumbing arrangements would have referred to the "Nocturnal distillations of Jack Scorem,/ Who did as all his sires had done before him" (251) even before he narrates Censor's boast that he has "translated them [the letters of Book One] into both prose and verse" (256). Censor's unwillingness to dwell on such "filth" is itself versified, in a way that rubs Censor's face in, if not filth, at least distastefulness: "But what? my muse, shall I sing.../ ...Scorem's painted gable?/ Or windy Hodge who overturned the table?/ Such filthy melodies sing shall I never,/ I'd sooner eat a pound of bullock's liver" (257).

Censor's next task, to "cull the flowers of Parnassus" (253), also leads to more recollections of unpleasant food from Book One. Censor becomes "in a short time... so engrossed with the flowers" (253) that he does not notice how most of "the sheriff's people... unexpectedly fell in with a large plantation of cabbage" (254). Cabbage, of course, has been the bane both of "windy Hodge" and the stranger who dies as a result of that very food on an empty stomach. Stepsure also thus demonstrates the practical futility

of 'flowery' satire, since the result of Censor's interest in both "burdocks" and the unfortunately unavailable "roses" is that "everyone did as he pleased" (253).

When Censor, for lack of anywhere better, has to insert "the stalks of his flowers" into "a quantity of soft summer cow dung," the combination reminds Stepsure of "the blooming beauty with which our people would have shone; had I only been able to load them with the productions "*which adorn and scent that delightful region*" (255, italics McCulloch's), an analogy which in essence shows Mephibosheth to be as judgemental as Saunders has ever been, since by comparing their fellow townsfolk to cow dung, Stepsure condemns them as moral refuse. The italicized phrase is a rough quote from Censor which gets to the heart of Stepsure's disagreement with Censor: the dishonesty and futility of describing moral 'waste-rels' with flowery phrases.

It should be apparent from the preceding that Stepsure's satire of Censor's precious pretensions shares a concern over the necessity for frankness in art with Irving's defense of Byron, but the similarities do not end there. We have already seen how "paltry, dirty, mean, filthy, and abominable" Irving considered Swift's work "'--like himself'" (*Studies*, 55). Stepsure, too, turns moralist against Censor and his inconsistent moralism when he notes that "the Graces" (*Letters*, 247), whom Censor insists "would pronounce their ban on the letters" (435)--a phrase imitated in Censor's boast before Apollo that he has "put his ban upon the chronicles (256)--the Graces "are living with Censor; and teaching him to say *Oh heaven! who the devil*, and other graceful expressions, *which adorn and scent his delightful letters*" (247, italics McCulloch's). The last italicized phrase is a reworking of Censor's own phrase about the flowers on Mount Parnassus, and the earlier italicized

phrases refer to Censor's own indiscreet (and from McCulloch's viewpoint, blasphemous) language--the second of which occurred in a letter even before Censor's letter "On Mephibosheth Stepsure," so that McCulloch was casting a pretty wide net in criticizing Censor on this point. The renewed spiritual focus of Book Two is thus apparent even in the response to Censor, which defends blunt physical description as it simultaneously condemns religiously unrestrained language--rather mildly, considering Censor's (hypocritical, from McCulloch's viewpoint) Biblical quotation in a later letter (dated January 11, 1823): "Paul may preach, and Apollos may water, saith the scripture, but the increase is from above [1 Corinthians 3:6]" (page 2, column 2).

(Whether the text that Censor quoted was also an imaginative stimulus for McCulloch is intriguing, since 1 Corinthians 3:4 says, in part "...one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos..." (italics in text). Though the text criticizes such party spirit, it is nevertheless true that as a Calvinist, McCulloch is "of Paul"--sympathetic to his stress on God's sovereignty--and Censor, who spends a whole letter critiquing the ladies at the theatre and loves to use classical conceits in his writing, is thus "of" *Apollo*, even if not actually "of Apollos[.]")

Censor's interest in women also scandalizes McCulloch even more than Censor's language. Stepsure mocks the florid description of the ladies from Censor's letter of January 11, 1823 (again casting his net widely, since this letter does not even mention Stepsure) in three different ways: first by simply quoting the most overblown passage, verbatim, with sardonic commentary, in Letter 24 (248); secondly, in Letter 25, by quoting a longer passage, almost verbatim again, but telling his readers that it is actually a

description of Parson Drone's female congregation (279); and finally, again in Letter 25, by providing the description's poetic 'translation' (279-281, again a derisive reference to Censor's remark about Stepsure's "inelegant" (435) language). Stepsure also refers three times to Censor's assurance, in his first letter to the *Recorder*--in the December 21, 1822 edition--that "on the frailties of 'lovely woman' I shall lay my chastising hand with a lover's softness" (page 2, column 1). Stepsure's quotations shorten it to Censor's assertion that he "can lay his hands upon the ladies" (247, 278), or "can step softly into the drawing room, and *lay his hand upon lovely woman with a lovers softness*" (249). The last quotation, of course, also refers to Censor's judgement that Stepsure's letters "will ever be refused admittance into the drawing room of polite life" (435), but most important to note are Mephibosheth's omissions. Dropping the phrase "the frailties of" has the effect of showing Censor as more salacious than he really is, but the omission of the word "chastising" removes the almost sado-masochistic connotations of Censor's original phrasing. The possibility that McCulloch may simply have been too genuinely disgusted to repeat the word "chastising" is confirmed by his ironic judgement, through Stepsure--just before Mephibosheth acknowledges that Censor can "*lay his hand upon lovely woman with a lovers softness*"--of Censor as "a cleanly man, as cleanly as soap suds and scrubbing can make him" (249). This judgement echoes Matthew 23:25-28, which condemns "hypocrites" for cleaning "the outside of the cup and of the platter" and for being "like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward" while "within they are full of extortion and excess.... and of all uncleanness...." and "are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

What is striking about Stepsure's attack on Censor's moral, rather than his artistic, principles is how much his critique of both Censor's language and his lechery draws on material *outside* the main letter "On Mephibosheth Stepsure." Stepsure is thus deliberately seeking occasion to moralize about the very two vices which were linked together by the narrator of William's tale when he speaks of William's shopmates' "merriment" (241) and "jests" (243), both of which have less to do with "wit" than with "obscenity and profanation" (241, 243). The old gentleman's concern with the replacement of wit in conversation by obscene and profane language links him with Stepsure's attitude to Censor's profanity and prurience. This link finally brings Stepsure into the moral community based largely on religious feeling--of Saunders, Drone, and the old gentleman--from which his pragmatism has previously excluded him. Does the choice of lewdness and loose language as Stepsure's targets for his moralism also put him, along with the old gentleman, in community with a religious tradition which links affect and effect more 'effectively,' perhaps, than McCulloch's own Calvinism: Puritanism?

