

Canadian Catholic Historical Association's Fortieth Anniversary: A Retrospective View

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Ten years ago, Father Michael Sheehan, C.S.B., Ph.D., Professor of History at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, University of Toronto, addressed members of the C.C.H.A. with an eloquent and thoughtful paper on the goals and problems of the Association. After a careful and perceptive analysis, Professor Sheehan concluded his considerations, with heartening and prophetic remarks:

Our Society is a small current within this vast stream. As the years have passed several tendencies have become apparent within it. ...It becomes apparent that most, though, not all, of these tendencies fit together, sometimes complementing each other in a remarkable way... we discover that the direction in which our Association is moving is one in which it is highly possible that it will be able to achieve its ends with greater efficacy than ever before. The evolution within the society can now become something that is understood and willed.¹

The genesis of the evolution, underscored by Professor Sheehan, occurred in Toronto in 1932 and 1933. During the Christmas season of 1932, the American Historical Association and the American Catholic Historical Association met in Toronto, for the first time on Canadian soil. On 30 December, 1932, the final day of the meetings, a committee was formed to consider the formation of a Canadian Catholic Historical Association. (A Canadian, Dr. James Kenney, Assistant Archivist, Public Archives, Ottawa, was President of the C.H.A.) The Honorable F. R. Latchford, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario, became chairman of this committee, and Father J. B. O'Reilly was named secretary.²

Further meetings were held in early 1933 at private homes and at

¹ Michael SHEEHAN, C.S.B., "Considerations on the Ends of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association," *Report*, 1963, p. 31.

² James F. KENNEY, Ph.D., "Secretary's Report," *Report*, 1933-34, pp. 6, 7.

religious houses in Toronto. One such meeting was held at the home of Mrs. J. C. Keenan, 38 Madison Avenue, Toronto. Mrs. Keenan, along with Mrs. Helen Walker, Provincial Historian for the Ontario C.W.L., was active in the Catholic Women's League with the result that several other C.W.L. members attended this discussion. Mrs. Keenan was, also, an American citizen, and a member of the Catholic Historical Association. More meetings were held which involved Dr. James Kenney, Assistant Archivist in the Public Archives, Ottawa, Brother Alfred, a distinguished scholar of the Christian Brothers community at De La Salle Oaklands, Toronto, Senator W. H. McGuire. Father Robert J. Scollard, C.S.B., Historian and Archivist of the Basilians for many years, Librarian of St. Michael's College for a number of years, and Secretary of the C.C.H.A. for the past three years, attended the meeting at De La Salle Oaklands late in 1933 which made a firm decision to proceed with the establishment of a society for Canadian Catholic Church History.³

Dr. Kenney recorded that a final meeting was held on 5 March, 1933, at the Jesuit Seminary of Philosophy, Toronto, to give shape to the activity that had been in motion since 30 December, 1932. After this meeting, Dr. Kenney reported that the *ad hoc* committee canvassed a large number of Canadian Catholics interested in History with positive results. Heartened by these replies, this committee proceeded to draw up a draft constitution which it submitted to all members of the Canadian hierarchy. The Canadian Bishops all replied favorably. Convinced that the time was ripe, Chief Justice Latchford and his committee called a General Meeting for 3 June, 1933, at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto.⁴

The foundations were now laid for the first Annual Meeting of the Association which took place on 29, 30 May, 1934, in Ottawa in the splendid settings of the Chateau Laurier, the Academic Hall of the University of Ottawa, and the Gothic precincts of the Public Archives. The original executive was strong on scholarship, dignity and public distinction. Setting a precedent still followed, J. M. Rodrigue Cardinal Villeneuve, O.M.I., Archbishop of Quebec City, accepted the post of Honorary President. Chief Justice F. R. Latchford was elected first President-General; to assist him as Vice-President-General was the Very Reverend Olivier Maurault, P.S.S., F.R.S.C., Rector of the Université de Montréal, and noted French Canadian Historian. Father Edward Kelly was elected Second Vice-President-General. Father Kelly, Litt.D., was an historian of the Archdiocese of Toronto, whose *History of St. Paul's Parish, 1822-1922*, was a valuable contribution to Toronto Church History.

Father Kelly, also, functioned as the first President of the English

³ Fr. R. J. SCOLLARD, C.S.B., Letter to J. O'Farrell, 24 May 1973.

⁴ KENNEY, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 7.

