

JOHN BUCHAN: CONSERVATISM, IMPERIALISM
AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

On October 11, 1899 war broke out between the tiny Boer republics of South Africa and the mighty British Empire. Contrary to all expectations on the part of the British the Boers were not crushed with ease, the war dragged on until 1902 and cost the Empire dearly in lives and money. Thus the opening of the new century saw British imperialists receive a rude psychological shock. The brash aggressiveness and confidence that had been a feature of British imperialists in the preceding three decades was now tempered with doubt and uncertainty. World opinion labelled their cause in South Africa as unjust and they were assailed by opponents of the war at home. The British Empire, of course, had always had its critics abroad and at home but in the euphoric days of expanding British power and influence they were easily dismissed. However, in the years from the outbreak of the Boer War to the beginning of the Second World War the assumptions, attitudes and actions of imperialists were to come under ever increasing critical scrutiny. Under that scrutiny the numbers of imperialists thinned and diminished while the ranks of their opponents swelled. Within the short space of half a century Britain was to resign herself to divesting herself of her Empire and her imperial prerogatives and responsibilities.

That is not to suggest that the British Empire and the imperial idea were cast off easily and without regret. Many Britons clung to the imperial idea and the notion of a British Empire. In fact, the British Empire continued to expand during the twentieth century and reached its zenith after the First World War when Britain added South-West Africa,

Mesopotamia, Palestine, German New Guinea and about a hundred Pacific islands to her vast holdings.¹

Complex factors, however, contributed to an erosion of British authority and power in the world. The Boer War signalled the first concerted attack on the imperial idea from within Britain herself.

J. A. Hobson in his book Imperialism: A Study (1902) attempted to prove statistically that imperialism was merely exploitation of primitive regions and peoples, regardless of imperialists' protestations that on the contrary they were conducting a great civilizing mission. Such exploitation was, Hobson argued, immoral, but it was also dangerous for it might lead to war with other imperial powers.² To many, World War I and its tremendous slaughter was a horrible confirmation of this interpretation of imperialism. The temper of Britain in the inter-war period became increasingly pacific. People were less willing to pin their hopes for security on the British Empire—the League of Nations appeared a far better alternative.

Economic depression in the thirties riveted concern at home. The Empire, if not forgotten, loomed less important in peoples' minds. First of all "the condition of England question" pre-occupied the British people, and secondly, the state of Europe and the problem of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia. Confidence in Britain's future was replaced with anxiety and uncertainty. Sabre rattling and the pugnacity popularly associated with imperialists were out of vogue. In fact, imperialists had in many circles become the object of ridicule. Colonel Blimp, a caricature of the retired Indian Army officer was a popular cartoon. This flippant attitude towards imperialists was the logical

culmination of the attacks of literati who, since the turn of the century, had been intent on smashing old idols. Lytton Strachey pilloried old heroes in Eminent Victorians, George Bernard Shaw tweaked the British lion's nose, and a host of other popular writers, H. G. Wells, Noel Coward, and Somerset Maugham all had their day exposing the hypocrisy and pomposity of Britain's sacred cows--imperialists included. The criticisms levelled at imperialists, whether satirical or serious, took their toll.

The opposition that imperialists faced at home was coupled with a reluctance on the part of the Dominions, British colonies, and protectorates to conform with what British imperialists thought was fitting and proper. The movement among imperialists begun at the turn of the century to promote Imperial Federation or some other form of greater imperial unity was to founder as the century wore on. Imperialists who had placed great emphasis on Imperial Conferences were to see the interval between such conferences slowly widen. Meetings which were held in 1921, 1923, 1926, 1930 and 1937³ seemed to imperialists to produce nothing tangible. It was also evident during these years that there was a growing national feeling in the Dominions, particularly South Africa and Canada, which seemed to exclude notions of a greater imperial unity. The Statute of Westminster (1931)⁴ which gave legal force to ideas current in some quarters about the autonomy and equality of the Dominions was not received by all imperialists with favour. To many it merely announced the death of the whole imperial unity movement.

Nationalism was not, however, restricted to the Dominions. In 1920 the Congress Party of India adopted a resolution calling for

"swaraj"—freedom. In the following years led by the holy man Gandhi, Congress agitated by non-violent means for Indian independence. Congress-led boycotts and demonstrations became a real threat to British administration in India. India, for so long described by imperialists as the "brightest jewel" in the British Crown, appeared to be intent on becoming mistress of her own destiny. That the British themselves might have suspected, however vaguely, the impermanence of their position in India is suggested by the drastic reduction in the number of recruits for the Indian Civil Service. In part this was due to the casualties of the 1914-18 war but the decline in recruiting continued right through the 1920's.⁵ Once regarded by many young men as providing the opportunity of a brilliant career, the Indian Civil Service could no longer attract the numbers or quality of staff it had in the past. Service in India seemed to many to be a dead end road.

There were also signs of a growing nationalism in other parts of the Empire. While nationalism in black Africa was virtually non-existent before the Second World War, Egyptians and Arabs did not always submit to British rule with good grace. Agitation against British rule could no longer be easily dismissed as blind rebellions by ignorant savages unable to recognize their own self-interest. The new rebels were often Western educated and only too willing to justify their opposition to British rule by quoting to their masters chapter and verse from Locke, Macaulay, Mill, Bentham or Burke.

It was not odd then that the imperialist, vilified by a growing minority at home and hated abroad, found himself taking up a defensive stance. Where before he had felt it necessary only to assert that

imperialism was self-evidently a good, a noble, or beneficent thing he now had to offer proofs. Where before an opponent's argument could be lightly dismissed because it was unheeded by the mass of Britons, it now had to be attacked and demolished. In the twentieth century that task fell to those men who in their youth had been swept up in the imperial fervour of the last years of the nineteenth century. One of those men was John Buchan.⁶

From 1900 to 1940 Buchan tirelessly preached the imperial message. He was in a fortunate position to do so, for his career encompassed two worlds, the literary and the political. He was not, however, recognized as the spokesman of any imperial school, nor, for long, was he a member of any imperialist group which sprang up to promote imperial unity. In the strictest sense Buchan spoke only for himself. But in the widest sense he also spoke for a large group of imperialistically minded people in Britain. His novels, biographies and histories were immensely popular with a wide reading public, his services as a journalist were eagerly sought. The characters of his novels displayed attitudes of mind that struck a sympathetic chord in a large segment of the British public and his newspaper articles presented arguments that reassured people of the importance of the imperial mission.

Buchan not only mirrored ideas common to many of his countrymen, he also attempted to answer imperialism's critics and detractors. He was in the forefront of a battle which was being waged for the British public's allegiance. In the end it was a battle which the imperialists lost to their opponents. But it is important to know not only that they lost, but in losing what they had championed. Too often the British

imperialists of the twentieth century, and Buchan in particular, have been merely tagged with the vague label "imperialist", as if it explained everything that needed to be known about them. Labels, however, do not reveal the men or their creed; they merely obscure them. To understand Buchan and his imperial idea it is necessary to discover what prompted his adherence to imperialism, how he defined it and what he hoped of it.

Buchan's opinions, prejudices and judgments are ones with which a later generation are, at best, uncomfortable. They are his own and presented as such. They help to explain the man and his doctrine.

Footnotes to Introduction

1. Colin Cross, The Fall of the British Empire (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968), p. 16.
2. Correlli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (New York: William Morrow and Co. Inc., 1972), p. 46.
3. Cross, p. 177.
4. The Statute of Westminster was intended to make law the principles embodied in the Balfour Report of 1926 which had claimed autonomy and equality of status for the Dominions and Great Britain. The Statute removed legal inequalities such as the power of disallowance, the refusal of assent to reserved Bills and the exercise of the supreme legislative power in the United Kingdom in respect to a Dominion. In most cases usage and convention had rendered such powers inoperable or amended their scope. The Statute of Westminster nullified such legal inequalities. K. C. Wheare, The Statute of Westminster and Dominion Status (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 122-138.
5. Cross, p. 43.
6. John Buchan was born in Perth, Scotland on 26 August 1875. His father, a minister of the Free Kirk, moved to Glasgow in 1888 where Buchan was educated at a grammar school and Glasgow University. From 1895 to 1899 Buchan attended Oxford where he excelled as a student and began for the first time to move in influential circles. On going down from Oxford he rapidly made several careers for himself. From 1900 to 1918 he acted successfully as an assistant editor at The Spectator, practised law, served as a private secretary to Milner, became a partner of Thomas Nelson & Son, and during World War I served as Director of Information. After the war Buchan became Deputy Chairman of Reuter's News Service and experienced great popular acclaim as a novelist, his books selling in the hundreds of thousands of copies. In 1927 he entered Parliament and his career in public life culminated with his appointment as Governor General of Canada in 1935. He died in office in 1940.

Throughout his career Buchan was recognized as one of the leading imperialists and was a respected figure in the circles of power. His failure to secure a position of authority in the imperial service or government left him only one avenue to attempt to influence British policy—his writings. For forty years Buchan divided the time stolen from his other occupations to preach the imperial message.

Chapter One

CONSERVATIVE AND CHRISTIAN

Throughout a long and productive literary career as a best-selling novelist, journalist, biographer, and editor, John Buchan devoted his time and energy to a criticism of modernity, an impassioned defence of the British Empire and all its works, and an examination of Imperial questions and problems. His position on all these subjects was, to a large degree, dictated by his conservative political philosophy and his Christian beliefs; they were the very foundations and inspiration of a good deal of his Imperial thinking.

For Buchan, his conservatism and Christianity were "felt" things and were therefore difficult for him to expound in a clear and succinct manner; his beliefs were decreed as much by the heart as the head. To him his Christian faith and conservatism were basically inseparable; his conservative attitudes were reinforced by his religion and his political and social ideas blended with his Christian convictions.

Buchan, like many conservatives before and after him, had difficulty in stating concisely his political and social ideas. He wished instead to suggest, as have most English conservatives, that conservatism is a spirit, an attitude, a temper, and not a set of dogmas.¹ He left no single work which can be regarded as a political testament or confession of faith, but in all his work he attempted to posit the position of the conservative and Christian in the modern world. In giving voice to his beliefs Buchan never attempted a systematic exposition. The

general principle was illustrated with reference to a specific situation or problem; he relied on metaphor and analogy to convey the meaning and substance of his ideas. Buchan's novels, biographies, and newspaper articles when taken in toto, however, clearly illustrate his social, political, and religious ideas and preoccupations. There was very little new or radical in Buchan's conservative stance and his religious thinking, but it profoundly influenced his attitudes on other matters.

There is a tendency for the English conservative to employ an organic metaphor when attempting to express his ideas about the nature of society.² He does so because the basis of English conservatism is the land, and it is the organic metaphor which is most comprehensible to the countryman. It was the organic metaphor and the conception of society as a living organism which Buchan turned to whenever he attempted to clarify his political and social philosophy.

Buchan, however, adopted the English conservative's stance. He was not born and bred a country gentleman, nor was he an Englishman. He was, rather, an urban Scot who came from a solidly Liberal family. Buchan, then, was in some sense an outsider but, he came, to a large degree, to accept the attitudes and beliefs of English conservatives, particularly those of the landed gentry. It was the notion of an organic society that was central to Buchan's political and social thinking. To Buchan the organic society meant a community of people who were tied to one another by their duties to their fellow members, by their shared experience, past and present, and by loyalties to the state elicited by common attitudes of mind and the traditions of the nation. These things held in common by all, were powerful enough to transcend any divisions of

local patriotism, class or interest within the nation. That is not to say that people did not have particular loyalties that they owed to the smaller social unit, whether it was one's family, one's town, one's province, or class. Buchan believed, as did his favourite author, Sir Walter Scott, ". . . in the virtue of local patriotism and the idiomatic life of the smaller social unit."³ Yet he believed that people were capable of feeling a wider and greater patriotism fostered by the ancient traditions of the race, the fundamental laws of the people, and established customs and practices. This community of people was not, however, nor could it ever be, an egalitarian one. Within the community there must be distinctions, and Buchan felt that such distinctions must be primarily ones of ability and merit. But every member of the community, however humble his position might be, had to recognize that he was an integral and necessary part of it upon whom, in part, the health of the nation depended. If every member of the community were valuable it did not follow in Buchan's mind that they were equally valuable. The health of the community depended on distinctions between its members; in Buchan's view, "The cure for anarchy [was] a hierarchy."⁴

Although Buchan accepted the language and theory of English conservatism he rejected the label "conservative". He much preferred to style himself a Tory democrat. His antipathy to the word arose from his feeling that the word conservative had acquired some unpleasant associations. Principally, it suggested the unwillingness to ever admit the practicability of any change whatsoever, while to Buchan the real duty of politicians might be that of "ruthless destruction."⁵

By "ruthless destruction" Buchan meant radical change, and he believed conservatives must be prepared to countenance such action if it were found to be absolutely necessary. Like most conservatives Buchan disliked change for change's sake, and he clung to what he considered was the classic confession of the conservative faith as enunciated by Lord Falkland. "When it is not necessary to change, it is necessary not to change."⁶

While Buchan was willing to admit the occasional necessity of change, he believed it must be guided by the fundamental tenets of conservative thought. Foremost among these was the conviction that society is an organism, and like any living thing it is ". . . a complex growth which cannot be fully comprised by any set of categories . . . much in it must remain unrationalized, and perhaps not rationalizable."⁷ Because society is a complex, living, delicate organism, Buchan was sure that it must be treated with care, and that ". . . changes to be organic must be gradual and well considered" ⁸ It was also true that if the organic metaphor was to be meaningful it must be carried to its logical conclusion. The care of any living thing and the preservation of its health often requires drastic measures: a tree must be pruned of dead and useless branches, a malignant tumour must be removed by surgery. However, to Buchan, such measures were never to be considered lightly and radical action was not to be determined by a process of abstract reasoning, or by formulae. Change was to be guided by a knowledge of and reverence for the past, so that it might conform to a pattern evident in history. Buchan wrote, "If the past has no meaning for a man, all problems will be considered on the supposition that human nature is like

a mathematical quantity, and that a solution can be reached by an austere mathematical process."⁹

Buchan hesitated to style himself a conservative because he felt conservatism was identified with an unconditional opposition to change; but he willingly described himself as a democrat. He claimed to believe in democracy, but as he defined it. Democracy was a ". . . spiritual testament, and not an economic structure or a political machine. The testament involved certain basic beliefs—that the personality was sacrosanct, which was the meaning of liberty; that policy should be settled by discussion; that normally a minority should be ready to yield to a majority, which in return should respect a minority's sacred things."¹⁰

Buchan supported the notion of majority rule, but he did not believe democracy was something which in itself was intrinsically good. Counting heads might be all very well, but it was wise to remember that a good many of them were likely to be empty. In his biography of Augustus, Buchan commented acidly on ". . . that degeneration of democratic theory which imagines that there is a peculiar inspiration in the opinions of the ignorant and a singular nobility in the character of the penniless."¹¹ Buchan felt that the real business of a democracy was in providing ". . . a chance not only of a livelihood, but of a worthy life . . .,"¹² and his deeply ingrained respect for the traditional ruling class of England made him believe that they were particularly suited to the task of governing and of guiding the governed to the "worthy life." It might be the majority's business to choose its governors, but there was little doubt in Buchan's mind as to who was

fit to rule. It was without doubt those men whose families had traditionally ruled England. This class was not a closed shop, however, and if a man had the ability and tenacity to rise into it (as Buchan felt he himself had done) he qualified for the role of a governor.

Even though Buchan had entered the charmed circle of the elite of English society, he remained in awe of the propertied classes who had for so long been in the habit of ruling and ordering England. He felt there was a particular mystique about them, an aura of authority. His feelings about the ruling class are captured in this passage from one of his novels.

The truth is, that if you belong to a family which for a good many centuries have been accustomed to command and to take risks, and if you yourself, in the forty-odd years of your life, have rather courted trouble than otherwise and have put discipline into Arab caravans, Central African natives, and Australian mounted brigades—well . . . your words may carry weight.¹³

It is evident from this passage that Buchan was less a Tory democrat and more a Tory paternalist.