Polyphony and the Size of the Moral Universe

If McCulloch is indeed moving in Book Two toward a more sympathetic approach toward other religious traditions, then Frye's praise (in the 1960 introduction to the *Letters*) for McCulloch, well deserved though it is, needs some qualification. Frye called McCulloch "the founder of genuine Canadian humour... which is based on a vision of society and is not merely a series of wisecracks on a single theme" (ix). While McCulloch may have sought to put across a unified vision of society in Book One, this vision was fractured, possibly by the very disunity of the moral community that McCulloch, in delineating the

characters of Stepsure, Saunders, and Drone, set up as the corrective to the "idleset and wastery" of Mephibosheth's fellow townsfolk. As well, Book Two's more or less successful restoration of moral community is accompanied by a broadening--as well as, I believe, a deepening--of McCulloch's moral and social vision. In Book Two, Stepsure lives in a larger moral universe.

In spite of the title of this section, McCulloch's early nineteenth-century conservative worldview still put him in--to use a physical analogy--a conventional 'Euclidean' space for discourse, rather than its 'Einsteinian' equivalent: the Bakhtinian universe of polyglossia, of unreconciled and conflicting voices. If Frye's insight has any validity, it is precisely in the fact that ultimately all McCulloch's voices agree at the intersection of their lines of argument. However, it is, paradoxically, only in Book Two, when the various narrators are freed from Stepsure's supervision to speak independently, that Stepsure joins what is, for McCulloch, a religiously, rather than pragmatically, significant exchange of moral concern. As well, only as independent speakers can each person's different "colouring" and "relief"--the supposed sameness of which is one of Censor's complaints--contribute to a religiously unified "canvass" (435) of moral criticism.

Three writers that we have looked at may have contributed to McCulloch's willingness to undercut his major narrator, Stepsure's, and so re-integrate that narrator into the deeper moral understanding of such as Saunders, Drone, and the "decent looking old gentleman". Censor, Wordsworth, and Defoe. We have already seen how Censor's criticism may stimulated at least Saunders' second letter, by calling for more variety in Stepsure's characters' language. As well, Censor's Biblical quote may have been an inadvertent

catalyst for Stepsure's trip up Mount Parnassus to see Apollo. Certainly Censor's criticism hit a nerve.

However, more important is the absence of one leg of the shaky moral triad of Book One: Parson Drone. Though Saunders still praises him, Drone has no voice of his own in Book Two (except for Saunders' brief quotation on the subject of temperance). Why not? Partly because, as with Stepsure's narratorial authority, Drone's religious authority, based as it is upon explicit Scriptural understanding, is being undermined by the suddenly sympathetically portrayed affective religion espoused by the narrator of William's tale, and practised by the tale's characters in Scotland. Drone has not been able to integrate faith and life for most of his congregation partly because his religion, at least as shown under Stepsure's pragmatic gaze in Book One, kindles no affect in them, so that they become heedless also of effect.

Book Two does not rely primarily on Drone's authoritative religious understanding, but more on the unity of feeling and understanding exemplified in the old gentleman's and Saunders' confession of Providence's reality. Drone also unites feeling and understanding in Book One, in that "[h]is principal comfort, he says, is derived from the perusal of the old Scotch and English divines" (52), and "the tear was trickling down the cheek" of the parson while confessing his own "'ill spent time and unprofitable labour'" (74). The parson's religion is thus sometimes as deeply felt as it is profound in its understanding, but Stepsure's rationalistic pragmatism, as we have seen, does not generally allow feeling religion to be noticed by the reader in Book One, since it distracts from Mephibosheth's repeated demonstration of the inherent temporal consequences of moral error.

Book Two moves from this satirical view of mostly immoral action--consistent with McCulloch's Calvinist belief in total depravity--toward a more positive portrayal of religious concern about both moral and immoral action--a focus more consistent with the more optimistic religious feeling of evangelicalism. This shift is consistent with Stepsure's creator being influenced by the two works on which William's tale is modelled: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Wordsworth's "Michael." William's tale does implicitly refute each work's optimism as to the possibility of spiritual integration--Crusoe in his isolation and Michael through the insight gained in living in harmony with nature. However, Crusoe's piety and sincere moral struggles and the quiet industry and love of Michael's household would still have been appealing to McCulloch.

In refuting Defoe's and Wordsworth's religious optimism, then, McCulloch imbibed some of their religious feeling, and passed it along to his readers through an old gentleman who tells Stepsure (having only just met him) about his trust in Providence; through a judgemental man who yearns for his native Scottish land and who is finally willing to judge his own past conduct; and through a pragmatic man who not only defends his own artistic practice from the attacks of a Censor, but goes so far as to attack also the other work of his critic, even when that work's ultimate practical effects are not obvious.

McCulloch's shift in narratorial strategy and the foci of his various narrators also includes one more tactic to which I have only alluded in passing. Unlike Book One, which has fairly clear closure, Book Two does not conclude so roundly. Admittedly, Saunders' second letter implies that it is his last, with its instructions for the distribution of his information "about America" (224), and William's tale comes to a clear end with the death

of its subject. However, Stepsure's trip to Halifax is left hanging, except for a possible indirect reference in admitting "that my letters... never soar. Indeed, I have been a creeping kind of a man all... my life. Upon a journey, I would never have a chance with the flying on the wings of the wind sort of folk in our town: were it not that they always halt and make a long stay with the sheriff" (248). This implicit allusion to Aesop's tortoise and hare (more classical allusion!) does not seem to refer to an actual physical journey, as much as to a 'walk of life'--a metaphor which Stepsure has used before (225)--and so leaves the Halifax trip's conclusion unreported. As well, Stepsure's telling us in the last sentence of his final letter that "by and by, ...I may enlarge upon the works and untimely end of the great Censor" leaves us as readers feeling cheated by unfulfilled expectations.

Besides the fact that much of Book Two ends rather inconclusively, it is also significant that Stepsure nowhere seeks to reconcile the varying voices of Book Two. His creator certainly could have used as one defense against Censor's moralism that William's tale avoided the "offences against delicacy" with which Censor charges Book One. To do so, however, would have allowed Censor to be the agent of the one activity in which all the narrators of Book Two have been engaged--undermining Stepsure's narratorial credibility--but McCulloch is making a careful distinction between moral wisdom and artistic authority. Though the old gentleman and Stepsure speak (somewhat) differently and have different concerns, they are not allowed to cancel each other out. Stepsure, though undercut as a source of moral wisdom, is allowed to maintain his artistic integrity, and McCulloch reasserts *his* by refusing to allow Stepsure to be the final judge and 'censor' of the other narrators of Book Two--a change in strategy from Book One. By

allowing the narrators to tell their own stories without the supervisory ironic commentary that was so typical of Stepsure in Book One, McCulloch broadens his sympathy with Puritanism--seen also in his allusions to *Pilgrim's Progress*--from narrow moral concerns to the unification of moral and artistic issues summarized by the typical Puritan term 'plain speech,' a shift acknowledged by Stepsure's use of the word "plain" four times in three lines: "It is my misfortune to be a plain man; and my mistake, to have told a plain story to plain people in plain terms" (248).