Section. He was aided by Father John B. O'Reilly, M.A., as First Vice-President. Father O'Reilly lectured in Church History at St. Michael's College, and, later, at St. Augustine's Seminary. He now lives in Toronto in retirement. The office of Second Vice-President was occupied by Sir Arthur G. Doughty, K.B.E., LL.D., Dominion Archivist. Dr. James F. Kenney, Ph.D., Assistant to Sir Arthur Doughty, accepted the key office of Secretary, and Editor of the yet unborn *Report*. Miss Florence Boland, of Toronto, joined the Executive in the capacity of Treasurer and Chairman of the Committee on Memberships. Father H. J. Somers, Ph.D., F.R. Hist. S., from St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, took over the task of chairing the Committee on Archives. The first English Executive had, as well, seven councillors: The Honorable Sir Joseph A. Chisholm from Halifax. Brother Alfred, F.C.S., of De La Salle Oaklands, who, as Father Scollard has pointed out, proved a dynamic fund-raiser for the society, and did much to build up the society in Toronto. Professor Donald J. McDougall, M.A., a well-known and most distinguished Professor of English History at the University of Toronto, who now lives in Toronto in retirement. Father J. H. Pocock, Professor of History at St. Peter's Seminary, London, Ontario, not only served as Councillor, but also as first Chairman of the Publications Committee. Father John R. O'Gorman, of Timmins, served as a Councillor; as did Mr. J. J. Leddy, of Saskatoon, prominent Catholic layman, and father of Sir J. Francis Leddy, now President of the University of Windsor, and, himself, an active member of the Association from 1943. Brother Memorian, F.C.S., Ph.D., like Brother Alfred, a celebrated member of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who founded and was first Rector of St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta, Edmonton, was a Councillor and Chairman of the Committee on Bibliography.

The first French Executive was equally illustrious. The first President was the Rector of the Université de Montréal, Very Reverend Olivier Maurault, P.S.S., F.R.S.C. In the post of First Vice-President, he was aided by Sir Pierre-Georges Roy, K.C.S.G., Litt.D., F.R.S.C., Archivist of Quebec. L'Abbé Lionel Groulx, LL.D., Th.D., F.R.S.C., served as Second Vice-President. As Secretary, their Executive was graced by L'Abbé Ivanhoë Caron, Ph.D., Th.D., Litt.D., Assistant Archivist, Quebec. Father Edgar Thivierge, O.M.I., Professor of History at the University of Ottawa, and, eventually, Vice-Dean of Arts, accepted the office of Treasurer. The French Executive had eight Councillors, mainly from the scholarly clergy of Quebec. As Councillor and Chairman of the Committee on Archives, Dr. Gustave Lanctot, K.C., Litt.D., F.R.S.C., a Canadian Historian of great merit and accomplishment, added much prestige.

To the glitter of such an amazing gathering of Catholic historical scholarship, was added a splendid round of religious services, dinners and a state reception in the Public Archives. The bilingual character of the new

organization was illustrated at the first meeting by alternate French and English papers. Among the speakers at the first presentations were Dr. Mary Manley, who later joined the Faculty of Assumption University of Windsor; Brother Alfred, F.S.C.; Honorable, later Senator, JeanFrançois Pouliot, C.R., M.P.; and Dr., later Senator, John J. Connolly.⁵

From the beginning, however, the central figure in the founding and development of the C.C.H.A. was Dr. James Kenney. The concluding paragraph of Dr. Kenney's Secretary's Report, the first item in the initial *Report*, 1933-34, deserves repetition:

The work that lies before us is vast. Even of the founders of the Church in Canada, Laval, Macdonnell, Burke, Taché, the early missionaries and sisters, much remains to be learned. Beyond the founders, the surface of the work is hardly skimmed. There are no adequate guides to sources, very few of the bibliographical biographical and other helps to historians are available: indeed, not a large amount of scholarly work of any kind has yet been done. In the broader field of world history, the story of the Church's mission is inexhaustible. The harvest is rich, and the Canadian Catholic Historical Association is calling for laborers.⁶

Of the laborers who worked for and sustained the Association, Dr. Kenney's name must lead them all. From 1932 until his death in 1946, he functioned as the able, hard-working and dedicated Secretary of the Association. Born in Belleville, Ontario, in 1884, Dr. Kenney received his B.A. and M.A. in History from the University of Toronto; acquired another M.A. in History from the University of Wisconsin, and, finally, achieved the Ph.D. in History from Columbia University. He entered the services of the Public Archives in 1912; in 1926, he was appointed Director of Historical Research and Publicity in the Public Archives of Canada. His career was marked by positions of great trust such as Acting Dominion Archivist for a time; President of the Catholic Historical Association in the United States; Advisory Editor of the *Catholic Historical Review*; and President of the Irish Historical Association.⁷

Such a man, with his deep, broad historical scholarship, nobility of character, and wide circle of friends in the learned communities of Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Europe, was admirably suited to have been the principal founder and chief pillar for fourteen years of the C.C.H.A. The 1945-46 *Report*, appropriately, was dedicated to his memory.

⁵ *Report*, C.C.H.A., 1933-34, pp. 1-7.

⁶ KENNEY, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁷ Fr. John A. GALLAGHER, C.S.S.R., "Tribute to Dr. Kenney," *Report*, 1945-46, p. 2.