The ideals of Tory paternalism became pervasive in the romantic fiction of Victorian and later times. The heroes of these books, Tory gentlemen all, conformed to certain standards; they were characterized as upright, courageous, protective, and right.¹⁴ It is just such gentlemen that people the light novels and "thrillers" that Buchan produced for an avid public. Though not all his heroes are country gentlemen of high birth and means, they are all men who subscribe to the attitudes and beliefs of such men and there is never any question in the reader's mind that they are men who "count." But in Buchan's characterization of his heroes there is always a peculiar tension. They may perhaps

be an heir to a peerage like Sandy Arbuthnot, or one of the most influential men in British politics, Lord Lamancha. However, Richard Hannay, the most famous of all Buchan heroes, pursues a rather ungentlemanly career as a mining engineer, though later in life he acquires an estate (as did Buchan) and settles down to be squire and lord of the manor. Buchan could never quite subdue the ungentlemanly admiration of success for success's sake; his heroes may acquire the trappings, manners, and attitudes of the gentry, but they are not quite comfortable in the mold. Buchan revered the old English families, their histories and mode of living, but he could not forget that he had got where he did with a struggle. Buchan's books display a Smilesian attitude; success is important, and Buchan's open admiration of it very often unconsciously parodied the ethic he wished his readers to admire. Buchan described one of his characters, Bronson Jane: "He had been a noted sportsman and was still a fine polo player; his name was a household word in Europe for his work in international finance; he was the Admirable Crichton of his day, and it was rumoured that in the same week he had been offered the Secretaryship of State, the Presidency of an ancient University, and the control of a great industrial corporation."¹⁵

Buchan wished to make his readers believe that his heroes, the Hannays, Roylances, Arbuthnots, and Lamanchas were country gentlemen at heart, men who realized like Hannay ". . . what a precious thing this little England [is], how old and kindly and comforting, how wholly worth striving for. The freedom of an acre of her soil [is] cheaply bought by the blood of the best of us."¹⁶ His fictional characters love the land.

If not born to it, they acquire an estate as soon as possible and apply themselves to the business of being country gentlemen.

The propertied men in Buchan's books have great privileges but their duties are equally great. They are not allowed to wallow in Arcadian bliss but are expected to be caring for and improving the lot of their tenants, or on a wider scale, serving King, Country, and Empire.

The mark of the conservative, it is often suggested, is the emphasis he places on the primacy of duties over rights.¹⁷ To Buchan, duty was elevated to a spiritual act in itself and service to the community is exalted to a pre-eminent position. Mr. Scrope, a character in Buchan's novel A Prince of the Captivity, reveals to Adam Melfort the true nature of duty. "Duty was expounded as a thing both terrible and sweet, transcending life and death, a bridge over the abyss to immortality. But it required the service of all a man's being, and no half-gods must cumber its altar."¹⁸ The characters in Buchan's novels gladly go out and die in the far reaches of the Empire because they never question for a moment their duty to do so. Lewis Haystoun, hero of the Half-Hearted, dies for ". . . one of the common catchwords of the crowd"¹⁹ while guarding the Indian frontier. Leithen, tubercular and dying in Mountain Meadow, gives up any chance of recovery by remaining in northern Canada to aid a band of starving Indians.

The paternalistic attitude demonstrated in Buchan's novels is often crude and implausible, melodramatic and sentimental. The novels are not so much reflections of what Buchan believed the ruling class really was, but what he wished it to be. But it is also true that

Buchan saw in the ruling class, as exemplified by the gentry, a sense of responsibility and a wholehearted willingness to serve. They were seldom what he wanted them to be, but they were the next best thing. His characters were really idealizations of the country gentry and it is through them that Buchan ". . . preaches the doctrine of Challenge; of no privilege without responsibility, of only one right of man—the right to do his duty; of all power and property held on sufferance."²⁰ Yet when Buchan searched for a living counterpart to his fictional characters he could not find a man whom he believed exemplified his ideas about responsibility and duty. Instead he had to turn to a man long dead, Sir Walter Scott, to attempt to illustrate what he believed were the attributes of the true conservative or Tory. Buchan wrote of Scott that

. . . it may be said that he had much of that practical socialism which Toryism has never lacked. He envisaged life in terms rather of duties than of rights; he hated the rootless and the mechanical; he believed in property but only as something held on a solemn trust; his social conscience was too quick to accept the calculating inhumanity of the economists. To him, as to Newman, it seemed that a worthy society must have both order and warmth.²¹

Buchan agreed with Scott that the worthy society had to possess both order and warmth. But he believed that the former was a precondition of the latter. Order did not necessarily lead to a warm and kindly society but it was a necessary condition for such a society to exist. Only if a man were safe and secure in his property and person could those relationships be cultivated between men that gave their lives a sense of security and well-being. In times of chaos, men could not possibly recognize their essential brotherhood or feel they were a community. Chaos set men against one another and caused every man to

look only to his own welfare.

Because Buchan emphasized that order was necessary for the healthy functioning of an organic society, he wrote three books which explored the problems of re-ordering societies that had disintegrated owing to internal strife and dissension. These books were his biographies of Montrose, Cromwell, and Augustus. Along with his biography of Sir Walter Scott, Buchan considered them his most important books. He believed that in writing these books he had come to a clearer understanding of his own views about society. Buchan wrote that the biographies were ". . . in a sense a confession of faith, for they enabled me to define my own creed on many matters of doctrine and practice, and thereby cleared my mind . . . I could escape from contemporary futilities, to a watch tower from which I had a long prospect and could see modern problems in juster proportions."²²

The three men, Montrose, Cromwell, and Augustus were similar in many respects. All three were soldiers, and two of them, Augustus and Cromwell, might be described as dictators. Buchan did not admire and respect these men because they were men on horseback. Living in a turbulent time himself, Buchan was interested in them because he believed they had recognized and tried to cope with problems that threatened to split their societies. Buchan realized that their particular solutions, applicable to the times in which they had lived, did not provide the answers for problems peculiar to the twentieth century. He was, however, interested in them because he thought each one of them had recognized and emphasized a principle that was essential for maintaining order in the state. Two of the men, Augustus and Cromwell, had been successful

in providing a measure of safety and security for their subjects after a period of civil war. But it was Montrose, who died on the scaffold because of his beliefs, whom Buchan most admired.

In the early seventeenth century, at a time when the Kirk in Scotland had set itself against Charles I, Montrose, a Presbyterian, had taken up arms against his Church in defence of the King. Buchan argued that Montrose had done so because he was interested in preserving both liberty and order in Scotland. Montrose, he felt, possessed a conception of a law immutable and fundamental that ordered the constitution of the state and scrupulously limited the central authority which issued from the person of the King. Montrose believed that the King's sovereignty was a gift of all the people of the nation, and the protection of the plain man resided only in the King's law. Any alteration in the distribution of public duties and authority would not add to public liberties but diminish them by exalting the power of an oligarchy comprised of churchmen and the nobility. To Montrose the duty of human government was to provide the citizen with a free, secure, and orderly life. This was possible only if delegated power was indivisible. The Church, however, was attempting in many matters to set itself up as a conflicting authority to the King. Buchan was certain Montrose had seen two dangers in this situation: the Church might ultimately draw to it all the King's power and without the checks historically imposed on kingship govern in a tyrannous way, or failing that, its attempts to interfere in the business of the state would result in anarchy.²³ Montrose took up arms, Buchan argued, because he recognized that there must be a sole and undisputed authority in the state, recognized as

legitimate by all citizens. He anticipated the modern attitude toward government and, "...saw that in a stable government the supreme power, while it must be delegated, cannot be made divisible. The Kirk was willing enough to accept the doctrine of popular sovereignty, but it did not grasp the inevitable conclusion--that the people cannot entrust this power to two conflicting authorities which may both claim to represent them."²⁴

Montrose, of course, failed in his bid to uphold the power of the throne in Scotland and was executed. A more successful contemporary, Oliver Cromwell, also fascinated Buchan. In Cromwell Buchan saw a man who, though a revolutionary, realized that at some time revolution must stop and a period of consolidation begin. He also saw a man who was resolute in his attempts to bring clarity out of confusion and was possessed by ". . . an honourable passion to integrate England once more, to establish in a polity the ideals for which he had fought, to make his country a power for truth and righteousness in a chaotic world."²⁵ It was because Cromwell wished government to be a government of principle (in Cromwell's case, religious principle) that Buchan admired him. He felt that Cromwell had realized that a society must be bound together by a commonly accepted spiritual outlook, which in this instance had been Puritanism. Buchan did not regard Cromwell as a religious fanatic but rather, for his day and age, a religious moderate, a man of a ". . . somewhat cross-bench mind, not easily brigaded into sect or party."²⁶ Buchan maintained that Cromwell was not interested in creating a theocracy

but in animating the spiritual life of the nation, and that his goal was ". . . to educate the people into a nobler life, and not merely to bow to and interpret the brutish commonplaces of the average man."²⁷

What Cromwell had done for the England of the seventeenth century, Buchan believed Augustus had done for the ancient world. He believed that Augustus had wisely chosen to take the old institutions of republican Rome and adapt them to the new conditions and problems of a mighty Empire. Augustus had revived respect for the old Roman gods and virtues, and by doing so had given the Romans a sense of destiny as well as a reverence for the past. Buchan believed that Augustus had lived at a particularly crucial time in history. Rome was in danger of destroying itself through civil war and ultimately losing the Empire to barbarous peoples. Civilization, Buchan thought, was on the point of being shattered. Augustus, however, managed to postpone such a calamity by adapting various old religious ceremonies, and improving imperial administration. Such measures enabled Augustus to provide the ancient world with a sane and humane government which ensured the citizens of the Roman Empire a measure of prosperity, security, and peace that they had not known for some time.

Augustus' approach to the restructuring of the state was haphazard, but it worked, and Buchan felt that he could not be faulted because he did not operate according to a comprehensive plan. Buchan wrote, "He was less a slave to a panacea than we moderns, who are apt to credit some type of constitution, some economic dogma, some international apparatus with a plenary power of salvation."²⁸

Augustus' great contribution, Buchan seemed to suggest, was that

he recognized that order in society can only be maintained if that society is willing to change in a way that enables it to grapple with different situations, conditions, and problems. Augustus realized that people find radical changes disturbing and difficult to cope with; he recognized the need of a sense of continuity. Augustus understood that stability and order could only be maintained in a society if people were made to feel that the old and familiar was not totally eradicated. They could not be cut loose from their moorings and set adrift.

Buchan freely admitted that his interpretation of Augustus and his work was ". . . a personal thing, coloured insensibly by my own beliefs."²⁹ It was equally true of his interpretations of Cromwell and Montrose; he felt that these men had shared his belief that order was of paramount importance to the survival and successful functioning of the state. The importance of these three books does not hinge on their veracity as historical or biographical works. They are important because they demonstrate Buchan's beliefs about the factors that tend to promote good government and order among men. Those factors were a sole, indivisible authority in the state recognized as such by all people, an underlying spiritual fabric of the state which was, in the widest sense, common to all citizens, and the willingness and ability on the part of the state to institute change while cushioning its shock.

Buchan's evident concern for maintaining order and security in society was closely tied to his Christian faith and his belief that Christian ideals must interpenetrate the "secular" world. There is a recurring theme in all of Buchan's work which figures particularly in his "thrillers." That theme is the fragility of civilization. A Mr. Lumley,

a character in Buchan's novel, The Powerhouse, says to Edward Leithen, "You think that a wall as solid as the earth separates civilization from barbarism. I tell you the division is a thread, a sheet of glass. A touch here, a push there, and you bring back the reign of Saturn."³⁰

It might be argued that Buchan's professed concern about the state of civilization and his certainty as to its tenuous nature was merely a convention of the spy novel. But M. R. Ridley makes the point that even in his most light and superficial work Buchan quite readily sacrifices homogeneity of expression to get said what he believes needs saying.³¹ And Graham Greene, in an essay written during England's darkest days of World War II, mused that perhaps Buchan had prepared a wide reading public, better than Buchan himself knew, for the realization of the delicacy of civilization and the vulnerability of the ordinary man when it was swept away.³²

The fact is, Buchan did believe that civilization was a fragile thing and that one of the strongest buttresses of Western civilization was Christianity. He wrote, "There have been high civilizations in the past which have not been Christian, but in the world as we know it I believe that civilization must have a Christian basis, and must ultimately rest on the Christian Church."³³

Buchan was the son of a Presbyterian minister, and the religious training he imbibed from his father was a powerful influence on a great deal of his political and social thinking.³⁴ As a child Buchan was subjected to a solemn regime of constant church attendance and family prayers. This rigorous and strict religious training made him acutely aware of "living in a world ruled by unalterable law under the direct eye

of the Almighty."³⁵

This sense of an unalterable law remained with Buchan and was further reinforced at a later date when, as a student at Oxford, he studied the Greek and Roman classics. Buchan found that the classics influenced his view of life; they dispelled some of the bleaker Calvinistic notions he had been taught as a boy. They also reinforced others.

If the classics widened my sense of the joy of life they also taught its littleness and transience; if they exalted the dignity of human nature they insisted upon its frailties and the aidos with which the temporal must regard the eternal. I lost then any chance of being a rebel, for I became profoundly conscious of the dominion of an unalterable law. Prometheus might be a fine fellow in his way, but Zeus was king of gods and men.³⁶

Buchan's belief in an unalterable law that ordered the universe and his conception of God were certainly not conducive to rebellion against the nature of things as he found them. Nor were they likely to lead him to a humanistic conception of the nature of man. Buchan, like Edward Leithen, a recurring character in his novels, found that a realization of God's ineffable purity and power assured that he would have no undue reverence for man.³⁷ In fact Buchan, like Edward Leithen, ". . . detested the glib little humanism of most of his contemporaries."³⁸

But while Buchan, raised a Calvinist, was distrustful of that "glib little humanism" he was equally distrustful of certain Calvinistic doctrines, particularly the doctrine of predestination. He felt that ". . . Calvinistic predestination led inevitably to an atomistic individualism. . . ."³⁹ Buchan, given his notions of community and his conception of an organic state, could not admit this aspect of Calvin's theology. Buchan early in his life discarded the doctrine of predes-

mination and substituted for it his own conception of "soul-making". Buchan regarded this world as a vale in which mankind "made" their souls. Character after character in his novels are consciously engaged in "making" their souls.⁴⁰ For Buchan, soul-making was an arduous and painstaking process that involved the renunciation of self and total submission to God's will. Adam Melfort, the hero of Buchan's A Prince of the Captivity, is obsessed by a scrap of poetry that constantly runs through his mind. That scrap of poetry seems to best exemplify Buchan's feeling that man makes his soul only by total submission to God's will.

Come ill, come well, the cross, the crown,
The rainbow or the thunder—
I fling my soul and body down
For God to plough them under.⁴¹

Buchan did not believe that soul-making was a passive act, for man had first to strive to discern God's plan and purpose before he could become a tool in His hands, an agent for God's work on earth. Buchan identified duty with the furtherance of God's wishes; it became, in a vague and undefined way, part of the process of soul-making. It is this which makes the fulfilling of one's duty a spiritual act, both "terrible and sweet . . . a bridge over the abyss to immortality." Duty, to Buchan, implied service on behalf of others; only through action that benefited others could man fulfill God's plan. Only through selfless action could man discover himself and make his soul.