Is this the plain truth? Or is there more to McCulloch's more sympathetic portrayal of different religious perspectives than artistic principle? As William Baillie Hamilton puts it in his 1970 Ph.D thesis--"Education, Politics, and Reform in Nova Scotia 1800-1848"--"an ecumenical spirit prevailed in the legislature in 1822," as in March the governor, Sir James Kempt, sought permission to have, for the first time, a Roman Catholic take his seat in the House of Assembly, without having to renounce Catholic doctrine (Hamilton, 127). McCulloch's own fellow feeling for Christians from other traditions may have been stimulated by this event--the timing is certainly right in terms of the difference between Book One and Book Two--but his ecumenism certainly did not originate with the increased toleration in the province for Catholics. Already in 1821, he had developed "a friendship with Edward Manning, a leading Baptist clergyman" who praised McCulloch's "'catholic method of instruction'" in his divinity school, in a letter to McCulloch dated June 14, 1821 (135). McCulloch would eventually return the compliment (after the writing of *The Stepsure Letters*) when, during a 1825-1826 tour in his native Scotland to promote his own Pictou Academy, McCulloch requested donations

of books for Baptist ministers, whom he characterized as "'men of evangelical views, pious and enterprising'" (139).

Not only did McCulloch's repeated quest to get permanent government funding for the Academy mean that friends in other denominations would have been valuable allies, but the Academy's legal status would have put him on the defensive in seeking such relationships. The 1816 Act by which McCulloch's Pictou Academy had been incorporated had, against McCulloch's wishes, allowed only members of the established Episcopalian and of the dissenting Presbyterian churches to act as professors or trustees, a move which two twentieth-century writers--D.C. Harvey and W. B. Hamilton--have independently interpreted as being designed to cut off support from other non-established churches in the province by making Pictou Academy a purely denominational institution (Harvey quoted in G. A. Campbell, 27; Hamilton, 102).

The need to gain, and regain, political support from other dissenting denominations may explain why the dogmatic McCulloch would become more sympathetic to other Christian traditions. However, it does not explain why the generosity of McCulloch's original educational design--"to provide.. a liberal education for persons of every religious denomination" as the original "Regulations Governing Pictou Academy" specified (quoted in Hamilton, 84)--would not become apparent in the *Letters* until Book Two. Even when McCulloch's political interests are considered, then, the *timing* of McCulloch's broad-mindedness becoming apparent in his literary output still seems to be--fittingly--dependent on his own literary input. Just as I have noted that his receiving the degree of Doctor of Doctor of Divinity in April of 1822 may have contributed to the

religious seriousness of William's tale, so McCulloch's reading or rereading of 'other voices'--possibly Wordsworth's, but definitely Censor's and Defoe's--around the same time may have stimulated his desire to broaden his range of voices beyond Stepsure's sardonically sophisticated, but largely religiously indifferent, narration to create a diverse but coherent community of religious discourse.

If, as I hope as I have shown, McCulloch's greatest achievement in the *Letters* was in Book Two, which was not published in its entirety until 1990, can we speak of McCulloch as an influence on other Canadian writers; can we see his voice as a significant part of the Canadian literary conversation? McCulloch's work--especially in Book Two--may not have directly influenced any later writers. However, other creators of Canadian literary towns also address an issue dear to McCulloch's heart: religious community. My conclusion, then, will address the extent to which McCulloch's concern was shared by two writers whose fictional communities are still drawn with a light touch: Sara Jeannette Duncan in *The Imperialist*, and Stephen Leacock in *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARSON'S COLLEAGUES: DRONES, DOCTORS, AND DEANS

This thesis has examined, among other things, two assertions about the 'missing letters' (those that were published in 1822-1823, and then left unpublished until at least 1960--and most excluded until thirty years after that). The first was that only through the missing letters could we see the importance of the *change* in religious perspective from Book One to Book Two--a change that demonstrates McCulloch's artistic growth and increasingly broadly based Christian (as opposed to both sectarian and secular) moral understanding. The second assertion was that McCulloch's more explicitly spiritual moralism in Book Two is undergirded by his greater emphasis on religious community, shown most explicitly in the disparate voices' essential agreement on spiritual issues (including Stepsure, and implicitly in McCulloch's release of those voices from Stepsure's (formerly sardonic) narratorial supervision--a literary reflection of religious community.

Since Book Two, after 1823, was not published again--even partially--until 1960, and not in its entirety until 1990, McCulloch could not have significantly influenced the treatment of religious community in Canadian literature However, a comparison of his reconciliation of religion and community with others' perspectives on the same issues may illustrate why McCulloch is still relevant to the Canadian conversation, even if none of the succeeding speakers are specifically replying to him.

Marching to a Different Drummond

If, as we have seen, Parson Drone's preaching has failed to make a practical difference to his parishioners, it has at least, by the end of Book Two, brought him into implicit

community with others of kindred moral and spiritual feeling--Saunders, the old Halifax gentleman, and Stepsure himself. Sara Jeannette Duncan, in her 1904 novel, *The Imperialist*, creates a clergyman, Dr. Drummond, who resembles Drone in the practical ineffectiveness of his preaching, but differs in his willingness to abandon preaching for practice.

Drummond, a Presbyterian (Duncan, 37), like McCulloch (and presumably Parson Drone), is somewhat effective in promoting the rituals of spiritual community among his parishioners. When he upbraids "'the oncoming generation'" for failing to "'remember their weekly engagement with the Lord"--the "'weekly prayer meeting'" (36)-- his concerns are echoed at least by Mrs. Murchison, the mother of the novel's protagonist, as she speaks to her sons about Drummond's upcoming visit: "'You boys... will see that you're on hand that evening. And I hope the Doctor will rub it in about the prayer meeting.... I saw it went home to both of you, and well it might...'" (37).

In spite of the spiritual rhetoric of the above admonition, however, Drummond is personally quite different from Parson Drone, whose isolation allows him only the comfort of his reading of the Scotch and English divines. Drummond's independence of his community--being "very significant among his people, ...but not, somehow, at any expense to his private self" (216)--is not opposed to, but is actually a part of, his temporal comfort. "[H]is people" know how much Drummond values that personal comfort. Mr Murchison knows that Drummond is visiting his family at the time he has scheduled because "'he'll be wanting his tea'" and Mrs. Murchison, in planning for the visit, agrees: "'Yes, I think I may as well expect him to tea. He enjoys my scalloped oysters, if I do say it myself'" (37). His

openness toward temporal comfort is, however, not universally appreciated: "St. Andrew's folk accused him of vanity because of the diamond he wore on his little finger" (39).

This 'worldliness' carries over into Drummond's other relationships to his community which are as much politically as spiritually and morally focused. Whereas Drone, for instance, confronts the magistrates on a moralistic temperance crusade, Drummond uses the excuse of moral criticism to justify his political stance. Though "the best of the Liberals himself," but having "made a great show of keeping it out of the pulpit" (17), Lorne Murchison says about him, "'You should have heard him when old Sir John Macdonald gerrymandered the electoral districts and gave votes to the Moneida Indians. The way he put it, the Tories in the congregation couldn't say a word, but it was a treat for his fellow Grits'" (136). By giving "his fellow Grits" that "treat[,]" of course, Drummond is not building, but rather undermining, spiritual community between parishioners of different political persuasions. He does this both by underlining that difference rather than their doctrinal unity, and by putting religion and politics on the same level.

