

Rev George Munro Grant
Minister at St. Matthews United Church
1863 – 1877

At the end of his life, the Rev. George Munro Grant, Minister at Saint Matthews from 1863 to 1877, was remembered for his contributions to nation building in Canada with comparisons to the leadership of John A. MacDonald and Joseph Howe.

At the beginning of his life in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, there was little in his circumstances to suggest such comparisons in his memorial. The Grant's were very poor and an early accident to George resulted in the loss of his right hand. He was educated first at the Pictou Academy, and the West River (Durham) seminary. He benefited from a scholarship from the Kirk church programme called the "Young men's scheme" which financed him to study theology and philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

He emerged from his studies in the liberal wing of the Church of Scotland. He was against the strict interpretation of the Westminster Confession, double predestination and in favour of a broad evangelicalism. We are hard pressed today to imagine just how controversial the divide over these theological issues was. To do so we must think of the most divisive issues in the church and society today to grasp just how deeply feelings went

over double predestination and the interpretation of the Westminster
Confession!

Rev. George Munro Grant was called to St. Matthews when he was in his late twenties, a remarkably young man for the major Presbyterian pulpit of its age. St. Matthews was “the largest and wealthiest Presbyterian congregation in the Maritimes” (Mack) and for only the second time in its history the church called a native Nova Scotian for its minister.

From the high pulpit he preached against the strict Calvinism of his day charging it with having become “cold, narrow and legalistic.” (Mack) He preached from the Bible about Paul’s theme of the freedom in Christ and about personal conversion. In the mystery of the Atonement – the gift of forgiveness to humanity in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross – Grant grounded his Christian vision. That vision led him to vigorously build the outreach of St. Matthews and the church in the North End City Mission School, re-build Presbyterian educational institutions like Dalhousie and Queen’s Universities, and vigorously support Presbyterian Church union and a national vision for Canada.

Based on information found in:

Elizabeth Townsend, Laura B. Morgan, Judith Fingard and Graham Morgan *St. Matthew’s United Church: A Sentinel on the Street, Halifax 1749-1999*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd. 1999.

D. B. Mack. “Grant, George Munro” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.
<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=40870&query=george%20AND%20Monro%20AND%20Grant> (accessed June 27, 2007)