Tory paternalism, the care and guidance of one's fellow human beings became, in Buchan's mind, identified with God's plan for man; consequently a political and social doctrine became allied with a religious one. Buchan's emphasis on soul-making and his belief that

service to one's fellow man was a religious duty naturally led him to become a proponent of the Church's role in the secular world. In an address to the General Council of Reformed Churches in June of 1937, he said, "We have produced, perhaps, too many ecclesiastics who were engrossed in their own sphere and had little regard for the uncovenanted world around them. The crying need to-day is for prophets who will enlarge the sphere of Christian duty and sharpen its purpose—men to whom there is nothing secular which is not also sacred. . . ."42

Buchan's call to the Church to play an active role in the world about it was a plea for the Church to emphasize the importance of moral and spiritual verities in the "uncovenanted" world. But it was also a challenge issued to the Church to strive to improve the material well-being of its flock. Buchan told his listeners that "Our business is not only with eternity but with time, to build up on earth the Kingdom of God, to enable men to live worthily and not merely to die in hope."43

If Buchan believed it necessary that the Church should take action to secure a better material life for all men, he did not wish to suggest that such action had its basis in an abstract belief in social justice, but rather in notions of Christian charity. Nor was he willing to identify social action by the Church with socialism. A character in A Prince of the Captivity states that Christ was a red hot socialist, and is answered that He was not the ordinary kind, for He did not call rich men knaves—but fools.⁴⁴

But if it were important that the Church take an interest in men's material life it was equally important that they recognize that they had a ". . . solemn duty to insist upon the need for moral

discipline—that broad, rational, humane discipline which is the teaching of Christ."⁴⁵ Such a discipline was necessary to combat the anarchic tendencies that Buchan saw as prevalent in every sphere of activity in the modern world. Buchan stated, ". . . we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is a great deal of moral anarchy abroad, and that the social discipline, which insisted upon a certain standard of conduct, has been gravely weakened. No one can study modern literature and modern art without being conscious of this disintegration. The tendency is one with which we can have no parley."⁴⁶

Buchan felt that the Christian Church, and by the Christian Church he meant the whole community of Christians irrespective of denomination, could exert a powerful and beneficent force to ensure stability and harmony both at home and abroad. Even the dour Reverend MacMillan, a bluff Presbyterian minister who appears in a book written by Buchan in conjunction with his wife entitled The Island of Sheep, concedes the importance of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Roman Church stands for much which the world dare not lose. We have been irritated by its apparent weakness and time serving, but let us consider its strength. It is for the historic bequest of Europe against crude novelties, for a spiritual interpretation of life against a barren utilitarianism, for dogma and ascertained truth against the opportunist, the sciolist and the half-baked. Those of us who believe in God cannot do without its aid.⁴⁷

Although Buchan realized that at various times and in various places the Church had not acted in the spirit that it should have, he still felt that even at its worst it had been a force for positive good. "I write as one who believes that the Church throughout its history was divinely inspired and never in its darkest days ceased to fulfil in some

degree its high mission."⁴⁸

In a world that he saw becoming increasingly disoriented and chaotic Buchan felt that it was imperative that Christian values be re-asserted, not only at the national level but also at the international level. He believed that there was a real need for a

. . . true internationalism, which seeks to add to the patriotisms of races and nations a patriotism of humanity. Now, world peace depends in the long run upon a universal will to peace rather than upon sanctions and treaties, upon a change of heart and a new code of values, upon the general acceptance and practice of the rules of Christian ethics.⁴⁹

Buchan, however, was not willing to place all his hopes on the belief that the acceptance of Christian ethics might further his goal of a wider internationalism. He was also a supporter of the League of Nations and had been a Locarno man.⁵⁰ Buchan was willing to support any movement that he sincerely believed might result in a more orderly, safe, and secure world system. The peace and security he wished to see in domestic politics was also his wish for international politics. Buchan took as his dictum that, "It is better in the long run to build up than to break down, to unite than to sever, or, rather, destruction and severance are futile except with a view to an ultimate construction and unity."⁵¹

He did not believe that his hope for a peaceful, orderly, and Christian society were even close to being realized in the immediate future. However, he did believe that they might be achieved and that the gradual unification of mankind was an on-going, organic process that was indicated by certain developments in human institutions. In The Island of Sheep, Buchan wrote that ". . . today as in the Middle Ages

[the ultimate hope for peace], lies in a community of law, interests, and culture over the biggest possible area. We could not restore right away the unity of Christendom, but the British Empire was the first instalment."⁵²

All of Buchan's thought and writing demonstrates an overriding concern with the problem of staving off disorder, disunion, and chaos in national and international affairs. His great fear was that civilization might be destroyed and consequently the world might be rent with dissension and strife. He also feared that Western culture and institutions would lose vigour and purposefulness and relapse into decadence and degeneration.

It has been suggested that when all life is viewed as art, it is possible to reach a satisfactory appreciation of the conservative.⁵³ This means that the conservative, like the artist, gives his world order and shape by utilizing certain symbols. For the Nineteenth century conservative the most prominent symbols were the Church, the land, the constitution, and the family.⁵⁴ It was these things which made life explicable to him, which suggested order rather than chaos and meaninglessness. Buchan, too, had his symbols, some of which he shared with earlier conservatives.

For Buchan the organic society was the most prominent symbol. All others were subsidiary, although necessary, for the preservation of a society that had both "order and warmth". But that other symbols were subsidiary did not mean that they lacked potency. The country gentleman, with his attachment to the land, his willingness to serve, and his belief in the virtue of doing his duty, was one. The Church,

which suggested stability and the submission to a higher and greater power, was another. In Buchan's mind these things were not only identified as being important for the preservation of order, but were identified with order itself. As modern society and modern man came either to attack these symbols, or simply disregard them, Buchan saw civilization as threatened. His response was to assert what he believed was valuable in the conservative and Christian tradition and to mount an attack against what he found objectionable or dangerous in the new.

Footnotes to Chapter One

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24. Ibid., p. 123.
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28. Buchan, Augustus, p. 352.
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30. John Buchan, The Powerhouse (London: Blackwood & Sons, 1916), p. 65.
31. M. R. Ridley, "A Misrated Author," Second Thoughts (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1965), p. 4.
32. Graham Greene, "The Last Buchan," Collected Essays (London: The Bodley Head, 1969), p. 225.
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35. Ibid., p. 6.
36. Ibid., p. 26.
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42. John Buchan, Presbyterianism: Yesterday To-day and To-morrow (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland Committee on Publications, 1938), p. 5.
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45. Buchan, Presbyterianism: Yesterday To-day and To-morrow, p. 9.
46. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
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50. Janet Adam Smith, John Buchan (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1965), p. 301.
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Chapter Two

CRITIC AND COMMENTATOR

Between 1900 and 1940 John Buchan was a highly critical commentator on almost all facets of modern life. As a working journalist, novelist, and politician he had unique opportunities of expressing his concern about domestic politics, international affairs, and the erosion of old standards in manners and morals. As a conservative and Christian he found the new emerging world an uncongenial and disturbing place, and he found it increasingly difficult to countenance new movements, ideas, and developments.

Throughout this period Buchan's criticism of modernity remained, in essentials, consistent. He was certain that the standard of political discussion and of politicians was in a regrettable decline and that unthinking adherence to a party line was, in part, responsible for that development. He was also increasingly fearful of the possibility of a class war in Great Britain that would ultimately lead to anarchy and result in a sundering of his society.

In international affairs, particularly after World War I, he could see only a dangerous and pointless rivalry among the great powers which might result in another catastrophic war and the destruction of Western civilization. The desire for unity and stability that he had always expressed as his greatest wish for Great Britain was extended to the world at large. He hoped that the League of Nations and the British Empire might prove to be two agencies which might create a new and more

stable world system and successfully combat the internationalism of Communism.

From the beginning of the Twentieth century until his death in 1940, Buchan seemed to alternate between a dark cosmic pessimism, a sense that everywhere things were breaking up, and a fervent belief that a new order could be, or might be, arising out of the chaos he saw all about him. But if Western civilization were to be saved, Buchan believed western man's cynicism, moral torpor, and sense of purposelessness had to be changed. In Buchan's canon the greatest peril that lay in wait for mankind was accidie, moral lassitude and mental sloth.¹ In time his attacks against these spiritual flaws earned him a place as a popular moralist of the middle-class. Buchan's novels, modern morality plays which presented no blurred distinctions between right and wrong, were enthusiastically recommended to young English schoolboys by parents and housemasters as morally elevating reading matter.² In these books he portrayed, as had one of his favourite authors, John Bunyan, the straight and narrow path that had to be travelled. To a generation or more Buchan's heroes epitomized the upright and morally courageous English gentleman.

John Buchan's first attack against the "new politics" appeared in 1900 with the publication of the novel, The Half-Hearted. In that book Buchan attempted a psychological study of the cultured people in whose circles he found himself moving for the first time. The book was a crude and clumsy affair, but it signalled Buchan's first public disapproval of the cheap huckstering that he felt beset modern political life. In the novel he pilloried Stock, an ostentatious and vulgar Liberal politician,

who appeals to the newly enfranchised electorate's political naiveté. "They [the people] want the practical, the blatantly obvious, spiced with a little emotion. Stock knows their demands. He began among them, and at present is but one remove from them. A garbled quotation from the Scriptures or an appeal to their domestic affections is the very thing required."³ In a letter to his friend, Gilbert Murray, Buchan confessed that Stock was ". . . merely a peg on which to hang some of my private dislikes" ⁴ It was the demogoguery of the "new" politician that Buchan most disliked. Politics, he maintained, was a serious business; a political appeal should be addressed to the intellect, and not man's irrational nature. A short time later, in 1902, Buchan's initial attack against the new "demogogic" politicians was followed by a laconic comment which appeared in a short story, "Fountainblue". "The ordinary political career is simply a form of trifling. There's no trade on earth where a man has to fear so few able competitors."⁵

If in the years between 1900 and 1902 Buchan expressed severe reservations about the standards of political conduct, he was thoroughly outraged by attacks launched by the Liberal Party against Lord Milner in 1905. The issue which raised the ire of Liberal politicians was the question of the importation of indentured Chinese labour to work the South African mines after the Boer War ended. Milner had authorized the importation of coolies because he felt the reconstruction of South Africa was contingent on making its mines operative. The supply of black and white labour was inadequate to meet the demands of employers for labourers. The Liberals fought the election of 1906 with "Chinese slavery" as one of their slogans, claiming that the Conservative Govern-

ment and Milner were responsible for the mistreatment and virtual enslavement of Chinese labour in South Africa.

The victory of the Liberals in that election only rubbed salt into Buchan's already smarting wounds. The initial attack against Milner had infuriated Buchan. He had served in South Africa as a member of Milner's Kindergarten and, like many of the young men of that select group, he idolized the great proconsul. Milner was everything Buchan felt a statesman should be: he had a cool dispassionate intellect, great administrative abilities, and the gift of ferreting out the cause of a problem. In Buchan's mind the Liberals were making cheap and unworthy jibes at a great man.

It was the sensational nature of Liberal attacks that most angered Buchan. He felt they were compounded of anti-Semitic slurs, appeals to racism, and any other tactic which would awaken hostility to Milner and the Conservative Party.

The old suspicion of the capitalist was awakened; and appeals were made to that Judenhetze which is dormant in all northern nations. The Liberal party embarked on their electioneering with as fine a hand of cards as was ever held by an opposition, and they made good use of their opportunities. The most sacred of moral appeals was prostituted in the party game. Posters and picture-cards represented mine owners as Legrees, and the labourers as shivering and tortured slaves, or with the logic common to such tactics, showed a Chinaman in bloated prosperity driving out an emaciated British workman.⁶

The Liberals, he was sure, were playing fast and loose with highly emotional and perhaps dangerous issues. Buchan wrote:

With many honest people the word "slavery" is sufficient to suspend all judgement and turn them into noisy abolitionists. Many, again, were impressed with the cry that a war which had been avowedly fought for the white working man had resulted in dispossessing him and filling his place with cheap coloured labour.⁷

Buchan felt that the root of this irrational and emotional electioneering was to be found in the unswerving adherence to one's party—right or wrong. Buchan, as a conservative and a member of the Conservative Party, often unfairly identified unthinking party loyalty primarily with Liberals, and at a later date with Labour Party supporters. But Buchan was not unwilling to castigate his own party when he thought it foolish and wrongheaded. The massive Liberal majority won in the 1906 general election had given that party a clear mandate for social reform. Buchan felt that the Conservative Party's continued opposition to such reform was not in the true spirit of Toryism. In an article for Blackwood's he made his views on the subject very clear.

We have to show ourselves [Conservatives] active in those causes which mean much to him [the worker]—a comprehensive pensions scheme, insurance against unemployment and sickness, and a wholesale revision of the Poor Law. Such reforms are in the true sense Conservative, for they are based on a belief in the organic interdependence of the parts of the State.⁸

Conservative opposition to such reforms not only was anti-thetical to Tory principles, but also was likely to lead to violent class antagonism that could only increase the disruptive tendencies within society. Buchan realized that Toryism could be "a danger when it [was] used to defend the indefensible privileges of a class. . . ." ⁹ It was for these reasons that Buchan found himself, in some measure, an ally of those urging reform of the House of Lords.

Troubles between the Liberal House of Commons and the largely Conservative House of Lords had begun with the destruction of the Liberal education bill of 1906 by hostile amendments in the Lords. The difficulties were finally resolved by curbing the powers of the Upper House in

1911 but during the heated national debate that accompanied the difficulties between the Houses, Buchan characterized the Lords as ". . . reactionary, incapable, unrepresentative; the tool of any Conservative majority; the irrational opponent of any progressive measure."¹⁰

Buchan felt strongly that the Conservative Party's obstinate refusal to fulfill the real aspirations of working men was not only dangerous but unfair. He argued that the working class ". . . which ultimately controls the decisions of the legislature, which is the backbone of our industrial system, and which gives us the personnel of our army and navy . . ." ¹¹ had, by its importance to society, earned and deserved the fundamental rights of protection from ill health and unemployment.

But if he believed that the Conservative Party had fomented ill-feeling among the classes Buchan was equally sure that the Liberals had contributed to that ill-feeling. He believed that during election campaigns their appeals were directed solely to the working class and had fallaciously suggested to workers that they were in reality the nation. ¹² It was the duty of the Conservatives to redress that imbalance and ". . . educate the industrial areas out of the class fallacy, which is both economically and politically ruinous." ¹³ What was needed was a ". . . more rational and masculine standard of judgement, which shall demand in each sphere the things that properly pertain to it." ¹⁴ That, of course, Buchan believed was the essence of the organic society, a delicate interplay of rights and duties, a measured balance that would exclude the tyranny of any one class and would demand of each citizen what he was capable of giving.

Buchan also felt that the Liberals who claimed to be the champions of the working class had no real understanding of or sympathy with it. In an article entitled "The Cockney" which appeared in Blackwood's, Buchan attacked what he defined as the "cockney attitude". By "cockney" Buchan meant a dilettante or a professional "do-gooder". Every party could claim such men but to Buchan it seemed that Liberalism with its long association with Non-conformity in England had the greatest share of cockneys. Although they claimed to be the protectors and champions of the workers, what they were most interested in doing was in modelling them in their own image. The cockney constantly laboured

. . . to impose upon the poor the middle-class standards of civilization. He would educate their children in the middle-class way and impose on their lives his own conception of decency and order. Every working-man, if he had his will, should be a follower of Mr. Samuel Smiles, his household conducted under a thousand rules, and his feet treading solidly in the straight path from the cradle to the grave.¹⁵

Buchan, because of his conception of an organic society and all the diversity it suggested, believed that the working class must be recognized as having ". . . a civilization of their own, different from that of the bourgeoisie, but no whit inferior."¹⁶

Buchan had at one time characterized Liberals as "sanguine and eager patriots" ¹⁷ He felt that optimism was among the most prevalent of their traits and he felt a grudging admiration for their enthusiastic belief in a better future. However, he believed that their enthusiasm could be dangerous. The years between 1910 and 1914 were troubled times for England. They were years of labour unrest, agitation by suffragists, constitutional crisis, and dissension over the question of Home Rule for Ireland which almost culminated in civil war. The

sanguinity of Liberals in such troublous times was caricatured by Buchan in the fictional person of Home Secretary Cargill, modelled on the Liberal Lord Advocate, Alexander Ure.¹⁸ Buchan wrote of Cargill,

The Irish patriot who cracked skulls in the Scotland Division of Liverpool, the Suffragist who broke windows and the noses of the police, the Social Democrat whose antipathy to the Tzar revealed itself in assaults upon the Russian Embassy, the "hunger-marchers" who had designs on the British Museum—all were sure of respectful and tender handling. He had announced more than once, amid tumultuous cheering, that he would never be the means of branding earnestness, however mistaken, with the badge of the felon.¹⁹

Buchan, who believed that order was of paramount importance in the successful functioning of the state, was appalled. Granted that these people might all have justifiable grievances, their actions were illegal and verged on the anarchic. Liberal imperturbability in the face of such outrages could not be condoned and he thought it necessary to speak out.