The latter practice is foreshadowed by the narrator's equation of the importance of politics and religion (60), and echoed in the repeated references to politics in Biblical or more generally religious rhetoric. For instance, Lorne calls "'England... the Mecca of the race'" (124). The narrator speaks (somewhat ironically) of the British champion of imperial unity as being "a right honourable evangelist with a gospel of his own, ...making astonishing conversions" promoting a "national economic creed" (129), and of Lorne Murchison's "candidature" seeing "his name" being "carried up and down the Dominion with every new wind of imperial doctrine that blew across the Atlantic" (177-178, see

Ephesians 4:14) and causing him to "now and then breathe in his private soul, 'Choose quickly, England,' like a prayer" (178). Finally, Lorne also speaks of the American nation as not having "remained faithful to Great Britain," as Canada has, making it "safe to prophesy" (229) that no British member of the ruling class will take up residence in the United States, but may do so in Canada (229-230).

But if politics becomes religion, then that 'religion' becomes more divisive even than the denominational differences of transcendent religion, as the decline of Lorne's romance with Dora Milburn shows, a romance which sputters not because the Milburns are from a different church, but at least partly because Lorne is the Liberal candidate and Mr. Milburn disagrees with his stance on imperial trade. Religious differences, though, still allow domestic community between Presbyterians and others, as, for instance, when "Abby, when she had married Harry, had 'gone over' to the Church of England" (36), and "Oliver, for reasons of his own"--romantic reasons--"would attend the... Methodist Church that evening" (202).

Politics, then, at least for one character, has the transcendent importance of religion, also in being the only consideration able to prevent the development of Lorne's domestic comfort. Perhaps the fading power of religion explains the failure of Drummond's attempts to use preaching--of various kinds--and religious ritual to *promote* the potential domestic comfort of Hugh Finlay and Advena Murchison. Their difficult relationship is itself a comment--as critical as any in McCulloch--on another competitor with formal religion: a broadly Romantic worldview (or at least the approach to life which Jane Austen typified as "sensibility"). Finlay is "a passionate romantic" whose "face bore a confusion of ideals...

the brow of a Covenanter and the mouth of Adonais, the flame of religious ardour in his eyes and the composure of perceived philosophy on his lips" (68). Advena is pleased to see "his doctrine" combined with "a spirit of wide and sweet philosophy" (69). Their romance is founded at least partly upon Romantic communion, as the poetic Finlay (71) and the imaginative Advena exchange poetic insights about the sadness of a sunset (71), and the two later speak of life as a literary experience--either a novel or a romance (109). A later conversation as well is hardly Presbyterian in its flavour, as Advena speaks of their having "'been rocked together on the tide of that inconceivable ocean that casts us half-awake upon life" (183) and quotes from Buddhist writings (184), and he, when alone, "drew upon a pagan for his admonition" (185).

If we accept that the two lovers' openness to nature, philosophy, and other religions has a Romantic cast to it, we also need to see that their relationship also founders on a Romantic ideal: Finlay's extreme conception of honour (161), which he admits is not grounded "'in reason'" but "'somehow in the past and in the blood'" (162). It is the refusal to "'sacrifice... all that I hold most valuable in myself" (162)--hardly the orthodox Christian guide for a moral decision--which forces him, as far as he is concerned, to go through with an arranged marriage and break Advena's heart. That a Romantic (or at least romantic) view of life could break, rather than foster, communion between human beings becomes more logical when we see the implications of his view of the Romantic redemption of the "human spirit," a spirit, which "as it is set free in these wide unblemished spaces, may be something more pure and sensitive, more sincerely curious about what is good and beautiful" (111). Such a view may simply be the typical agrarian

exaltation of the countryside, or it may celebrate an alternative, or at least a supplement, to Christian redemption. That an alternative is being set up can be seen from Finlay's (a clergyman's) perception of Advena's modest blush: "Hugh Finlay saw his idea incarnate" (111). This incarnation, unlike the Incarnation of Christian theology, requires no direct divine intervention, and no Gospel proclamation to make it effective for other human beings. It involves only the response of a sensitive individual to Nature. Finlay's Romantic theology thus breaks human communion by stressing purely private experience--like the affective religion of Book One in the *Letters*.

Drummond's scorn for what he calls Finlay's "'extravagant, hypersensitive conception of honour'" (162), however he expresses it--however he preaches it--makes no difference to Finlay and Advena's romantic progress. When he and Finlay first speak of it, Drummond does not hesitate to call their love "'beyond mending, Finlay, because it is one of those things that God has made'" (161) or to oppose Finlay's conception of honour to the idea of Providence: "'[Y]ou have no business to make this marriage.... Leave other considerations to God and to the future. I beseech you, bring it to an end!'" (162). When Finlay says, "'I tell you from my heart it is impossible'" (162) to change his mind--again invoking a Romantic guide--Drummond prays with him, not merely for guidance, but actually demanding "little less than... Divine interference; but the prayer that was inaudible [Finlay's] was to the opposite purpose" (163).

Drummond's public preaching is no more effective than his private counsel. Just as "the practical politics of the long prayer" (198) in the church service make Drummond's beliefs about imperial preference apparent, so Drummond uses the long prayer for rhetorical

purposes when he sees both Advena and Finlay sitting in the congregation before him at the same time:

> "O Thou Searcher of hearts.... Our mortal life is full of... the misconception of virtue. Do Thou clear the understanding... of such as would interpret Thy will to their own undoing; do Thou teach them that as happiness may reside in chastening, so chastening may reside in happiness. And though such stand fast to their hurt, do Thou grant to them in Thine own way, which may not be our way, a safe issue out of the dangers that beset them." (204)

To Advena, ignorant of Finlay's earlier encounter with Drummond, this prayer carries the "mysterious double emphasis of chance words that fit[,]" but they do not change the heart of their intended audience, Finlay, who is "furious, and more resolved than ever" (205).

This public prayer is called Drummond's "method of reconciling foreordination and free will" (204), but his final actions tip him heavily toward the free will side of the paradox as he refuses to leave the "safe issue out of the dangers that beset" Finlay entirely to God, choosing instead to abandon preaching for practice. Having first "persuaded Finlay to go to Winnipeg" (215) "to attend a mission conference in place of a delegate who had been suddenly laid aside by serious illness" (215) "with a vague hope that something, in the fortnight's grace thus provided, might be induced to happen" (215), Drummond finds that, regardless, Finlay's intended has arrived from Scotland safe and sound, and still herself intending. His solution is "'to marry her myself[,]'" assuring Miss Cameron's aunt that 'I think I see the finger of Providence in this matter'" (254). Just how *un*Providential this outcome is, at least in one sense, is made clear by the narrator: "[E]ven when pitted against Providence, the Doctor was a man of great determination" (255).