The Great War which began in 1914 suspended for the time being the internal discord that had been rife since 1910, and Buchan's service as an Army Intelligence officer and as Director of the Department of Information removed him for the duration of the war from any journalistic work and hence from commenting on the state of British politics. But privately he expressed satisfaction at the formation of a National Government, because it ". . . got rid of much of that silly old party stuff. . . ." ²⁰

The termination of the war, however, saw a renewal of that "silly old party stuff" with an added dimension. By the end of the war it was clear that the Labour Party might now be in a position to gain power in Britain. Buchan realized that the whole world he had known was going and ". . . that we were at the point of contact of a world vanishing

and a world arriving, and that such a situation was apt to crush those who had to meet it."²¹ If Buchan, unlike some of the more hard-nosed and reactionary Tories, did not feel crushed, he certainly did feel squeezed and pinched. Buchan's brand of Tory paternalism had always led him to feel a great deal of sympathy with the plight of working men and he was always genuinely interested in social reform that would ameliorate their position. But it is doubtful that before the war he could have envisaged that the governed might become the governors, and the idea was, at the least, disconcerting. By 1919, when he collaborated with his wife in the writing of The Island of the Sheep, a fictionalized symposium on social questions, he was certain that it was only a matter of time before Britain would have a Labour Government and that such a possibility must be admitted. Buchan, quite implausibly, presented his program to meet this exigency through Burford, a fictional ex-Labour M.P., who stated, "The only hope for Democracy is to make it an aristocracy."²² The aristocracy was to be an aristocracy of merit and to assure that the aristocracy was of the proper kind, Buchan turned "cockney". The problem, as he now saw it, was to educate the worker in the proper way of thinking and to prepare him for the role of governor.

We have to train him to take the long view and to have the means of making out of better economic conditions a better life. We have to train him to govern himself and his industry, and to produce leaders that can lead and ministers that can administer. In a year or two most likely there will be a Labour Government in power, and we have to make certain that it will be a wise Government.²³

Buchan was willing to accept the possibility that the Labour Party was likely to form a Government because, in some measure, he now regarded it as an ally. The October Revolution of 1917 and the success

of the Bolsheviks had led him to identify Bolshevism as the real enemy and he hoped the Labour Party might provide an alternative to Communism. Buchan feared both the appeal to class interest and the avowed internationalism of Communism. Buchan expressed his own opinions about Bolshevism and his belief in the solid character of the British worker through the mouth of a fictional union leader, Jonas, who asks

What's Bolshevism anyhow? Judging by the Russian specimens, apart from their liking for 'olesale 'omicide, it seems to mean a general desire to pull things up by the roots. Well, that ain't the line of the British working man. He is the soundest conservative on the globe, and what he wants is to get his roots down deeper We are over-industrialized, as the saying is; but a root's got to be found somewhere, and he finds it in his Union.²⁴

There is a note of whistling in the dark in much of The Island of Sheep, as if Buchan were persuading himself that there was really little to fear from the British worker. But his belief that the Labour Party and unionism might help keep the worker on an even keel, as well as a belief that the worker needed some form of protection, made him a defender of unions throughout the 1920's. During the national railway strike of 1921, when Lloyd George was calling the unions unpatriotic and the Labour Party Bolsheviks, Buchan attacked him for his tendency to see things in crude antagonism, and pointed out that unions afforded the worker his only security. And in 1926 in an article in English Life he sympathetically explained to a middle-class readership why union members after the General Strike of 1926 were so angered by the Trades Dispute Act.²⁵

It was the year after the General Strike of 1926 that Buchan entered the House of Commons as a Conservative M.P. for the Scottish

Universities. The member for the Universities was expected to interest himself in matters dealing with education and Scotland. But what attracted Buchan to stand for the seat was that the member for the Scottish Universities was widely regarded as his own man. By tradition he was given greater freedom from party control.²⁶ Buchan won the election handily and held the seat until his appointment as Governor General of Canada in 1935.

Buchan had always claimed that, like Cromwell, he had a "cross-bench mind" and he very quickly demonstrated that he was unwilling to toe unquestioningly the Conservative Party line. In his maiden speech he rose in the House to attack the Conservative Government's proposal to return to the House of Lords power that had been taken from it in the Parliament Act of 1911. It was the hope of Conservatives like Lord Birkenhead that a rejuvenated Lords might prevent revolution in Britain.²⁷ The Spectator, in reporting the speech, said that the ". . . scheme had been seriously unwell. It wilted and died five minutes after Mr. Buchan had risen."²⁸ In subsequent years Buchan continued to demonstrate the same critical attitude toward his party. He was one of three Conservative M.P.'s who defied his party's stance on the recognition of Soviet Russia and voted for diplomatic recognition of that nation.²⁹ In 1933 he rose in the House of Commons to defend the B.B.C. from Conservative members' attacks that the Corporation demonstrated a left-wing bias. Buchan claimed the right for the B.B.C. to broadcast what he described as unorthodox views.³⁰

While Buchan sat as a member of Parliament he continued to contribute fortnightly articles to The Graphic dealing with political

matters in Britain. Although Buchan, as a Conservative, was convinced during the period of Labour rule that his party would do a better job in power he was fair enough to admit that the years 1929 to 1931 were indeed a difficult time in which to govern. He wrote

The Labour Government has been judged perhaps too hardly, not only by its opponents but by its nominal supporters and by its abusive Liberal allies. They have had none of the luck which a Government may reasonably look for. The only member with any gift of leadership and imagination, the Prime Minister, has been distracted by conference after conference from his Parliamentary duties.³¹

What Buchan had hoped for as early as November of 1930 was the formation of a National Emergency Government composed of more than one party that could deal with the country's economic problems.³² He felt, and rightly so, that the nation was becoming increasingly sceptical about politics. The titles of Buchan's own magazine articles ("A Parliament Perplexed", "The Twilight of Parliament", "The Political Circus"), suggest his own disquiet over politics in Britain. He felt it necessary that a National Government be formed so that the citizen would be reassured that Parliament would govern in his interest and not serve merely as a playing-field for politicians. Buchan's hopes for a National Government were fulfilled in 1931 when Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Party was split when he accepted the task of heading a new Government. MacDonald was in many ways a lonely figure; he had lost almost all his Labour Party followers and was barely tolerated by most Conservatives. But Buchan saw in MacDonald a man of rare courage and conviction and he rallied to his side at the behest of an old friend, Stanley Baldwin. Buchan did what he could to sustain the Prime Minister's often flagging morale. He regularly met

MacDonald early in the morning for a walk in St. James' Park and then stayed for breakfast at No. 10 Downing Street. He would then remain to discuss political problems, help MacDonald organize his day, and assist in the editing of memoranda and speeches.

The two men had a great deal in common. They were, of course, both Scots and incurable romantics, delighted by English country life and high society. But the relationship was also something of a symbiotic one. Buchan enjoyed being at the centre of power and "in the know" and MacDonald benefited from Buchan's precise mind and his capacity for work. In fact MacDonald found Buchan's help so invaluable that he toyed with the idea of giving him a ministerial appointment without a department so that Buchan could act as his personal assistant, and help him re-organize the responsibilities of various ministers.³³ The appointment, however, was never made and in 1933 Buchan was appointed the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland where he acted as the King's representative. The appointment proved to be something of a dress rehearsal for Buchan's appointment in 1935 to the position of Governor General of Canada, where his five years of service removed him from the British political scene and effective comment on it.

Buchan's criticism of modern British political life was concerned with three problems: the general diminution of character and ability among the politicians of the nation, the disunity occasioned by excessive partisanship, and the fear that the organic society might be split by class antagonism. He believed that his society was showing signs of disintegrating and he believed it necessary to set aside disputes over

"inessentials" and concentrated on keeping at bay the forces of discord and anarchy.

If, however, Buchan was disenchanted by the state of domestic affairs, he was even less happy with the state of international affairs between the years 1900 and 1940. His book, The Half-Hearted published in 1900, not only announced his displeasure with British political life, but also revealed a profound and deep fin de siecle pessimism about the state of the world in general. In that novel Buchan seemed to be suggesting that western civilization was teetering on the point of collapse.

Look at Western Europe and you cannot disbelieve the evidence of your own eyes. In France you have anarchy, the vulgarest frivolity and the cheapest scepticism, joined with a sort of dull capacity for routine work. Germany, the very heart of it eaten out with sentiment, either the cheap military kind or the vague socialist brand. Spain and Italy shadows, Denmark and Sweden farces, Turkey a sinful anachronism.³⁴

In the book there is a sense of imminent and perhaps catastrophic change, for the world ". . . was on the eve of one of its cyclic changes and unrest seemed to make the air murky."³⁵ Buchan's attitude was not, however, unusual. Many European intellectuals reflected the same despair about the condition of Western civilization. Buchan was at this time particularly fearful of war with Russia. During the writing of The Half-Hearted in 1899, Curzon's Russia in Central Asia was a much discussed book and the British public's attention was focussed on the supposed Russian threat to India. In fact one of Buchan's first articles in the Spectator dealt with Russian imperialism.³⁶ In The Half-Hearted Buchan wrote of a projected plan on the part of Russians to sweep down on the Punjab and gain control of India. He, however, was soon to change his

views about which continental power was the real threat to England. The war mood that had been growing in Great Britain since the 1890's communicated itself to him and Buchan came to believe that war, most probably with Germany, was a certainty. If war were inevitable, he urged that Britain prepare herself. He supported Army reform and urged preparedness, claiming that he hoped "to see the day when drill and rifle-shooting will be made compulsory in all schools, and the foundation prepared by compulsory national training for voluntary national service. We all subscribe to Lord Haldane's idea of a 'nation in arms'."³⁷ Military preparedness did not mean only Army reform and military training; it also meant a psychological readiness to fight. "Limit the chances of strife as much as we may, and mitigate its atrocities, we must face its ultimate certainty; and the true way in which to ennoble war is not to declare it in all its forms the work of the devil, but to emphasize the spiritual and idealist element which it contains."³⁸

War, Buchan argued, was an inevitability that arose from the nature of states and any hope that it might be outlawed was foolish for

A State is not a moral personality in the same sense as the individual, and the man who denies this is ignorant of the first fact of politics. However amiable and highly civilized the component parts of a nation may be, the nation as a whole stands toward other nations as primitive man stood towards his fellows. There is no law sovereign between States, however we may disguise the fact, because there is no higher power capable of enforcing its mandates.³⁹

When war came in 1914, Buchan threw himself into the fray in whatever capacity his ill health would permit. He served as a war correspondent for the Times, as the author of Nelson's History of the War, as an Intelligence Officer, and as Director of the Department of

Information, an agency designed to co-ordinate British propaganda. He also managed to write two war novels, Greenmantle and Mr. Standfast, in which he vicariously got in his licks against the Germans. In these novels he portrayed bullet-headed, cruel, and ruthless Germans and sung the praises of the virtuous and brave British Tommy. He also attacked the pacifists and "half-baked intellectuals" on the home front. Such people had "a graft with every collection of cranks in England, and all the geese that cackle about the liberty of the individual when the Boche is ranging about to enslave the world."⁴⁰ However, by the close of the war Buchan's jingo tendencies had been curbed. He could not believe that the war had been unjust, wrong, or even foolish, but he was certain that its like must never happen again. He had seen the carnage of the Western Front and would never again be able to suggest that war possessed a "spiritual and idealist element." He had seen at first hand the horror of modern warfare and any romantic notions he might once have had about military glory had vanished. He now believed that the first task at hand was the creation of a peaceful and stable world. He was certain that Western civilization could never recover from another war of such magnitude. The young man who had written ". . . nothing of value can come into being without a struggle, and war is the colossal form of this dire necessity. . . ." ⁴¹ was now to make the point that ". . . war is a very blunt and blundering pruning hook, which lops off not dead wood but the best of the young growths. We must find an implement better fitted for the purpose or our garden will become a jungle."⁴²

Buchan, like Lenchard, a character in The Island of Sheep (1919), believed that ". . . the war had shown us, I think that we can't live

apart from the rest of the world."⁴³ The League of Nations as a "working union of all civilized peoples"⁴⁴ offered the only hope for peace and stability.

The arch-enemy Germany had been defeated but Buchan believed another had sprung up to take its place. Bolshevism was now the greatest threat to Western civilization. He felt that perhaps the League of Nations might act as a bulwark against Communism by offering an alternative to the internationalism of the Communists. For Buchan, the conservative, it was necessary that the principle of nationality be recognized, though he understood its excesses had to be tempered. But the Communist notions of class warfare and a classless state were so contrary to his own conception of the organic state that he felt compelled to warn others that

. . . some of the opposition to Germany came from people to whom the whole notion of nationality was repugnant. During the war we made a pet of the extreme German socialists who would divide the world horizontally by classes. Let us beware lest in opposing Germany's foolish exaggeration we denied a doctrine [nationalism] which lay at the root of civilization, and allied ourselves with civilization's arch enemies.⁴⁵

Buchan sincerely believed that Russia was the enemy of civilization. He might, on practical grounds, urge Britain's recognition of the U.S.S.R., but the Russian state, Communist and officially atheist, was the antithesis of Buchan's conservative and Christian ideals and he could declare with certainty ". . . that Russia does not belong to the comity of civilized nations. . . ." ⁴⁶

Buchan saw the role of the League of Nations as essentially that of a referee in international disputes. To avoid open conflict, it was to ". . . attempt to find a world machinery for preserving peace,

reducing armaments and settling inter-State difficulties by means of international tribunals."⁴⁷ Yet as time went on and the League showed its inability to stop aggression on the part of Japan, Italy, or Germany, Buchan grew sceptical. He clung to the hope that it might still prove of benefit if it were modified, but how it was to be modified he was unsure. He knew only that the old machinery did not work and what was wanted was ". . . a different international machinery from that of the League in its present form. . . ." ⁴⁸

By the Thirties Buchan was certain that there was another force to fear besides Communism. In A Prince of the Captivity he commented; "A disintegrated world lets loose strange forces which do not bother about the conventions."⁴⁹ In that novel Buchan portrayed one of those strange forces, the Nazis, under the fictional name The Iron Hand. He characterized them as the "gutter-blood" of Germany, violent nationalists and ex-soldiers, men who like the Communists hankered after short cuts.⁵⁰ Several years later in his biography of Augustus, Buchan paused in his narrative to comment in an oblique manner on the Italian Fascists. "Once again the crust of civilization has worn thin, and beneath can be heard the muttering of primeval fires. Once again many accepted principles of government have been overthrown, and the world has become a laboratory where immature and feverish minds experiment with unknown forces."⁵¹

As early as 1924, in The Three Hostages, Buchan had expressed dismay over the possibility of a charismatic figure rising to power. He would be a man who had the power to compel ". . . the limp things that men call their minds" The kind of man "who [had] no logical gaps

in his creed . . ." and who "within his insane postulates . . . is brilliantly sane."⁵² To Buchan, by the time of the writing of his autobiography in 1939, his prophecies had come true. The world had grown more and more insane and he saw people surrendering to anything or anyone who promised them security. They ". . . seemed to be eager to get rid of personal responsibility, and therefore in politics—and in religion if they had any—were inclined to extremes, and readily surrendered their souls to an ancient church or a new prophet, an International or a dictator."⁵³

Buchan believed that the root problem of the modern world was a moral one. The world was plagued by that moral torpor and purposelessness that he had attempted to delineate in The Half-Hearted. In his autobiography, Pilgrim's Way, Buchan had stated that his ". . . fear was not barbarism, which is civilization submerged or not yet born, but de-civilization, which is civilization gone rotten."⁵⁴ As early as 1900 he believed that British society was on the verge of lapsing into decadence. In speaking of Britain, Buchan wrote, "There is none of the blood and bone left for honest belief. You hold your religion half-heartedly. Honest fanaticism is a thing intolerable to you. You are all mild rational sentimentalists, and I would not give a ton of it for one ounce of good prejudice."⁵⁵

The problem with modern man was that he lacked any conviction; in a word, he was half-hearted. Buchan crudely attempted to portray this lack of inner strength in his novel The Half-Hearted. Buchan's friend, Raymond Asquith, the son of a future British Prime Minister, approved of the theme: "I don't think you could have chosen a better subject: half-

heartedness is really the most salient feature of the pleasanter sort of modern."⁵⁶

In the years between 1900 and 1940 Buchan railed at the half-heartedness that he saw about him and preached the old values of duty, responsibility, and self-sacrifice. As a moralist Buchan lacked any profundity, one commentator has suggested his moral propaganda smacked of the enthusiastic housemaster who urged cold baths and hard work.⁵⁷ Buchan saw in Spartan values and simple virtues an antidote for the cossetted, selfish life of modern man. He harped on the need for a return to older and simpler values. He believed that in many Britons there was an untouched core of real energy and strength, that there were still ". . . men who in all their spiritual sickness . . . have kept something of that restless, hard-bitten northern energy, and that fierce hunger for righteousness, which is hard to fight with."⁵⁸ That energy had to be nurtured and released for, to Buchan, it was the salvation of a nation whose citizens were sunk in selfishness and self-interest. This self-interest, Buchan felt, was often erroneously identified with freedom, and mindless rebellion was often viewed as something courageous. Englishmen, Buchan argued, must understand that, "Individual liberty is only possible if we regard it as limited by the higher demands of the Church or the nation."⁵⁹ All of history, Buchan maintained, had been ". . . an effort to make definitions, clear rules of thought, clear rules of conduct, solid sanctions, by which we can conduct our life."⁶⁰ Buchan's conservatism led him to believe that it was those old and well tried rules of conduct, manners, and morals that were valuable. But it was exactly the old Victorian morality that a new generation was jettisoning.

The wholesale rejection of old standards without anything to satisfactorily replace them meant, to Buchan, that society was without a firm foundation. Creevey in A Prince of the Captivity stated that, "Our malady to-day is disintegration. We are in danger of splitting into nebulae of whirling atoms. There is no cohesion in any of our beliefs and institutions, and what is worse, we have lost the desire for cohesion."⁶¹

Buchan knew the old morality, social conventions and art were dying, and he refused to accept the argument that what replaced them was valuable. He asked himself, "Is the new millennium to be like a Brighton hotel, all upholstery and rich cooking and a jazz band?"⁶² Would the new art be made by ". . . those rotten painters who splash colours before they learned to draw, and those rotten writers whose tricks disguise their emptiness . . .?"⁶³ And worst of all would Freudian psychology debase the conception of mankind to that of ". . . a herd of guzzling, lecherous little mammals . . .?"⁶⁴

The modern world had become inexplicable to Buchan. The new manner in art, changing social and moral standards were hailed by many as signalling a new age of freedom and wider perspectives. For Buchan they were a sign of a decaying civilization and the death of everything he held in esteem. In Britain he saw only class antagonism, cheap political huckstering, and a society without purpose or aims. Nowhere was there a Cromwell intent on making his country "a power for truth and righteousness in a chaotic world." Abroad there appeared to be only the danger of more strife and discord.

Buchan believed his nation had to have a great mission, a common

goal under which national differences might be subsumed. He also felt that some league or combination of nations might tend to arrest the decay he felt was becoming the salient feature of Western civilization. Buchan became, in part, a confirmed Imperialist because he thought Imperialism offered solutions or partial solutions to these problems. He became an adherent to the imperial idea because he felt it might be the salvation of his country and, in his more grandiose moments, the world.

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Chapter Three

WHITE MAN'S COUNTRY

By the turn of the century John Buchan appeared to have settled into a career as an author and barrister. However, in 1901 an article of Buchan's dealing with the Boer War raging in South Africa appeared in The Spectator and caught the eye of Alfred Milner, one of Great Britain's most eminent imperial administrators. Milner had had a distinguished career as a public servant. He had served as under-secretary of finance in Egypt (1890-92), as chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue (1892-97), and at the age of forty-three had been appointed High Commissioner to South Africa.¹ In 1901, with the end of the Boer War in sight, he was intent on recruiting able and intelligent young men to carry on the work of reconstruction in South Africa. Impressed with Buchan's article on the South African problem, Milner offered him a position as his Political Private Secretary. Buchan eagerly accepted. At a very early age John Buchan took on a job with a salary and responsibilities that most young men could only dream of. He was also to see for the first time one of Britain's overseas possessions.

His experience as an imperial administrator had a profound effect on Buchan. While a student at Oxford, he had been vaguely interested in Imperial questions but his short service with Milner, from 1901 to 1903, helped turn him into a zealous imperialist, as it did most of the young men Milner had gathered around him. These men came to be known as Milner's Kindergarten, a name given by their critics in derision of their

youth and inexperience. This small group of individuals bore the imprint of Milner's imperial thinking to the end of their days and spent their lives on the periphery of political life as proselytizers of Empire, regarded by their contemporaries as either eccentrics or seers.² Foremost among them were Lionel Curtis, Leopold Amery, Geoffery Dawson, and John Buchan.

John Buchan's service in South Africa deflected him from his career at the Bar and led him to believe that his proper career was that of an imperial administrator. On his return to England from South Africa he hoped to find a position in Egypt under Lord Cromer³ who, like Milner, had captured the British public's imagination as a great proconsul of Empire. But the position he hoped for never materialized and Buchan's fondest dream was crushed. If, however, he could not serve the Empire on its farthest frontiers, he found that he could preach the imperial idea on the home front in his articles and books.

In Buchan's mind there was a clear division in the British Empire between the white dominions, or what he described as "white man's country", and those areas in which non-white or subject races were ruled directly by the British. His greatest imperial dreams always centred on those lands which he thought had been decreed by Providence to serve as areas of settlement for people of British stock: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Kenya, and Rhodesia. It was this part of the Empire to which he most often turned his attention and which he believed was at the very heart of the British imperial vision.

Buchan claimed that there were two great modern speculative creeds, imperialism and socialism.⁴ Buchan was an idealist and it seemed

to him that these two creeds, and these creeds alone, suggested the means of bettering men and the world in which they lived. Given his conservative political philosophy, he rejected socialism and invested all his idealism, imagination, and hope in the imperial idea. He came to believe that imperialism would help relieve domestic unrest by offering the poor but industrious workman the chance of settling in new lands, that it would elevate the level of political discussion, and dispel political divisions at home. He hoped that imperialism might act as a force to promote international peace and, above all, raise the moral tone and alleviate the selfishness of a Great Britain sinking into apathy and physical and spiritual degeneration. In fact imperialism seemed to suggest that "plenary salvation" which Buchan despised others for seeking in their own differing creeds.

In 1903 John Buchan entered the debate on imperial questions with the publication of his book The African Colony. The book was a hodge podge of chapters on the history, politics, and scenery of South Africa, but in a rambling and discursive manner Buchan managed to discuss many of the problems which preoccupied imperialists at the time of its writing.

Foremost among these questions was the problem of Imperial Federation. In 1903 the hope of Buchan and his imperialist friends was the creation of a council and executive common to the whole Empire, the same scheme that had been in the mind of Joseph Chamberlain at the Imperial Conference of 1902.⁵ For this and other reasons imperialists were interested in urging a federation of South Africa.⁶ On one level they believed that the federation of South Africa would assure the economic prosperity of the region and help introduce a British influence

that would leaven the particularism of the Boers. They also believed that the federation of South Africa, if once achieved, might be used as a signpost to guide the whole imperial unity movement in Britain.⁷ They argued that if Briton and Boer, peoples with differing languages and culture and who had been lately at war with one another could be brought together in a federation the possibility of Imperial Federation would have to be admitted by the Dominions. However, in 1903 Buchan realized that the federation of South Africa was a thing of the future and Imperial Federation little more than a sanguine hope.

The task at hand was to prepare the ground for federalism in South Africa. He argued then, as he was to argue later in his biographies, that the first step was to provide war torn South Africa with some measure of stability. That might be done by encouraging South Africa's innate conservatism. Buchan argued that ". . . the groundwork of conservatism already exists. We have a plutocracy and a landed aristocracy. We have also in the legal element a class, in its South African form, peculiarly tenacious of the letter of the law. We have an established kirk in all but name, and a racial tradition of resistance to novelty."⁸

He also thought it wise to point out that a liberal extension of the franchise such as had occurred in England might not be a good policy. Perhaps South Africa could learn from Great Britain's blunders.

The lower type of European and the back-veld Dutchman have in their present state no equitable right to the decision, which the franchise gives, on matters which they are unable to come within a measurable distance of understanding. The fact that the fool may have a vote at home is no reason for exalting him to the same level in a country which is not handicapped by a constitutional theory.⁹

If South Africa were assured of a measure of stability Buchan

believed that rapprochement between the British and Boers might be brought about. In fact he hoped that a new nation might arise in southern Africa that would amalgamate the best of both cultures. The new nation would in the course of time adopt

. . . English principles but not English institutions, since while principles are grafts from human needs, institutions are the incrustated masses of time which do not bear transplanting . . . any attempt to tend such alien plants will be a waste of money and time. South Africa will create her nurseries, and on very different lines.¹⁰

Buchan's phrase "English principles" was purposefully vague. He meant to suggest to his readers those virtues that they believed were singularly British: a sense of justice and "fair play", moderation and common sense. The Boers would contribute to the new nation the pioneer spirit, hardiness, and tenacity of purpose which made them ". . . a force so masterful, persistent and sure."¹¹ And these qualities carefully directed and husbanded by Britain with the co-operation of South Africa's productive classes—farmers, miners, and manufacturers, would create a prosperous new nation linked by self-interest and loyalty to the British crown.

Although Buchan's purpose in writing The African Colony was, in part, to further the cause of Imperial Federation and an Empire governed by a common executive, he nevertheless demonstrated heretical tendencies even as he wrote.

The only approach to a dogma is the theory that to colonise is to decentralize—that before a vigorous life can begin overseas the runners must be cut which bind the colony to the homeland. France fails, we say, because a Frenchman away from home cannot keep his mind off the boulevards; he is forever an exile not a settler. Britain succeeds because her sons find a land of their adoption. But the converse is equally important, though too rare in its application to be often remembered.

No race can colonise which cannot decentralize its energy; but equally no race can colonise which can wholly decentralize its sentiment and memory.¹²

At the time Buchan apparently did not note the contradiction inherent in advocating the decentralization of the Empire while urging a Federation which would exercise executive powers. What he was interested in emphasizing was the importance of those two intangibles, "sentiment and memory". In time Buchan would come to believe that they were stronger forces for imperial unity than any constitution or institution. He would come to believe that a spiritual unity would develop among the Dominions fostered by their common heritage, culture, and political principles. In fact, Buchan could write as early as 1903 with unruffled aplomb that, "Wars of separation may come, but a colony is still a colony: it may have a different colour on the map, but its moral complexion is the same; politically it may be a rival; spiritually it remains a daughter."¹³

Shortly after his first venture as a publicist for imperialism, Buchan joined the Compatriots, a group founded early in 1904. Edwardian England produced many small circles which united men of the political and intellectual world intent on influencing national policy. The Compatriots were such a group. Founded by a former Kindergarten member, Leo Amery, it included many important journalists of the day: Halford MacKinder, J. L. Garvin, H. A. Gwynne, F. S. Oliver, and Buchan, all of whom were intent on seeing that Joseph Chamberlain's campaign for tariff protection did not overshadow the imperial aspect of his policies. Buchan, however, never had been interested in being identified with a sect or party and soon left because he was, at heart, a free trader.¹⁴ By this time he had

become something of a renegade in imperialist circles, opposing Chamberlain's tariff policies and moving away from the idea of binding the Dominions together with an Imperial Parliament or any other body that would exercise executive functions. This was not a surprising development because his conservative ideas were increasingly coming to the fore. Always distrustful of any attempt to rationally construct a machinery of government, he was willing to wait for an Empire that would be a product of time and the needs of men—his description of an organic society.

In 1905 Buchan set himself the task of writing a book which would restate or modify some of the opinions he had presented in The African Colony. The book, A Lodge in the Wilderness, would attempt a definition of imperialism, demonstrate the benefits of that movement, and chart the course the Empire should steer in the coming years. Buchan's method of exposition was to write a novel, but hardly a novel in the commonly accepted sense. It was really an extended discussion of imperial questions in which the participants were the thinly disguised counterparts of living people. For its initial readers one of the most exciting aspects of the book was identifying the characters.¹⁵ For instance, the novel's Mr. Carey was based on Cecil Rhodes; Launceston derived from Milner; Lowenstein from Alfred Beit, the South African millionaire; and Lord Appin was a composite of Rosebery and Balfour.¹⁶ A host of other characters were modelled on now forgotten figures who were interested in imperial matters. The only character who appears to have had no real-life counterpart was Wakefield, the Canadian statesman. Instead he was to depict what Buchan understood to be the position of Dominion

politicians.

In A Lodge in the Wilderness Buchan attempted to present what he felt was the best of contemporary thought on the subject of Imperialism. His group of characters was brought together in a hunting lodge in South Africa for a prolonged discussion of Imperialism. Buchan's fictional characters presented the cases of their originals; ideas with which Buchan agreed were cogently and resourcefully argued, those with which he disagreed were weakly presented and were refuted in subsequent discussion. In this manner, and by interjecting his ideas, Buchan presented his own unsystematized view of what was meant by Imperialism and what course of action imperialists should pursue in the immediate future.

One of Buchan's first tasks in A Lodge in the Wilderness was to arrive at a definition of the British Empire and Imperialism. Wakefield, the Canadian statesman, offered his pragmatic and earth bound definition. "I define Imperialism as the closer organic connection under one Crown of a number of autonomous nations of the same blood, who can spare something of their vitality for the administration of vast tracts inhabited by lower races—a racial aristocracy considered in their relation to the subject peoples, a democracy in their relation to each other."¹⁷ The Empire had to be viewed ". . . not as England plus a number of poor relations, but as one organic whole, whose centre is to be determined by the evidence of time."¹⁸ In fact Wakefield suggested that the Imperial centre might come to reside in Canada, a suggestion with which Buchan did not disagree. "In time to come the centre of gravity will change according to natural economic laws. If electricity should replace coal as the motive force of

the future, a country such as Canada, with her immense water-power, will be far better endowed by nature than England."¹⁹ Although Buchan certainly did not think it likely that the Imperial centre would shift from London in the near future, he was willing to countenance the hypothesis that it might.

To recognize in principle the autonomy and equality of the Dominions within the Empire was, however, not enough. Such a bloodless description did not begin to suggest the very spirit of Imperialism or the Empire. Buchan's romantic temperament demanded of Imperialism more than that. The artistic Mrs. Deloraine of A Lodge in the Wilderness spoke for Buchan when she described Imperialism as ". . . a key to life, an ideal which will leave out nothing and satisfy the hunger in our heart."²⁰ Her description was couched in the language of faith, and Buchan's conception of Imperialism can best be understood in such terms. For Buchan believed wholeheartedly and without reservation that Imperialism could provide the cure for the ills that beset Britain and the world. Imperialism was ". . . a conscious attempt to redeem the tragedy of our civilization not by any violent cataclysm but by using those means which are ready at hand. In Canning's phrase, we must call in the new world to redress the balance of the old."²¹

Imperialism, Buchan felt, could insure the survival of Britain as a Great Power and, most important, help solve many of the economic, political, and social problems that plagued Britain. He believed that England had always stood in the world as a pillar of truth, righteousness, and justice. But to continue to be an arbiter of international relations she had to exercise power; for in the final analysis perhaps only sheer,

naked power could preserve British influence for good. In Buchan's thinking then, the new world was indeed to be brought in "to redress the balance of the old." As Carey (Rhodes) explained, "Imperialism is not capitalism, but it is akin to it in method. The capitalist makes his fortune by recognizing the value of combination and the wisdom of earning profits over the largest area possible. Imperialism depends likewise upon a form of combination. Both believe that Providence is on the side of the bigger social battalions."²²

If Buchan was willing to rest the final appeal on naked power, he also tried to suggest that Imperialism was really the handmaiden of peace. "I say that Imperialism, sanely considered, is the best guardian of peace. Its aim is not conquest but consolidation and development, and its task within its own borders is so great that it has little inducement to meddle with its neighbours."²³

Writing in 1906 Buchan seemed to have forgotten the tension created in Europe by the scramble for Africa and other late Nineteenth century colonial adventures. And he seems to have totally dismissed the wider ramifications of a "colonial" war such as the Boer War. But the characters of his novel, the elite of English society, moving through the lodge in the wilderness with its Livres china, paintings, and expensive bric-a-brac never once mentioned the fact that Great Britain had any imperial rivals, or that imperial rivalry had and could create nasty situations. Their self-assurance would not admit any suggestion that the Imperial experiment might have its dangers.

But if Buchan was interested in "bigger social battalions" and the romance of "consolidation and development" he also wished to make it

clear that that was not the sum of imperial aspirations. As Launceston (Milner) stated, "Too often these Imperial visions have a Byzantine colouring. They dwell on size and numbers and wealth, but not enough upon the new life which is bound up in them."²⁴ It was this new life the areas of white settlement offered that appealed to Buchan. Those were lands ". . . not only capable of sustaining life, but fit for the amenities of life and the nursery of a nation."²⁵ The vision of new nations of British stock springing up on the face of the globe fascinated Buchan, for he felt that these new nations could retain the best of the British tradition and discard the worst.