McCulloch might have been less concerned about the Doctor's success in building the potential domestic comfort of Finlay and Advena than his failure to build spiritual

community. The example of Drummond's successful exhortation given at the beginning of this section--about the prayer meeting--also shows his realization that spiritual community has declined over time:

> "Time was when the prayer meeting counted among our young men and women as an occasion not to be lightly passed over. In these days it would seem that there is too much business to be done, or too much pleasure to be enjoyed.... [S]ee that there shall be no departure from the good old rule" (36, underlining mine)

Drummond speaks just as nostalgically about the old church choir:

> "Knox Church was a different place back then. ...[E]very man Jack in the choir had a frown on in the singing.... We've been twice enlarged since, and the organist has long been a salaried professional. But I doubt whether the praise of God is any heartier than it was when it foliowed Peter Craig's tuning-fork." (158, underlining mine)

The Imperialist, in its attitude toward religion, is closest to Book One of the *Letters* in showing the ineffectiveness of preaching and the necessity of practice. In indicating how closely religion and politics mix and even change places, Duncan also shows us a world in which religion no longer has the uniquely transcendent function it fulfils in Book Two of the *Letters*. Her attitude toward Romantically flavoured religion is as critical as McCulloch's, in showing how Romantic ideals can prevent the development of domestic comfort, but it is not what McCulloch would consider true religion that finally builds up even that kind of community; it is pragmatic common sense. Neither religion nor common sense, however, promote the genuine spiritual community of McCulloch's Book Two.

Drone and Darwin

Though, then, Duncan shows us a world in which religion is often eclipsed by politics and pragmatism, she does not attack its essential sincerity or usefulness. Stephen Leacock is not so charitable. Robertson Davies summarizes Leacock's attitude to *his* Drone--the Dean--in the introduction to *Feast of Stephen: A Leacock Anthology*, thus: "The Dean

exemplifies a feeling of Leacock's... that the clergy, and organized religion itself, were not forces in any community, great or small.... For him the clergy, and one supposes Christianity as well, had not much to do with life" (16). One reason for this attitude is provided in the debates of two young men in Leacock's 1912 *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. Of the three books which are the focus of this chapter, *Sunshine Sketches* refers most directly (though still indirectly) to Charles Darwin--the catalyst for "tremendous arguments about creation and evolution" (*Sketches*, 161) which satirize both Christianity and the pseudo-scientific attack upon it.

Mr. Pupkin, "the junior teller in the Exchange Bank" (*Sketches*, 158) "who was a tremendous Christian" (161), argues about religion with his roommate, Mallory Tompkins, who "was so intellectual that he was, as he himself admitted, a complete eggnostic" (160-161). Two of Mallory's defenses of 'eggnosticism' are that "if you study at a school of applied science you learn that there's no hell beyond the present life" and "that the miracles were only electricity" (161). In response to the latter contention, Pupkin is willing "to admit that it was an awfully good argument, but claimed that he had heard it awfully well answered, though unfortunately he had forgotten how" (161). Pupkin similarly meets Tompkins' claim that "the flood was contrary to geology" by mentioning "a book,--the title of which he ought to have written down,--which explained geology away altogether" (161). The final score is summarized thus:

> Mallory Tompkins generally got the best of the merely logical side of the argument, but Pupkin... was much stronger in the things he had forgotten. So the discussions often lasted far into the night, and Mr. Pupkin would fall asleep and dream of a splendid argument, which would have settled the whole controversy, only unfortunately he couldn't recall it in the morning. (161)

Though Pupkin does not have the intelligence to see that Tompkins' "awfully good argument" is in reality spurious, he also lacks Tompkins' pretensions:

> Pupkin would never have thought of considering himself on an intellectual level with Mallory... Mallory Tompkins had read all sorts of things and had half a mind to write a novel himself.... All he needed, he said, was to have a chance to get away somewhere and think. Every time he went away to the city Pupkin expected that he might return with the novel all finished; but though he often came back with his eyes red from thinking, the novel as yet remained incomplete. (161-62)

Of the three main types of people in Mariposa, Tompkins thus belongs to the class that is unsophisticated and refuses to admit it, but Pupkin is possibly the only person who senses his own lack of worldly knowledge. (Josh Smith, the hotel owner, is possibly the only one who possesses that knowledge--and uses it, often and generally shadily.) Pupkin's well-deserved intellectual humility at least puts him morally a rung higher than Mullins, the banker, who, speaking at an election rally, "knows the figures so well that he never bothers to write them into notes and the effect is very striking" (241-242). Mullins' appeal to statistics on "'just to what extent the exports of this country have increased in the last ten years" and "'what per cent of increase there has been in one decade of our national importation'" end with the statement that "'I don't recall, ...exactly the precise amount myself,--not at this moment,--but it must be simply tremendous'" (242). On "'the question of population,' ...warming up again as a born statistician [clearly Mullins' opinion of himself] always does at the proximity of figures," he asks, "'how many... can state... the decennial percentage increase in our leading cities----?'" and tells his audience, "'I don't recall the exact figures... but I have them at home and they are positively colossal'" (242).

Dean Drone, in his self-satisfaction, is more like Mullins and Tompkins than Pupkin. This self-satisfaction, in the form of sanctimony, is evident in the very first mention of

Drone in the narrative, as one of the clergy who direct their sermons against "Smith's saloon"--with his hilariously misapplied text: "'Lord be merciful even unto this publican Matthew Six' ...generally understood as an invitation to strike Mr. Smith dead" (20). Given that the text is actually a self-descriptive prayer of repentance from one of Jesus's parables, and hence an occasion for divine grace, this sermon in itself dramatically paints Leacock's Dean as already surpassing the worst of *Parson* Drone's homiletic excesses. Dean Drone's sanctimony, which is, ironically, much like the Pharisee in the parable of Matthew Six (adding hypocrisy to the list of the Dean's failings), is, however, no greater than that exhibited in "the sermon at the Presbyterian church... on the text 'Lo what now doeth Abiram in the land of Melchisideck Kings Eight and Nine?'" which really means, "'Lo, what is Josh Smith doing in Mariposa?'" (20-21). However, the Dean is unique in carrying his hypocrisy to the extent of still accepting Smith's generosity. Smith's "wide and sagacious philanthropy" includes giving money to children for the merry-go-round for the sake of their thirsty parents (thus learning "the blessedness of giving" (21), a phrase which, though derived from one of Jesus's sayings (Acts 20:35), is never applied to any of His followers in Mariposa); donating money to worthy causes; joining "all those things which needed premises to meet in and grew thirsty in their discussions"; and secretly giving "over a hundred dollars to Judge Pepperleigh for the... Conservative Party" and, last but most important, having installed "a new font in Dean Drone's church" (22). Eventually Smith's generosity leads the Dean to "go so far as to step into the 'rotunda' and collect a subscription" (23)--to accept the presence of Smith's bar.