The Empire meant not only a "new life" abroad for Britons, but also a new life at home. Buchan believed that the newly acquired lands overseas would relieve congestion in England by state supervised emigration within the Empire. Such emigration would provide the Dominions with the labour they needed so desperately and ease unemployment in England. The removal of discontented workers would also tend to ease the class antagonism which was becoming a feature of English political and social life. It would offer the worker a new, happier and healthier life, while assuring that he remained a British subject and thus a member of the larger "social battalions".

Buchan believed that in every sphere of life in England the Empire could prove its beneficent effects. It could, for instance, help ameliorate party rivalry. In A Lodge in the Wilderness Carey (Rhodes) unequivocally states that, "The Empire must be accepted, like the Monarchy, as a presupposition in politics which is beyond question. Any inclination to use it for party ends should be zealously condemned as the occasional

attempts to drag the King's name into current controversies or to assume that patriotism is the monopoly of one side."²⁶ Buchan believed that the Empire, like the monarchy, might become yet another potent symbol that would bind the nation together and help alleviate the gratuitous strife that he saw as the predominant characteristic of party politics.

Buchan, the conservative, also hoped that the Imperial creed might rejuvenate a moribund Toryism. For, as one of the characters in A Lodge in the Wilderness states, Imperialism is ". . . simply Toryism under a new name—the Toryism of our great men, Bolingbroke, Pitt, Canning, Disraeli Toryism has always held by the instincts and traditions of the people and when our island became an empire it became naturally Imperialism."²⁷ Imperialism, Buchan suggested, was consonant with the best of Tory traditions. If supported and defended by conservatives, Imperialism, with all its glamour and romance, would draw people to its banner and in turn to the banner of conservatism.

The Imperial idea also sparked the individual to perform great deeds and the Empire gave him scope for action. The individual in turn, by his example, invigorated and uplifted the entire nation, something which a Great Britain sinking into apathy and effeminacy was in need of badly. In discussing General Charles Gordon, the martyr of the fall of Khartoum, Buchan wrote, "His failure and the manner of it were worth a dozen successful wars and a whole regiment of impeccable statesmen. It put new faith into the race and screwed us up for another century."²⁸ Wakefield, the Canadian statesman, had been hesitant to accept the idea of a man of destiny, but by the end of the book he was willing to admit the worth of men like Gordon. He said,

I objected to the 'man of destiny'. I withdraw that objection now. The thing may be undemocratic, illiberal, and reactionary. I do not care a penny whistle if it is. It is the only power which can plant civilisation in the wilds. . . . Our democracy is excellent in its way, but it can't do that sort of thing—you want the individual with his heart on fire to start the ball.²⁹

To Buchan the Imperial idea was identified with vigour and purposefulness—the very antithesis of the malaise he felt was in possession of England and its people.

Buchan also believed that Imperial sentiment and feeling would find expression in the development of new art. He hoped for an outburst of vitality in literature comparable to that of the Elizabethan Age. The youthful Dominions and their citizens would help demolish the old, rigid forms of artistic expression in Great Britain, and "What is lost . . . in Art which is colonial, and therefore provincial, may be recovered in Art which is imperial."³⁰

Buchan predicted a glowing picture of what the Empire might accomplish, but all his predictions were predicated on the assumptions of a real and lasting unity among all the white peoples of the Empire. Questions of emigration, defence, and imperial political solidarity were all contingent on an Empire which worked in concert. By this time Buchan had come to see Imperial Federation as a real threat to an Empire acting in concert. If federation were forced on the Dominions or hurriedly implemented the effects could be disastrous. "Any rigid scheme of federation applied prematurely will either be inoperative, and so bring the ideal into discredit, or it will curb and choke the life and produce monstrosity instead of growth."³¹ Buchan was interested in unified action on the part of the Dominions and Great Britain, but unified action

suggested a partnership freely entered into. There could never be so much as a hint of coercion on Britain's part. A federal structure, Imperial parliaments, or institutions of any kind were not the sole considerations. They would be inoperative and valueless if not accompanied by the proper feelings of co-operation. Real imperial unity meant common attitudes, beliefs, and goals shared by all the white men of the Empire. It was the imperialist's duty to emphasize what was shared and help men recognize their commonalty. In time, Buchan believed the citizens of the white Empire would recognize their interests as one and act accordingly.

A Lodge in the Wilderness proved to be the basis of all Buchan's later imperial thinking. It suggested a vista of limitless possibilities. The Empire could solve many of Britain's domestic problems and act as a force for world peace. The idea of Imperial Federation was refuted and replaced by the less tangible concept of a slowly evolving organism based on a common heritage and ideals. Almost all of Buchan's later writings focussing on Imperial matters dealt with these themes. Although the emphasis on certain aspects of his Imperial thinking was altered to fit new situations or developments, it nevertheless remained constant in spirit.

In the years 1907 and 1908 Buchan, as editor of the Scottish Review, devoted a great deal of that paper's space to a discussion of the relationship between the Dominions and Great Britain. While he had urged in A Lodge in the Wilderness that the Dominions develop into autonomous nations within the Empire, he had some reservations about whether in reality they were ready to be immediately granted such status.

His was an ambivalent attitude. He was placed in the unenviable position of urging that the Dominions be allowed to grow towards an independence that would make them allies and not subservient states, while often feeling that they were not quite ready for many of the steps that they seemed to be contemplating. Buchan wished for an adjustment of centrifugal and centripetal forces within the Empire but he was well aware that to arrive at such a balance was difficult. In commenting on the Imperial Conference of 1907, Buchan applauded Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman ". . . who in his opening address and subsequent speeches made it clear that the Conference was one between Governments which ranked equally as autonomous states.

. . ." ³² Buchan then went on to claim that the Empire was ". . . more than a mere alliance—it is a family partnership and a working partnership." ³³ A year later Buchan attempted to define what he felt were the limitations on the powers of the Dominions. He wrote,

The objections against giving any State within the Empire the treaty-making power in the full sense of the word are obvious and insuperable. A treaty can only be made by a sovereign State which can bring forward as a sanction all the might of its armed forces. The breach of a treaty made with Britain involves war with the British Empire. The breach of a Canadian treaty would only involve a quarrel with Canada, and Canada has no navy and only a militia for an army. Unless a State has armed forces on the scale of a Great Power, it cannot treat on the level of a Great Power. ³⁴

He also argued that Britain had the right to interfere in a Dominion's internal affairs. Discussing relations between blacks and whites in South Africa, Buchan felt it was the prerogative of Great Britain to interfere to assure the protection of the natives, suggesting, "We should be very far

from saying that in no case should the Imperial Government interfere with the action of an autonomous state."³⁵ The Dominions, however, would not be content with such a limited status in the years ahead.

However, by 1909 another group of intellectuals followed in the steps of the Compatriots in gathering together to explore Imperial questions, principally the question of Imperial Federation. This group known as the Round Table movement, was founded by Lionel Curtis, another ex-member of Milner's Kindergarten. At its inception the Round Table was chiefly interested in defining the powers of the Dominions within the Empire, and in 1909 members of the group travelled to Canada and talked with leading Canadians about the Dominion's present and future status within the Empire. For most Canadians at that time such questions appeared merely academic,³⁶ as they did to Buchan who never joined the movement.³⁷

Curtis at this time believed that the Dominions had to be encouraged to think of themselves as separate states and then be persuaded of the advantages of a federal union.³⁸ Buchan, though an equally fervent imperialist, believed that a union was likely to prove entirely unworkable and opted for some loose form of co-operation on defence and other matters between the Dominions and Great Britain. In reality Buchan was advocating a system much akin to that of the European alliances, but an alliance which was strengthened by the member states' common interests and culture. To ensure that these intangible bonds of culture were strengthened he urged the Dominions and Great Britain to adopt a common educational policy, arguing that, "An empire organized educationally on one system is in the deepest sense united. It is one in spirit, and agreement in

specific policies will inevitably follow."³⁹

Within a very few years Buchan was to feel that his belief that the Dominions and Britain were spiritually united had been confirmed. The outbreak of the First World War saw the Dominions rally to the side of Great Britain and give their support to the war cause. In the Preface to a later edition of A Lodge in the Wilderness issued in 1916, Buchan exulted, "We understand, as we have never understood before, that our Empire is a mystic whole which no enemy may part asunder, and our wisest minds are now given to the task of devising a mechanism of union adequate to the spiritual unity."⁴⁰ The "mechanism of union" which Buchan wished to see was a continuation, after the war, of Imperial Conferences and a closer co-operation in matters of trade, defence, education, and foreign policy. However, the First World War with its terrible losses of men and material left everyone shaken and disillusioned, and none more so than imperialists. Public reaction to the war resulted in an attack on imperialists, whom many Britons saw, at least in part, as responsible for the war. In The Island of Sheep (1919), written in the immediate aftermath of the war and the resulting recrimination, Buchan attempted to defend the imperialists' position. Buchan's case was argued by Lenchard, the fictional imperialist of that book.

Well, then, I wanted the Empire for three reasons. One was its economic value. These islands were over-industrialized, and to give our people a wholesome life we needed more space. A second was its moral value. The duties of Empire brought fresh air into our politics, and gave our young men a richer field of service. Thirdly, I wanted it as a safeguard of peace. The hope of peace, to-day as in the Middle Ages, lies in a community of law, interests and culture over the biggest possible area. We could not restore right away the unity of Christendom, but the British Empire was the first installment.⁴¹

Lenchard, like Buchan, now believed, "We have to orientate the parish pump with a wider world. I used to think that the Empire was enough for the purpose, but now I see that we want nothing short of humanity at large."⁴² And he concluded, "I believe in a League of Nations on the same grounds as I believed in Imperialism."⁴³

War and all its attendant horrors had forced Buchan to shift his position. He did not, or could not, admit that perhaps Imperialism had in some small measure hastened the European conflict. Instead, he refurbished his old argument that Imperialism was a force for peace and international order. This was not hypocrisy on Buchan's part; the war had merely changed his perspective. He now believed that any organization which enlarged men's sense of community, whether the Empire or the League of Nations, was justified. The war had almost smashed Western civilization. Now the time had come to support any organization which emphasized man's commonalty and which could be a force to maintain stability in a world gone mad. Buchan believed that the League of Nations and the British Empire both existed for those purposes.

In the years following World War I Buchan gave less of his attention to imperial matters. The African Colony, A Lodge in the Wilderness, and The Island of Sheep had defined his position on most questions, and a flourishing career as author, businessman and parliamentarian left him little time for speculation. But he did not cease to comment, criticize or applaud imperial developments. In 1924 Buchan published Lord Minto: A Memoir, a study of one of the British Empire's great proconsuls. The book charted the career of a man who had served both as Governor General of Canada and Viceroy of India. In commenting

on Minto's career Buchan, with hindsight, could commend himself in commending Minto. He wrote

It is no disparagement of the idealists who from the nineties on have preached organic imperial union to say that they misjudged the course of events, for their ideals, even if unrealized and unrealizable, have had a potent influence on political thought; but it was those who, like Minto, looked forward to alliance instead of federation, to executive co-operation rather than a legislative partnership who judged most shrewdly the trend of Empire development.⁴⁴

If Buchan felt that there were reasons for congratulating Minto on his perspicacity, and indirectly himself, all was not quite as it should be. He could understand why French Canadians had not kindled ". . . to the racial mysticism of the imperial creed . . .,"⁴⁵ but those imperial feelings which should have been engendered in English Canadians by a language, heritage, and culture which they shared with Britons did not appear to be in evidence in Canada to the degree Buchan hoped. Canada's participation in the Boer War, which Buchan at the time had felt was a striking manifestation of imperial solidarity, now appeared to have been a backward step in the march toward imperial unity. Buchan wrote, "Indeed looking back after the lapse of a quarter of a century, it may be argued that Canada's participation in the South African War was a movement retrograde in its results. It tended to increase her particularism and foster a baseless sense of security."⁴⁶

But if Canada's particularism had been accentuated by her participation in the Boer War, the First World War only hastened that trend. The years after 1924 were to demonstrate even more clearly the gradual erosion of imperial feeling in the Dominions. Buchan, who perhaps more than any other publicist of Empire had been sympathetic and sensitive to national feeling on the part of the Dominions, had hoped that national

patriotism would not preclude Imperial patriotism. As time progressed, however, that did not appear to be the case. Although the Dominions were evolving into autonomous sister states as Buchan had suggested they must, there was no evidence that there had been a corresponding increase in Imperialistic sentiment. In fact the reverse seemed to be true. Buchan could honestly applaud the Balfour Report of 1926 which offered the classic definition of the Dominions as political entities. ". . . they are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, although united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."⁴⁷ After all, the Balfour Report and its formalization in the Statute of Westminster were merely the culmination of what Buchan had been suggesting since 1906 was the natural course of events. It was, however, all too evident that the Dominions and Great Britain, now styled a Commonwealth, would not necessarily, or perhaps even likely, act in the concerted way Buchan anticipated.

It was some four years subsequent to the enactment of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, that Buchan was appointed Governor General of Canada and raised to the peerage as Lord Tweedsmuir. What would appear to have been the crowning achievement of his years spent as an advocate of Imperial unity did not, however, greatly excite Buchan. He was not particularly interested in a quasi-royal position in which he would be a mere figurehead. He nevertheless felt it his duty to accept the position. The years spent as Governor General of Canada (1935 to 1940) were not particularly satisfying for him. Nor was his relationship with Prime

Minister Mackenzie King always an easy one; the personalities of the two men prevented them from being comfortable in one another's company.

Although Buchan believed King to be a remarkably able politician and the only man capable of providing Canada with a stable government in the difficult years of the Depression,⁴⁸ he found King's personal idiosyncrasies distasteful. King's cult of his mother, the ruins at his

country home in Kingsmere and his wish to have Buchan address him as "Rex", the nickname used by intimate friends, all seemed absurd to Buchan.⁴⁹ But what Buchan found most irksome was being bridled as

Governor General, of not being able to speak his mind on any question he chose. On 3 September, 1936, Buchan addressed the Alberta Military Institute on the controversial topic of defence. He stated at that time that, "No country is safe from danger. No country can be isolated.

Canada has to think out a policy of defence and take steps to implement it."⁵⁰ Defence, always a touchy subject in Canada, certainly was not an

appropriate subject for a Governor General and King justifiably reprimanded Buchan.⁵¹ What had been to Buchan merely a platitude appeared to King a direct attack on Government policy. Buchan had no wish to attack the King Government, but his years as a journalist and speechmaker had accustomed him to speaking his mind and he found it difficult to restrict himself to what he described as "Governor-Generalities".

In 1937 Buchan delivered another address before the Canadian Institute of International Affairs entitled "Canada's Outlook on the World" in which he said of Canada

She is a sovereign nation and cannot take her attitude to the world docilely from the United States, or from anybody else. A Canadian's first loyalty is not to the British

Commonwealth of Nations, but to Canada and Canada's King, and those who deny this are doing to my mind, a great disservice to the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth, in a crisis, is to speak with one voice it will be only because the component parts have thought out for themselves their own special problems, and made their contribution to the discussion, so that a true common factor of policy can be reached.⁵²

The sentence which suggested that Canadians' first loyalty was to Canada caused a minor furor in the Dominion. Some felt that the speech suggested a weakening of Commonwealth ties, and a Conservative ex-Minister raised the question in Parliament. The Montreal newspaper, Le Devoir, was however, frankly delighted and the sentences were carried in the top left hand corner of the front page for several years.⁵³ Buchan's statement was not, however, out of character. It was merely a modification of the policy he had been advocating since 1906. If Canadians recognized their own self-interest they would realize that it coincided with the Empire's interest. Buchan also invited Canadians to shoulder some of the burdens of Imperialism and urged the graduating class of the University of Manitoba to enter the British Colonial Service and the Indian Civil Service, saying "that Service is as much the right of Canada as it is of Britain."⁵⁴ He still believed that Canadians had two undivided loyalties, one to their country and one to their Empire.