Dean Drone, then, unlike Parson Drone, is for sale. No wonder, too, since his passion is not for Scripture or sanctification, but for a new church building--though he puts on a good front. During the boat trip narrated in the much-anthologized "The Marine Excursions of the Knights of Pythias," we learn first of all that Drone is quite "a fisherman" (66), an allusion to another saying of Jesus (Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17), which, however, is here stripped of its evangelistic meaning, as the Dean takes "a fishing rod... and... a trolling line in case of maskinonge, and a landing net in case of pickerel" (65); and "his eldest daughter... in case of young men" (65-66). When Drone and his friend and intellectual rival Dr. Gallagher try to top each other's significant comments about the passing shoreline, the Dean initially matches Gallagher's (erroneous?) knowledge of Canadian history with comments about how "the Almighty had piled up the hills... long before" and "had placed even the smallest shrub in its appointed place" (78). Soon, however, these rather general and non-Biblical references to God are replaced by details from Drone's true area of expertise: classical history. When Gallagher continues his references to the French exploration of the area, it recalls for Drone the image of "Xenophon leading his ten thousand Greeks" (78) and elicits the Dean's offer to "show him a map of Xerxes' invasion of Greece" (79).

(For Leacock, Drone's clerical status even seems to exclude him from conventional masculinity (along with the town's other clerics): "Dean Drone managed the races and decided the ages and gave out prizes.... They had to get mostly clergymen for the races because all the men had wandered off" (81-82). When the excursion boat, the Mariposa Belle, sinks (all the way "up to the lower deck" (87)), it is "the Presbyterian student"

(another cleric)--who goes off with the first lifeboat load--of "women and children" (89). Drone also spends his time "making kites and toys and clockwork steamboats" (98) for the children, but also playing with them himself (99). His attempt to maintain his clerical status through the trivia of Greek history has cut him off from adult community with Dr. Gallagher, and childish community is, seemingly, all that is left.)

Drone's classical education is further explored in the next chapter when we are told that he reads Theocritus (critic of God?) next to "a yellow bee hive with seven bees that belong to Mr. Drone" (96)--a Drone raising bees. Beyond this punning reference to one of the meanings of "Drone," there is the fact that, unlike Parson Drone, the Dean (and, by implication, other Anglican ministers) is a drone in the parasitic sense of living off the members of his parish, as we learn through Leacock's irony:

> [T]he rector's life was one round of activity which he might deplore but was powerless to prevent. He had hardly sat down... after his mid-day meal when there was the Infant Class at three, and after that, with scarcely an hour between, the Mothers' Auxiliary at five, and the next morning the Book Club, and that evening the Bible Study Class, and the next morning the Early Workers' Guild at eleven-thirty. The whole week was like that.... [T]here wasn't a busier man than the Rural Dean among the Anglican clergy of the diocese. (98).

Whether the Dean would be of any use to anyone if he did work is debatable: he is repeatedly shown as ineffectual, particularly in mathematics (100-101), which is needed for the balancing of the church's books (102-104), a task made impossible by the debt incurred in building the new church (107). Even in the construction of the church, Drone is only in the way of "the men" digging the foundations, "the stone-masons, ...the carpenters," and "the architect's assistants" (105).

Drone's obsession with the debt motivates "a special sermon on sin" in which he notes "with Christian serenity" the fact "that the ancient Hebrews used to put unjust traders to

death" (107), as well as "special collections at Easter and special days of giving, and special weeks of tribulation.... and a service of Lenten Sorrow,--aimed more especially at business men" (108). Eventually "the congregation had diminished by forty per cent" (108), but not because Drone's Scriptural preaching is too ethically challenging (as with Parson Drone). Rather, combined with the irritation of the debt is the fact that as a preacher, in his irrelevant scientific illustrations (111), his pointless references to his trip up the Mackinaw (111-112), and his pompous diction (112-113), the Dean is a "mugwump" (113). Those that stay try repeatedly--and unsuccessfully--to retire the debt, with chain letters (114-115), a bazaar (115-116), Drone's bizarre and inaccurate slide show "on 'Italy and her Invaders'" (116), "an evening of readings from the Great Humorists from Chaucer to Adam Smith" (117), and a "Whirlwind Campaign" (118-131).

Leacock's resolution of the debt problem indicates exactly how low is his regard for the Dean and the Dean's dreams. It is the reprobate Josh Smith who rescues the Dean by secretly burning down the new church (146) and thereby furnishing the congregation with a generous insurance payment (144). The congregation's fraudulently obtained payment is sustained by another pillar of Mariposa's civil religion, Judge Pepperleigh, who insists on his intention, in response to the insurance company's "[l]egal proceedings to prevent payment," of "upholding the rights of a Christian congregation... against the intrigues of a set of infernal skunks that make too much money, anyway" (145).

The use of secular methods and authority to solve the congregation's building problems is the final way in which the spiritual significance of the building itself is undercut. Drone's names for it have included "a greater Evidence" (104) and "a greater Testimony"

(105)--language reminiscent of William Paley; "a city set on a hill" (106), quoting, almost verbatim, Christ's words from Matthew 5:14; "an Ark of Refuge"--in which the "Bible Class would meet in the basement" (106), a prosaic activity combined with an incoherently Old Testament term linking the Ark of the covenant and either the cities of refuge or God as a refuge; and "a Brighter Beacon" (106). The last-mentioned term is mocked by the title of chapter VI, "The Beacon on the Hill." When Drone first sees the "light in the sky[,]" he wonders whether it is "already the dawn of the New Jerusalem brightening in the east" (138), but soon realizes that the church has become, not spiritually, but materially, "a very beacon kindled upon a hill" (139). The congregation receives the purely humanly caused fire as a kind of miracle, a reward for their "faith and effort": "The Greater Testimony that had lain so heavily on the congregation... burned up its debts... and enriched its worshippers by its destruction. Talk of a beacon on a hill! You can hardly beat that one" (145). Right! You can hardly beat that whole quotation for anti-religious cynicism.

Actually, you can beat it. To really see how determined Leacock is to eliminate the possibility of genuine spiritual experience, let us go back to the morning before the sinking of the Mariposa Belle. Leacock includes a number of anecdotes about "the people who were left behind, or in some way or other kept from going" (70)--in, ironically, a book published the same year as the sinking of the Titanic. Two of the characters fall to their knees when they hear about the mishap, one seemingly in gratitude because his mother-in-law is on the boat--and he isn't (72)--and the other because having decided that he would not go on the boat trip, and affirming his decision twice, he thus was not on the

Providence, and he fell on his knees in thankfulness" (71).

is no denying that Leacock's anecdotes about those who "had escaped being on e Mariposa Belle" (70) are very funny parodies of a simplistic view of Providence, not want to leave the impression that I read *Sunshine Sketches* without laughing l, but note the difference between Leacock's one reference to Providence and ch's references. My point is not that Leacock has no right to be humorous about experience, but simply that the ultimate standard behind his satire is quite than McCulloch's. Particularly in Book Two, McCulloch's belief in the God of ice--the God of Saunders and the old gentleman--is what underlies both his ning of Stepsure's narratorial authority and his objections to Censor's inconsistent n. McCulloch values most genuine spiritual *understanding*. Leacock, on the other ampions the liberal humanist virtue of authentic *feeling*, as seen in the two most passages in the book: the descriptions of the Dean's love for his dead wife (99) and Pepperleigh for his dead son (156-157). Never in the book does Leacock become e near that serious about religious experience. One of the most serious criticisms Dean involves not any lapse in theological understanding, but his hypocritical ent of the mathematics professor whom he blames for his own incompetence:

hematics were not the rector's forte, and he blamed for it (in a Christian spirit...) mathematics professor, and often he spoke with great bitterness. I have often him say that... the colleges ought to dismiss, ...in a Christian spirit, all the ssors who are not, in the most reverential sense of the term, fit for their jobs.

ously McCulloch, particularly in Book Two, also values feeling, and Leacock, as I oted, also mocks intellectual pretensions. However, Leacock's mockery of

intellectual pretensions is not directed so much at ignorance as at arrogance, and McCulloch's references to Providence require the proper understanding of God to evoke appropriate feeling in both narrator and reader. The kind of Scripturally informed reader who would have been moved by McCulloch's work in Book Two would have found it difficult to warm up to the warmest of Leacock's descriptions of Drone, knowing that the Dean, in--apparently--entire ignorance, neither possesses himself, nor evokes in others, the passionate gratitude to Providence that is felt by even (or especially?) such a dogmatically fierce character as Saunders.

As a result of Leacock's condescension toward belief in spiritual reality, those of his characters who rely, however weakly, on such belief are cut off from spiritual community. Though the *Sketches* show us glimpses of romance and love within families, the kind of domestic community *between* the families of Stepsure and Saunders which marks Book Two is matched only by the friendship between the Dean and Mullins--upon whom Drone "leaned... in matters of business, as upon a staff;" while Mullins "leaned against him, in matters of doctrine, as against a rock" (116, underlining mine). Though the underlined phrases mimic Old Testament images of reliance upon God, there is neither joy nor comfort in their almost contractual relationship of business expertise in return for doctrinal mastery. When Mullins has to inform Drone of the failure of the Whirlwind Campaign, Mullins is glad that Drone "hardly seemed to follow what Mullins was saying.... because it proved that the Dean wasn't feeling disappointed as... he might have" (133). Mullins' wishful lack of sensitivity leaves the Dean alone in his lowest hour. Leacock's

condescension towards transcendent belief thus leaves his Dean unable to connect deeply also on the human level.

Rich Religion

If formal religion is largely irrelevant to community in *The Imperialist* (except for the debased forms of religion--politics and Romantic feeling--actually interfering with domestic community), then formal religion in the *Little Town* is even pathetic in its attempts to interfere with the only thing, unfortunately, that strengthens community in Mariposa--Josh Smith's cunning and capital. In neither book does religion strengthen what, for McCulloch, it was supposed to: *spiritual* community. *Arcadian Adventures Among the Idle Rich* portrays a religious environment, "in the City" (*Adventures*, 7), even more corrupted by the pursuit of money.

The first mention of Scripture in the book is by the university president, to "the late Mr. Underbugg, who founded our lectures on the Four Gospels on the sole stipulation that henceforth any reference of ours to the four gospels should be coupled with his name" (59), a reference which itself couples the university's greed with the late Dr. Underbugg's vanity. Vanity and greed seem to be the two besetting sins of the clergy in *Arcadian Adventures*--men who, as a *group*, reflect much of the experience of Dean Drone in *Sunshine Sketches*, creating an ultimately more complex, but hardly more hopeful, picture of formal religion and its effect on community.

The first clergyman we meet is the "Rev. Fareforth Furlong" (10), whose opulent lifestyle is a result of his patronage of the wealthy, thereby massaging their egos as well as having his own stoked by being asked for important counsel on such matters as the taste

of Mr. Lucullus Fyshe's soda (10-11), or by being asked to dine, as a kind of 'minister' of protocol, with Fyshe and the Duke of Dulham (12). His father, Mr. Furlong, senior, is the head of, among other things, the Hosanna Pipe and Steam Organ Limited (12), a company which was also mentioned in *Sunshine Sketches*. Mr. Furlong, senior, is largely behind Furlong the rector's interest in the potential of the Duke's fortune to underwrite the financial obligations of the rector's parish, St. Asaph's. Furlong, junior, seems more affected by vanity than greed, even if at a wedding, his expression bears "the added saintliness that springs from the five-hundred dollar fee" (130), since the eventual merger of his Anglican church with St. Osoph's, the Presbyterian church, for the sake of a "general economy of operation" (170) is not his idea. Indeed, the lawyer who carries the merger through considers "the rector's brain... unfit for the subject of corporation law" (171) precisely because the rector cannot see his church as anything other than "'an indivisible spiritual unit manifesting itself here on earth'" (170). The rector, as tempted by materialism as he is, sees "his congregation drifting from St. Asaph's to St. Osoph's" (159) precisely because he cannot help preaching what he believes. When he preaches a sermon on creation, in response to his father's suggestion that he fails to "'deal sufficiently with fundamental things as others do[,]'" the resulting sermon, though it is condemned by the congregation as "mere milk and water[,]" reflects his honest and then suddenly unpopular view of the text according "to the teachings of Sir Charles Lyell" (166).

One of the ministers of St. Osoph's, who has "with the aid of seven plain texts pulverised the rector into fragments" (166) on the creation, would therefore seem to be an alternative to Furlong's muddled theological liberalism. However, the Rev. Uttermust

Dumfarthing, though he refuses to kowtow to anyone's vanity explicitly, is nonetheless preaching to order. His hellfire-and-brimstone message and moral condemnation of his congregation (157), "the rich[,]... the poor[,]... working men[,]... children[,]... the Overend brothers[,]... Plutoria university" (158), and students (159) is preached in St. Osoph's only because he is being paid one hundred dollars more per year there than in his previous parish (155). Unlike Furlong, Dumfarthing knows exactly what is the legal structure of his parish "'as I had occasion to enquire into the matter when I was looking for guidance in regard to the call I had received to come here'" (171). The "'guidance'" that finally leads Dumfarthing away from St. Asaph's is an offer of seven hundred dollars a year more than St. Asaph's last offer.

Only one of the religious figures in the book seems entirely uninfluenced by money--the minister who is replaced by, and later replaces, Dumfarthing: the Rev. Dr. McTeague. McTeague does not notice when "his trustees" reduce his salary by fifty per cent (137). His only thought of money indicates not greed but the one touch of vanity in his nature: his reflection that "lowly and meek as they are, there are men among them that could buy out half the congregation at St. Asaph's" (133). McTeague is much like Dean Drone in his struggle to reconcile Hegel and St. Paul (136-137), but he is also absolutely sincere and unable to avoid preaching what he believes--including its moral implications (137). Like Drone, McTeague also suffers a type of stroke when confronted by too much stress. In McTeague's case, however, that stress is not the financial condition of his church, but rather a question from a student in his philosophy lectures about how to, as the university president puts it, "'reconcile his theory of transcendental immaterialism with a scheme of

rigid moral determinism'" (151). While the Dean, after his stroke, is reduced to lecturing the Infant Class, McTeague, though he loses his position teaching philosophy, is released from his philosophical difficulties (177) to *live* out his moral teaching.