Buchan died in office in 1940. For four decades he had devoted himself to the role of Imperial advocate. In his last years, however, he came to realize that the Imperial idea had lost its lustre. Buchan claimed, "The doctrine remains, but it has passed into the light of common day. It is now a business policy, no longer an aspiration. The first fine rapture of it has gone, and it cannot appeal to the youth of to-day as it appealed to those of my generation, to whom it seemed a new

and wonderful thing."⁵⁵ He was understandably disenchanted, for he had hoped for a great deal from the imperial experiment. Unfortunately Britain's political divisions had not been mended by the possession of an Empire, nor had Britons wholeheartedly accepted the Imperial idea. Domestic difficulties remained unresolved and by the time of his death his hopes for peace had been destroyed by the outbreak of World War II. Buchan may have felt some small satisfaction that the Empire had evolved into a Commonwealth as he had predicted it would. However, the Commonwealth, though joined together against a common foe, had in the pre-war years showed no propensity to act in concert.

Buchan, however, was not totally disillusioned. In Mountain Meadow, written shortly before his death Buchan could still find some solace in the thought, that although the Commonwealth might have ". . . too few folk, and those scattered over big spaces . . . they're all organically connected like apples on a tree."⁵⁶ For Buchan the Imperial idea was not yet dead.

Footnotes to Chapter Three

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Chapter Four

THE SUBJECT EMPIRE

John Buchan saw the British Empire as clearly and quite likely irrevocably divided into two distinct geographical and spiritual entities. Most of Buchan's concern was centered on the Dominions and those areas in which there was a large proportion of white settlers. His central preoccupation always remained the creation of a far-flung, spiritually united commonwealth of white English speaking peoples. In such a union non-white peoples figured hardly at all. In A Lodge in the Wilderness Buchan wrote, "The Tropics will always be a bar to a type of union which belongs essentially to white men and the temperate zones."¹ But the mass of the Empire's lands and peoples fell, by definition, outside the pale. Buchan, however, as a theorist of Empire, could not totally disregard those peoples and lands subject to the British crown and they entered into his literary discussions of imperialism.

For many imperialists, such as Lord Curzon, possession of an Empire in the exotic East and all the pomp and majesty that such possession entailed was something to glory in. Such feelings and sentiments held almost no appeal for Buchan. This was probably due to the fact that Buchan had almost no contact (except for his short stay in Africa) with the non-white regions of the Empire and little opportunity to fall under the romantic spell of strange lands and peoples. In fact, Buchan at times demonstrated a mild aversion to the more histrionic and colourful of those imperialists who had been captivated by India and other regions of

Britain's eastern Empire. In writing of Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India and engineer of the spectacular Durbar held in India to commemorate the accession of Edward VII to the throne, Buchan wryly commented, "On the long view it may fairly be said that Lord Curzon had provided in India a diet which, though wholesome in quality, was too large in quantity for a normal digestion."²

Buchan considered that his approach to the subject races was a no-nonsense one. The non-white peoples could never really be expected to enter into the larger community of culture, common political institutions, and ideas of Britain and her Dominions. They were, almost certainly, incapable of doing so. There was nothing unusual in Buchan's attitude; he simply expressed the very common assumptions of racial superiority that were prevalent in his time.³ To him it was simply ludicrous to assume that the non-white races, particularly black Africans, were likely to achieve the moral and intellectual level which would allow them to be admitted as equal partners in the Empire. And he made it a point to draw this fact to his readers' attention.

Strangely enough, given his scanty associations with the non-white races, Buchan was considered by some of his contemporaries as an expert on race. Lord Cromer in preparing his study Ancient and Modern Imperialism solicited Buchan's opinion on why race prejudice was so strong in northern peoples. Buchan in replying to Cromer stated that such prejudice was a relatively recent phenomenon. He pointed out that in the Middle Ages it had been the Viking's dream to marry ". . . the Sophy of Egypt's daughter."⁴ Buchan was inclined to think that the origin of race prejudice could be traced to the institution of slavery which had

conferred on the black a social stigma. He did not think that race prejudice was inherent in northern peoples, citing the fact that he had seen newly arrived Tommies in South Africa walking arm in arm with Kaffirs. He believed that the Negro, when seen only occasionally, struck the casual observer as "romantic and strange"⁵ but seen every day, perhaps in one's household as a servant, he became instead "uncanny and repulsive".⁶ In other words, close contact with the black led one to recognize his deficiencies—familiarity did indeed breed contempt.

In his books Buchan was intent on making clear to his readers the spiritual and intellectual deficiencies of the black, and demonstrating the gulf that separated the black man from the white. Buchan described the black as

. . . . crude and naive as a child, with a child's curiosity and ingenuity, and a child's practical inconsequence. Morally he has none of the traditions of self-discipline and order, which are implicit, though often in a degraded form in white people. In a word, he cannot be depended upon as an individual save under fairly vigilant restraint; and in the mass he forms an unknown quantity compared with which a Paris mob is a Quaker meeting.⁷

Buchan argued that the difficulty in granting the black an equal status with the white was due to a difference of mind which might never be bridged. Buchan wrote that between the black ". . . mind at its highest and ours at its lowest there is a great gulf fixed, which is not to be crossed by taking thought At bottom, and for obvious reasons, the native mind is grossly materialistic. The higher virtues and what we call 'spirituality' are radically unintelligible to it, though it may learn to claim them and talk their jargon."⁸

By describing the blacks' mental and moral characteristics,

Buchan was preparing a justification for the steps he thought had to be taken to successfully rule them. His characterization of the black as childish, unstable, capable of gratuitous violence and devoid of any type of spirituality was the norm for the age. Popular writers of the Nineteenth century all portrayed this image of the black African in their best-selling fictions. It was a stereotype that was accepted as accurate and true by the vast majority of Buchan's contemporaries at the turn of the century.

Buchan maintained that to rule a people so capricious it was necessary to remain aloof, assert one's authority and under no circumstances ever mingle with them. He felt that the English might learn a few instructive lessons from the mistakes of the older Portuguese Empire in Africa. They, he believed, had attempted to adapt themselves to the way of the conquered and, "The white man's pride died in their hearts."⁹ They had also cohabitted with native women and their offspring, nominally Portuguese, had not retained the virility of thought and action that characterized the white man. Buchan illustrated this point with an appeal to a rather vague social Darwinism. He wrote of the Portuguese in Africa, "And since Nature to the end of time has a care of races but not of hybrids, this tolerant, foolish, unstable folk dropped out of the battle-line of life, and sank from conquerors to resident aliens, while their country passed from an empire to a vague seaboard."¹⁰ The ruling race had to keep itself racially pure and above social and cultural intercourse with the black. The first condition of successful management of subject races was that the rulers must never "go native"—the prestige of the white man had to be preserved at all costs.

But if the ruler was to be aloof, he must also be able and well trained. Buchan believed that the only justification for a British presence in Africa, or anywhere else for that matter, was contingent on their ability to provide a better government than the native could provide for himself. To further the aim of better government and administration in tropical Africa Buchan advocated that

. . . a boy who goes into the civil service in England would under my scheme go out automatically in five years to a minor post in some dependency, and return after some years of service to a higher post at home. By this means our governors and our permanent secretaries would be of the same class, with the same training, each sympathizing with and understanding the other's work. There would be some kind of solidarity in imperial administration, and when the wheels go smoothly they go faster and farther.¹¹

But if the bureaucracy were to be streamlined and bureaucrats made aware of the problems of their counterparts in the colonies and at home, it was also necessary to insure that the civil servant sent abroad was trained to meet all the challenges he would have to face in the farthest reaches of the Empire. Buchan wrote

. . . we must take steps to give our people the best possible training for the work they are going to do. I want to see imperial colleges established where young men will be taught tropical medicine, and surveying, and natural history and ethnology, where in a word, the long experience of the Empire will be concentrated into precepts.¹²

Buchan wholeheartedly subscribed to the concept which has come to be commonly called the "white man's burden". He felt it incumbent on Europeans, particularly the British, to take up the task of "civilizing" and materially bettering the condition of the subject peoples. His program, if it might be so described, was simple. He was intent on slowly attempting to raise the non-white races to what he considered was

an acceptable moral and intellectual level. Given the natives' peculiarities of mind he was not sure that this could be done; the native might not prove to be equal to the challenge, but the experiment had to be attempted.

If we patiently and skillfully bring to bear upon the black man the solvent and formative influences of civilization, one of two things must happen. Either the native will prove himself worthy of an equal share in the body politic; or the experiment being honestly tried, he will sink back to his old place and gradually go the way of the Red Indians and the Hottentot.¹³

Buchan's thinking on all racial matters was conditioned by his belief in a biological determinism best summed up in the phrase "the survival of the fittest". He wrote with apparent equanimity that, "Both Bushman and Hottentot, having within them no real vitality, have perished utterly as peoples: in Emerson's words, they 'had guano in their destiny,' and were fated only to prepare the way for their successors."¹⁴ This apparently harsh and unyielding attitude was, however, ameliorated by Buchan's paternalism. It was not necessary for such people to perish because they could now be protected and guided by their European masters. If after a period of trusteeship and tutoring in the arts of government by the British they proved incapable of ordering their affairs, then the role of governor would devolve upon the British in perpetuity. Buchan's program of trusteeship was a simple one. The rudiments of civilized life would be taught the native and if he mastered these, more complex skills and ideas would be taught him. It was absolutely necessary that this process be a careful and slow one. Buchan wrote, ". . . a rational system of education, will leave the door open for the extension of rights till such time as the native has finally shown whether he is worthy of

equality or condemned by nature to rank for ever as a subject race."¹⁵

This rational system of education involved, as a first step, technical instruction for the native population. Buchan suggested that, "When the boys are taught everywhere carpentry and ironwork and the rudiments of trade, and the girls sewing and basket-making and domestic employments, a far more potent influence will have been introduced than the Latin grammar or the primer of history."¹⁶

The second step involved religious instruction for the native. As a Christian and an advocate of the civilizing influence of Christianity Buchan believed that the native had to be introduced to Christian instruction. But such instruction had to be simple and easily comprehended, for the native mind, at least for the present, was incapable of grasping spiritual abstractions or the niceties of theology.

The wisest missionary I have ever met had a station with a kind of ideal city for order and industry, with carpenters' and blacksmiths' shops, a model farm, basket-making, orchards and dairies. 'By these means,' he said, 'I am teaching my children the elements of religion which are honesty, cleanliness and discipline.' 'And dogma?' I asked. 'Ah,' he said, 'as to dogma, I think we must be content for the present with a few stories and hymns.'¹⁷

Buchan advocated such a rudimentary instruction in all matters because he felt that European political ideas, or European religion might stir up disorder among the natives. They had to be slowly introduced to such conceptions because a misunderstanding of them could be dangerous. India, he believed, was a case in which the too rapid introduction of European education had had a bad effect.

The origin of modern unrest in India is not hard to diagnose. We have established a system of education under which Indian boys are taught the old Whig doctrines of Macaulay and Mill--admirable doctrines, but scarcely suitable to an autocracy. The Bengali is not a strong man, but he has an

ingenious and receptive brain, and has absorbed this kind of Western learning far faster than the average Englishman. Armed with doctrines about self-government and the equality of man, he began to ask himself why he had not an equal share with the British in the government of his own country—why, indeed, the British were there at all.¹⁸

As Indians and other subject peoples rankled under British rule, Buchan maintained that such people were incapable of recognizing where their own good interests lay. He believed that history demonstrated that these people were incapable of providing for themselves a humane and competent government. Buchan pointed to the case of Egypt and wrote, "In twenty years one Englishman (Lord Cromer) has done what twenty centuries have failed to do. He has made the Nile Valley one of the most prosperous countries in the world. . . ." ¹⁹ The Egyptians themselves had only a short time ago undertaken to govern another people, the Sudanese, and the result had been such that, "Misgovernment was universal and enormous. A plague of rapacious underlings covered the land. The slave-trade officially forbidden, was unofficially encouraged. There was little law at the centre, and only anarchy at the circumference. Small wonder that the name of Egyptian or "Turk" stank in Soudanese nostrils." ²⁰ Misgovernment, Buchan suggested, had been the norm for such people. The problem at hand was to train them to govern themselves and if they proved incapable of ruling themselves justly and wisely, Britain was under an obligation to do so.

The process of preparing these people for self-rule would have to be a careful and painstaking one. In 1903 Buchan believed that the first step toward black African self-government was to extend to them equal legal rights with whites but for the time being no more than that. Buchan reasoned that, "A subject population, to whom legal rights are

denied, tends in the long run to degrade the value of human life, and to depreciate the moral currency—a result so deadly for true progress that the concensus of civilized races has utterly condemned it."²¹ But if legal equality were granted there was no reason to presume that social and political equality would immediately follow. The native was not capable of sanely exercising social and political rights because such rights were of a different order than legal rights. The courts could assure the native of protection under the law, but social and political rights, by definition, demanded that the native protect and exercise them himself. This, he felt, the native was incapable of doing. The natives in South Africa, however, might under the guidance of whites be taught the principles of self-government on a limited basis. Buchan wrote

. . . it may be possible to admit the Kaffir to a share in self-government without giving any adherence to the doctrine involved in a grant of a national franchise. Local government is still in its infancy all over South Africa, but the common type is some form of urban or district council. The questions which such councils discuss do not involve high considerations of statescraft, but simple practical matters, such as roads and bridges, sanitary restrictions, precautions against stock diseases and market rules Supposing that in any district there exists a tribe or a location sufficiently progressive and orderly, I see no real difficulty in bringing the chief or induna sooner or later directly or indirectly into the local council.²²

Buchan believed that the Indians were capable of a larger measure of self-government than were the blacks and he subscribed to the theory of trusteeship with an easier mind, believing that in time greater and greater responsibility might be doled out to the Indians. But he was not sure if the British presence in India might ever be entirely done away with. Owing to the diversity of race and religion in India the

removal of British power would result in widespread civil strife and disorder. He suggested that if the British were ever to withdraw from India ". . . these races would be at each other's throats to-morrow, and the warrior peoples of the north-west would reduce peaceful and progressive Bengal to that servitude which was for centuries its heritage."²³

Buchan argued that Britain's first duty in India was not necessarily to prepare her for self-government but to preserve order at all costs. In his biographies, Augustus, Cromwell, and Montrose he constantly emphasized that the first essential of health in the state was order, and this belief led him to argue that

As trustees for the population of India, our first duty is to preserve order. The safety of the commonwealth is at all times the highest law; and if the men on the spot entrusted with this task think it well to prosecute newspapers, to deport agitators, and to suppress public meetings in certain districts, then it is folly to interfere with them. After all, it is because speech is free, and every man may claim a fair trial, and the Press is uncensored, that at a crisis it is necessary to take these steps. If we give freedom, we are bound to guard against its abuse, or we shall fail in our duty to those we govern.²⁴

Buchan maintained that the mass of the Indian people did not care in the least about politics,²⁵ and even if they had, he suggested it was not a moral necessity for the British to have the assent of the governed to British rule.²⁶ It was Britain's moral duty to protect the Indian from himself. "It was unfair to allow an immature population to be the prey of a gutter Press which incited to crime The school-boys and youth of a town, the ignorant ryots, the half-educated Bengali, must be protected against his own kind."²⁷

The picture that Buchan painted was a dreary one. The British were attempting what appeared to be the impossible, to raise the native

population to a level of civilization they appeared incapable of achieving. And for their trouble they received only thanklessness. What then was the reward in possessing them? Buchan seldom used an economic argument to justify the importance of the colonies. In the years of economic collapse in the 1930's he once argued that the mineral wealth of tropical Africa might ". . . produce much which is vital to our industrial and commercial future."²⁸ And from the beginning of his conversion to imperialism he had used a justification which was indirectly economic, pointing out the fact that the colonial civil service, police, and military forces offered unique opportunities for careers to young men.

Yet economic arguments were never emphasized in his writing; he felt that a justification in terms of pounds, shillings, and pence was no justification at all. This was not hypocrisy on his part; he did not spout moral platitudes consciously to disguise surreptitious motives. But there was a great deal of undisguised self-interest in his argument that the retention and rule of Africa and India was a moral responsibility. To Buchan the ruling of subject races was justified not only in that it civilized "savage races" but that it preserved in Britons the valuable ideals of service, duty, responsibility, courage, and even-handed justice. In Prester John, a boy's adventure story that tells a tale of a native uprising in Africa and its subsequent suppression, Buchan, like most authors of children's stories, was intent on illustrating a moral and teaching a lesson. For the future civil servants and proconsuls of Empire Buchan explained the "white man's burden".