The shifting reactions to McTeague and Furlong before and after McTeague's stroke illustrates the fickleness of affective religion in the City. Before the stroke,

> Dr. McTeague was a failure, and all his congregation knew it. "He is not up to date," they said.... "He don't go forward any, said the business members of the congregation. "That old man believes just exactly the same sort of stuff that he did forty years ago. What's more, he *preaches* it. You can't run a church that way, can you?" (136-137, italics Leacock's)

After his stroke, when he is replaced by the more forceful Dumfarthing, the exact converse of this criticism is applied to Furlong by Fyshe, a member of the rector's congregation:

> "...[I]n the matter of his religion itself, one always feels as if he were to little fixed, too unstable. He simply moves with the times. That, at least, is what people are beginning to say of him, that he is perpetually moving with the times. It doesn't do..." (163-164)

What "people" want is not spiritual or moral guidance--after all, Dumfarthing's condemnation of university studies sets the students "to work with a vigour that put new life into the college" (159)--but rather entertainment.

That this desire for affective religion does not promote the understanding of spiritual community can be seen from people's attitudes toward the ministers' concern about others. Furlong is, much like the foolish townsfolk of McCulloch's Book One, popular for his whole-hearted social(izing) commitment(s) (135). However, there is less appreciation for McTeague's genuine post-stroke *concern* for the community. The university president describes as "'pathetic'" the spectacle of McTeague's "'reaching out his hand for the newspaper'" because of his apparent desire "'to read one of the editorials'" (156). When McTeague moves from his earlier pride, ironically, "that his congregation are made of the

lowly and the meek in spirit" (133) to "greeting" (167) everyone he sees in a spirit of "meek and willing affability," it leads those who see him to conclude that he has lost his mind, as his concern becomes more personal:

> "He stood and spoke to me about the children for... a quarter of an hour," related one of his former parishioners, "asking after them by name, and whether they were going to school yet and... questions like that. He never used to speak of such things.... I'm afraid he is getting soft in the head." "I know," said the person addressed. "His mind is no good. He stopped me... to say how sorry he was to hear about my brother's illness. I could see from the way he spoke that his brain is getting feeble. He's losing his grip. He was speaking of how kind people had been to him after his accident and there were tears in his eyes. I think he's getting batty." (168)

The desire for entertaining religion and the consequent inability to appreciate genuine concern about others explains why "The Yahi-Bahi Oriental Society of Mrs. Rasselyer-Brown" (76-102) is so popular. That her own religious ignorance leaves her vulnerable to such mystical shysterism can be seen from her reference to her uncultured husband as "a severe handicap.... and in Mrs. Rasselyer-Brown's religious moments a crucifix" (76). Since a crucifix is a cross with Christ still hanging on it, the awkwardness of taking up such a burden should be obvious; however, it is not so to Mrs Rasselyer-Brown, since she is not united to, but divided from, her husband, by his religious duties "at the Mausoleum Club" (95).

The others in the Yahi-Bahi Oriental Society are chiefly interested in Mr. Yahi-Bahi's bag of tricks: vanishing money (86); "his marvellous gift of reading the future": "'Many things are yet to happen before others begin'" (87); and "the... reastralisation of Buddha" (94). The actual teachings of the Society's religion, Boohooism, are simple. Each disciple hopes to attain to, among other mystical states, that of Bahee, or the Higher Indifference by, for instance, being "willing to sacrifice his friends, or his relatives, and even strangers"

(90). Higher states yet require "further meditation and fasting--...living solely on fish, fruit, wine, and meat" (90). Boohooism is thus the perfect twentieth-century counterpart to the affective religion--portrayed in McCulloch's Book One--which causes women who attend prayer meetings to neglect their own families or men who decry the things of the world to enjoy them at others' houses.

Though there is plenty of domestic comfort--and discomfort--in *Arcadian Adventures*, only McTeague abandons the state of Higher Indifference in which most of the others are sunk to attempt to build up domestic community that involves concern for *others'* families. The possibility of genuine spiritual or moral community among the rich in the City seems equally difficult, since, upon the merger of St. Asaph's and St. Osoph's, the motion is passed that "points of doctrine, belief, or religious principle may be freely altered, amended, reversed, or entirely abolished at any general annual meeting!" (175). McCulloch may well have found Leacock's diagnosis an accurate one, but Leacock certainly provides no Book Two to show the alternative.

Voices Overheard Briefly

The three books we have looked at in this chapter are the closest in time and tone to *The Stepsure Letters*, but many later authors have dealt with the issue of religious community--specifically Protestant religious community. One author who deals with some of the same issues as McCulloch is Frederick Philip Grove, whose 1933 novel *Fruits of the Earth* features a diligent and eventually prosperous farmer, Abe Spalding, who, like Saunders, takes a stand against his daughter being involved in 'frolicking' with a married man and thus attempts to create and sustain moral community, linking him to McCulloch's

satirical intent in the *Letters* (particularly Book Two). Sinclair Ross's 1941 novel *As For Me and My House* has a clergyman, Philip Bentley, who seeks to escape the constraints inherent in the position by which he serves the community, to find artistic integrity, and a narrator who repudiates the Romantic faith in the harmony of man and nature, but who also has no alternative transcendent relationship in which to find fulfilment, the kind demonstrated by the faith in Providence of Saunders and the old gentleman. W. O. Mitchell, on the other hand, in his 1947 novel *Who Has Seen the Wind*, portrays the power of both Biblical religion and the more Romantic communion with nature, with characters who form, not specifically a moral, but at least a philosophical community--one whose speculations are, moreover, bound up with moral concerns.

Other authors for whom not merely one book, but rather their entire body of work, reveal their struggles with the issue of religious community and commitment are Morley Callaghan, Hugh MacLennan, Rudy Wiebe, Robertson Davies and Margaret Laurence. Except possibly for Callaghan, all the above-mentioned authors lack McCulloch's combination of dogmatic religious belief and the moralistic streak which judges William wanting. The more typical modern combination of personal confidence and existential uncertainty makes for intriguing philosophical or psychological exploration, but not for genuine concern about William's soul. Can the loss of doctrinal religious certainty lead to a lack of sympathy for spiritual distress? Is the question even admissible in a university which has eschewed creedal affiliation?

Possibly not, but one of the themes that has run through this chapter is that the authors after McCulloch, because they did not share his religious confidence, consequently also

could not share his confidence in the possibility of deeper spiritual and moral community--community that recognizes the importance of values and beliefs shared among different households, that upholds the value of work beyond its material effects, that promotes a view of personal redemption that requires communion with other worshippers rather than mere harmony within oneself and/or with Nature. As humanism became the *de facto*, if not always the professed, religion of Canadian authors, what was lost in the new creed? To what extent were writers after McCulloch able to go beyond the simple satire of religion that is most characteristic of Book One? Despite the moralistic toughness of Book Two, it nonetheless represented a broadening of McCulloch's religious understanding without giving up his religious commitments. More work needs to be done with authors besides those I have looked at in detail in this chapter to see whether the reconciliation of religious feeling and understanding, of affect and effect, which McCulloch accomplished in Book Two is still possible in a largely secular century.

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