I knew then the meaning of the white man's duty. He has to take all risks, recking nothing of his life or his fortunes, and well content to find his reward in the fulfillment of his tasks. That is the difference between white and black, the gift of responsibility, the power of being in a little way a king; and so long as we know this and practise it, we will rule not only in Africa alone but wherever there are dark men who live only for the day and their own bellies. Moreover, the work made me pitiful and kindly.²⁹

In this passage Buchan was careful to point out to his young readers the inherent difference between white and black, and the relative superiority of white men in regard to their black brethren. But he was also anxious to demonstrate the salutary effects of "the white man's duty" on the individual that performs his duty. One should not expect material reward for his work, or even thanks, only the satisfaction of a job well done and the moral growth that accompanies the doing of a good deed. Buchan, who had sloughed off a great deal of his early Calvinistic upbringing believed that souls were made by doing, by the performance of good works. The individual who selflessly serves finds himself morally transformed. What Buchan merely hinted at in Prester John he made explicit in his last novel Mountain Meadow, published posthumously in 1941. In that novel Sir Edward Leithen, a character who recurred often in Buchan's novels and shared similar ideas and traits with those of his creator, gives up his life to aid a starving band of Indians in northern Canada. This act of paternalism leads to the spiritual transformation of Leithen. Father Duplessis, the fictional priest of the novel, describes this transformation.

I observed that as the days passed he showed an increasing tenderness towards the Hares. At first I think he regarded their succour as a cold, abstract duty. But gradually he began to feel for them a protective and brotherly kindness. . . . At first, when we sat at the conferences and went in and out

of the huts, his lean pallid face revealed no more than the intellectual interest which might belong to a scientific enquirer. But by degrees a kind of affection showed in his eyes. He smiled oftener, and his smile had an infinite kindness.³⁰

While a contemporary of John Buchan's, George Orwell, attempted to demonstrate in a novel, Burmese Days, that the rule of other races morally stunted the ruled and the rulers Buchan attempted to suggest that it did the very opposite. He believed that it was evident that British rule raised, at least in some small measure, the moral and intellectual stature of subject races. Equally as important, the rule of subject races had a subtle and beneficent influence on the rulers. By the rulers Buchan did not mean to suggest only individuals in the colonial service, but Great Britain herself. Britain had to be awakened to her duties to the world. She had to be motivated by a great mission and made to understand her role in the world as a civilizer. The Pax Britannica had to be more than a phrase; it had to be a reality. Britain's apathy and "half-heartedness" had to be replaced by moral zeal and earnest selflessness. The nation was expected to pay gladly the toll in sons and gold that the administration of vast tracts of the globe entailed.

To Buchan's disappointment Britons did not rally enthusiastically to the cause. The very cause that he proffered them came to be rejected. The idea of the "white man's burden" was increasingly open to scrutiny, and the more temerarious of Britons suggested that the idea was immoral or, at best, laughable. Many might cling to the idea, but they were not of sufficient numbers or zeal to stem the tide.

By 1940 when Buchan wrote his autobiography Pilgrim's Way, he realized that the idea was already in need of justification and

explanation. "As for the native races under our rule, we had a high conscientiousness: Milner and Rhodes had a far-sighted native policy. The 'white man's burden' is now an almost meaningless phrase; then it involved a new philosophy of politics, and an ethical standard serious and surely not ignoble."³¹

It was clear to him that the British public was becoming unwilling to act in perpetual trusteeship of the races under Great Britain's rule. He could no longer expect that imperial responsibilities and duties would work a spiritual and moral transformation of the British populace.

Footnotes to Chapter Four

1. John Buchan, A Lodge in the Wilderness (London: Thomas Nelson Co., 1916), p. 75.
2. John Buchan, Lord Minto: A Memoir (London: Thomas Nelson Co., 1924), p. 213.
3. Gertrude Himmelfarb, "The Imperial Responsibility," British Imperialism, Robin Winks ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 66.
4. M. E. Chamberlain, Lord Cromer's Ancient and Modern Imperialism. The Journal of British Studies, XII, 1, Nov. 1972, p. 80.
5. Ibid., p. 80.
6. Ibid., p. 80.
7. John Buchan, The African Colony: Studies in Reconstruction (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1903), p. 290.
8. Buchan, A Lodge in the Wilderness, p. 139.
9. Buchan, The African Colony, p. 29.
10. Ibid., p. 36.
11. Ibid., p. 116.
12. Ibid., p. 116.
13. Ibid., p. 291.
14. Ibid., p. 7.
15. Ibid., p. 291.
16. Ibid., p. 310.
17. Ibid., p. 310.
18. John Buchan, "Unrest in Modern India," Comments and Characters, W. Forbes Gray ed. (London: Thomas Nelson Co., 1940), p. 105.
19. John Buchan, "Lord Cromer in Egypt," Comments and Characters, W. Forbes Gray ed. (London: Thomas Nelson Co., 1940), p. 112.
20. John Buchan, Gordon At Khartoum (London: P. Davies Ltd., 1934), p. 14.

21. Buchan, The African Colony, p. 289.
22. Ibid., p. 303.
23. Buchan, "Unrest in Modern India," p. 106.
24. Ibid., p. 107.
25. Buchan, Lord Minto, p. 325.
26. Ibid., p. 213.
27. John Buchan, "The Problem in India," Comments and Characters, W. Forbes Gray ed. (London: Thomas Nelson Co., 1940), p. 110.
28. John Buchan, "Thirty Years Since Cecil Rhodes," The Graphic, 14 Nov. 1931, p. 249.
29. John Buchan, Prester John (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson Co., 1910), p. 238.
30. John Buchan, Mountain Meadow (New York: Literary Guild of America Inc., 1941), p. 267.
31. John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1940), p. 120.

Chapter Five

BUCHAN'S IMPERIAL IDEA

Various commentators on John Buchan have suggested that of all the imperial writers it was Buchan who demonstrated most clearly, "the 'proconsular idea'."¹ Or more sweepingly, that his work demonstrated an ". . . unremitting search for a synthetic philosophy which would satisfy all of man's aspirations and accord him the completest self-fulfillment" ² There are reasons for suggesting that Buchan's vision of the British Empire was the most holistic of those propounded by the imperial propagandists. All of Buchan's thought rested firmly on the foundation of his conservative political philosophy and his Christian belief. As a Christian and a conservative he was alarmed by what he considered were the nihilistic tendencies of the modern world. The disgust he felt led him to a criticism of modernity. He did not, however, pause at mere criticism for he believed there were solutions to the problems he saw about him. The solutions were to be found in the British Empire and the imperial creed. Few imperialists attempted to suggest that the Empire could resolve so many diversified social, cultural, political, and moral quandaries. To imply, however, that Buchan satisfactorily, or convincingly, wove the many strands of his imperial thought into a whole would be unjustified. Buchan's abundant imagination, his varied interests and his concern with topical matters did not allow him the leisure calmly to relect upon all he had written and thought about Britain's imperial mission. In attempt-

ing to define the Imperial idea he found, "You cannot carve an epic on a nutshell or expound Christianity in an aphorism. If I could define Imperialism satisfactorily in a sentence I should be very suspicious of its truth."³

The parallel that Buchan drew between Christianity and Imperialism is striking. He suggested that both were conceptions too great and too important to the future of mankind to be bounded by a definition. Perhaps, unconsciously, he meant to suggest something more, that they could not be understood as intellectual abstractions but only as faiths. For it was always in the language of the faithful that Buchan described his own adherence to the Imperial idea. "I was more than a convert, I was a fanatic."⁴ It was his fanatical belief in Britain's Imperial mission that explains the inconsistency, oversights, and utopianism of his own imperial thinking. It was the very vagueness and complexity of the imperial idea that appealed to Buchan; it could be all things to all men. In his Imperial writings Buchan continued to claim for Imperialism dissonant possibilities. It was Buchan's faith in the efficacy of Imperialism to solve all problems that led him to so many logically untenable positions. He was first and foremost a propagandist intent on urging the acceptance of the Imperial idea and as a proselytizer of Empire his message was tailored to appeal to individuals, classes, and the member states of the Empire. He failed to recognize that these appeals, however ambiguous, might be antithetical.

Buchan's examination of the domestic political scene led him to believe that the Empire might prove to be a powerful symbol around which all political parties might rally. The Empire, he argued, could offer a

common ground for agreement and alleviate gratuitous party strife over what he chose to believe were "inessentials". But he failed, or refused, to recognize that imperial questions were often contentious. The Boer War had caused a clear division of opinion at home, and his own personal experience of the rancour engendered by attacks against Milner over the "Chinese Slavery" issue should have taught him that men were likely to continue to differ on imperial matters. Home Rule for Ireland was always a bitter subject, as were moves to grant India some measure of independence and self-government. On the face of it, it appeared unlikely that the British people would ever come to a full and satisfactory agreement on specific imperial questions, or even the more general ones. Yet Buchan persisted in the belief that the Empire was one of the few things that could unite Britons and help them recognize their commonalty.

He was also seriously disturbed by what he felt was Great Britain's increasing moral lassitude. The panacea he proffered was a subsuming of self in the care and guidance of other races and nations. He wished to extend Tory paternalism into a wider arena. His heroes were the men of the service class; colonial civil servants and military men who exemplified those virtues Tories most admired: discipline, a regard for duty, service to the community. He invited Great Britain and the Dominions to shoulder "the white man's burden", not only for the good of the non-white races, but for their own. The invitation could stir men in 1900 but it was slowly to have its appeal eroded as the century wore on. Societies which increasingly claimed to adhere to egalitarian and democratic principles were perhaps not ones best suited to such a task. After all, they might recognize, however uneasily, the dichotomy of preaching

one thing and practising another. Nor were the non-white races willing to accept British rule without some opposition. Buchan was to find that his paternalism was becoming unfashionable at home, and hated abroad.

The justification which he offered for the rule of native races was also logically unsound. He claimed that Britain's administration of the non-white peoples was vindicated because she was intent on civilizing them; she was exercising a form of trusteeship until such peoples "came of age". Yet Buchan's characterization of the native mind and moral character suggested that Buchan seriously doubted their capacity to ever reach a stage of development at which they would be capable of self-government.

Toward the white Dominions he undoubtedly felt more sympathy. The greatest weakness of the imperial school in Great Britain was its inability to appreciate the differences of atmosphere between Britain and the self-governing colonies.⁵ Perhaps more than any other British imperialist Buchan could understand the growing nationalism of the Dominions. As a Scot he could sympathize with national sentiment in the Dominions and appreciate, to a degree, their resentment of English domination. He was therefore wary of attempting to push the Dominions into any type of Imperial Federation scheme. He wished, instead, to see the Dominions grow into confident nationhood for as independent nations they could freely enter into an alliance with Great Britain as equals. He soon, however, discovered that the Dominions felt that the road to independence was to be travelled at a greater pace than he thought wise. Eventually he relented in his opposition to the speed at which concessions were granted to the Dominions, confident that a common race, culture

and political institutions would insure their loyalty to the Crown and Empire.

Like many imperialists, however, Buchan could not believe that Great Britain's interests could ever conflict with those of the Dominions. He maintained, in theory, that imperial policy decisions were not the prerogative of Great Britain, but in practice he was disturbed when the Dominions objected to Britain's imperial adventures or voiced disagreement with British policy. In reality he identified British interests as Empire interests. For example, he could not understand that Canadians could feel that they lived "in a fire proof house", or that the King Government would take violent exception to his statements on defence. Nor would he have been able to believe that some Canadians could be genuinely distrustful of the imperial idea. Frank Underhill writing in The Canadian Forum in 1935 warned Canadians that their new Governor General was a fervent imperialist and pointed out that Canada had better beware.

. . . we are once more living in a period when British imperialism is using all its efforts to win us in Canada into a close economic and military alliance. The essential drive of British imperialism is always the same; it is to get the Dominions to lend their resources, human and material, to the support of British policy. It takes different external forms in different periods; the talk may be about Imperial Federation, or a Zollverein, or a Commonwealth founded on a continuous co-operation. But the underlying purpose is the same Fundamentally the purpose is to get our assistance in making the world safe for British capitalism.⁶

Buchan overestimated the power of common ancestry, culture, and political institutions to strengthen the bonds of the Empire. As the Dominions, widely separated in space from Great Britain, achieved a measure of autonomy, cultural and political links weakened and differ-

ences however secondary were accentuated. Buchan had hoped that the patriotism of the smaller unit would not preclude that of the larger unit but time proved him wrong.

With hindsight Buchan's imperial message can be dismissed as inconsistent and utopian. To Buchan, however, the Imperial idea was the last hope for the salvation of all that was best in the old world. He was less concerned with military and economic power than he was with protecting the older social, cultural, and moral standards. Buchan did not dismiss the importance of military and economic power for they were the surety of all else he valued. He was, however, less concerned with them than other imperialists. He wrote,

People repeat glibly that trade follows the flag, and that commerce is the basis of empire and in a sense it is true, for an empire without commercial inter-relations and a solid basis of material prosperity is a house built on sand. But if the maxim be taken in the sense that commerce is in itself a sufficient imperial bond, it is the most fatal of heresies. The Dutch, in their heyday, had an empire chiefly of forts and factories: and what part has the Dutch Empire played in the fortunes of mankind?

Buchan wished the British Empire to play a leading role "in the fortunes of mankind". His faith that the Empire offered new hope for Britain, and eventually the world, was smug and insular. But such an assumption was according to his own lights liberal and reasonable. The variety of imperialism he preached was idealistic and self-assured but his diagnosis of the world's ills convinced him that what was needed was a strong dose of selfless idealism and masterful leadership. He could comment astutely and with authority on specific imperial questions but the larger moral he drew from them was likely to be at best a platitude. He did not, as some have suggested, ever fully demarcate the sphere of

imperial action, or arrive at an integrated philosophy of Imperialism. Buchan could only vigorously assert that in the Empire was to be found the solutions for all the evils that devilled his society and the world. Others, however, dismissed such ideas as ludicrous and he found himself in his later years on the defensive, attempting to explain to a sceptical audience what imperialism had meant to him and his contemporaries. In his autobiography, Pilgrim's Way, he wrote,

I dreamed of a world-wide brotherhood with the background of a common race and creed, consecrated to the service of peace; Britain enriching the rest out of her culture and traditions, and the spirit of the Dominions like a strong wind freshening the stuffiness of the old lands. . . . I saw hope for a new afflatus in art and literature and thought. Our creed was not based on antagonism to any other people. It was humanitarian and international, we believed that we were laying the basis of a federation of the world.⁸

Intent on such large and vague objects Buchan's imperial idea suffered from generalizations, oversights, and inconsistency. Maintaining that the Empire was a gift which could work miracles was not enough, for the assumptions on which his imperial idea relied were ones which, by and large, his contemporaries could no longer accept. For Buchan, however, the vision was never really lost. He remained to the end a true disciple of the imperial creed; his faith could not be weakened by argument or expostulation. It remained a faith to the end, as it had been in the beginning.

Footnotes to Chapter Five

1. Robin Winks ed., introduction to Gertrude Himmelfarb's "The Imperial Responsibility," British Imperialism (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 64.
2. Alan Sandison, The Wheel of Empire (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), pp. 149-150.
3. John Buchan, A Lodge in the Wilderness (London: Thomas Nelson Co., 1916), p. 28.
4. John Buchan, Pilgrim's Way (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1940), p. 120.
5. A. M. Gollin, Proconsul in Politics (London: Anthony Blond, 1964), p. 398.
6. Frank Underhill, "Spiritual Enlargement," The Canadian Forum, XV, August 1935, p. 321.
7. John Buchan, The African Colony: Studies in Reconstruction (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1903), pp. 31-32.
8. Buchan, Pilgrim's Way, pp. 120-121.

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There is no edition of Buchan's collected works. Those editions were used which were readily accessible. In some cases American editions have different titles than the British. For instance, Buchan's autobiography was published as Memory Hold-the-Door in Great Britain and under the title Pilgrim's Way in the United States. Similarly, one of Buchan's novels was published as Sick Heart River in Great Britain and appeared as Mountain Meadow in America. What follows is a working bibliography; it is by no means a comprehensive bibliography of Buchan's works.

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