Until the advent of Father Sheehan's own remarkable *Bibliography* in the *Report* of 1964, and on, Dr. Kenney's hope for bibliographical work by the Association went neglected. There was a tentative step in this direction in the 1943-44 *Report*, by F. J. Wilson, M.A., whose article on Archbishop Thomas Connolly, of Halifax, concluded with a most useful "Appendix" which contained a number of the Archbishop's letters, especially those which passed between himself and Sir John A. Macdonald. Such printed archival material, however, remained unique. Dr. Kenney's aspirations for biographical material was much better realized. In the 39 volumes of the Association, there exists a wealth of personal material on the lives and activities of laymen, clergy, members of the hierarchy, and members of various religious orders, both male and female.

Although the Canadian Catholic Church embraces the northern part of North America from Victoria to Halifax, understandably, if regrettably, the material collected in the *Report* and *Study Sessions* is weighed heavily towards the Church in Ontario and Quebec. In more recent times, a better distribution of the Church's history across the country is being effected; helped by events such as Manitoba's Centenary in 1970, and by having had the Executive located in Western centres, as was the case recently in Winnipeg. The Church in the Maritimes fared better in this respect, with representation in the very early papers of the Association. This was likely because of the influence and interest of Dr. H. J. Somers in Antigonish. The Canadian West was introduced to the *Report* by Brother Memorian, F.S.C., with a paper on Bishop Vital J. Grandin given at the 1935 meeting; but there is an hiatus of Western topics until Miss Bernice Venini, B.A., of Calgary, in 1943 rescues Father Constantine Scollen, Calgary's first missionary, from oblivion. The last two decades have seen much more Western material. Recently, too, there have been articles on the Ukrainian Catholic Church, which have helped to make the *Report* and *Study Sessions* more truly reflective of Catholicism in Canada.

The Association owes its existence to many splendid people, and organizations over the years who gave of their talent, time, money and various resources to help realize its purposes. Surely no one will regard it as ungenerous of this author, if we single out the Oblates of Mary Immaculate of St. Patrick's College, Ottawa, who provided the Association with a Central Office from 1963 to 1967. The Association is also much indebted to priests of the Congregation of St. Basil, located at St. Michael's College, the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, and at Assumption University in Windsor. Although Basilians such as Father E. J. McCorkell, and especially Father Robert J. Scollard have had virtually a life-long interest in the Association, with the election of Father D. J. Mulvihill, C.S.B., Ph.D., Head of the Department of History, Assumption University, Windsor, Ontario, Basilian participation in the executive and in politics through the

sixties has been pronounced, and of immense value. The Christian Brothers have clearly been active since the foundation; more recently, Brother Bonaventure Miner, F.C.S., served as Secretary from 1963 to 1965, performed an excellent job of reorganization. And we have had welcome contributions from the Jesuits, and other religious communities.

Once more, naming some officers, and not others, creates risks; but, as examples of distinguished academic laity taking leadership in the society, one thinks of Professor Donald J. McDougall, M.A., Professor J. B. Conacher, Ph.D., both of the University of Toronto, and of Sir J. Francis Leddy, K.G.C.M. (Canada), D.Ph., O.C., now President of the University of Windsor. Although lay leadership has been noted from the start, the Association has increasingly in the last decade come to rely on the lay academic community for its main officers and its principal contributors to its annual program. The decision in 1961 to meet with the other learned societies; the inclusion of papers on the history of other Christian communities; the opening of relationships with the Canadian Historical Association and the Canadian Society of Church History are all marks of a coming of age.

Meeting with the other Learned Societies of Canada once a year has probably worked to the convenience of the academic members of the C.C.H.A.; and allowing frequent joint-sessions with the Canadian Historical Association and the Canadian Society of Church History has added to the experience and prestige of our own Association. Apart from the ending of the traditional religious and social events, this newer arrangement has separated us from our French brethren. The publication of the Association has always been and remains bilingual. Until 1969, when the French Session chose to meet separately at another time and at some centre in Quebec, the annual meeting of the C.C.H.A. always featured a joint-session with French and English papers. This happy highlight is now no longer possible. In spite of this departure from tradition, the French and English Sections operate under the chairmanship of the President-General, a position that alternates annually between the retiring Presidents of the French and English Sections. Through this important link, and a long tradition of co-operation at the executive level, the two branches remain in friendly communication.

The pride of the Association, its bilingual journal, a rare and invaluable contribution to Canadian scholarship, was printed for the first two years by the Le Droit Press of Ottawa. Since 1935, however, the journal has been published by Leclerc Printers of Hull, Quebec. For the regular publication of the journal and patient managing of the whole delicate process of publication over many years, the Association owes a debt of great gratitude to Sir Conrad Charlebois, K.S.G., of Leclerc Printers. To honor this debt, and Sir Conrad's other contributions of long standing to the Association, the Executive of the English Section is happy this year to bestow on him the George Clerk

Medal-named after another, earlier, distinguished Quebec publisher and editor.⁸

We could not have functioned at all except for the support of our members. As a denominational society, we are deprived of grants from the Canada Council. The one exception to this rule occurred in regards to the 1970 edition of *Study Sessions*, which was geared to the Manitoba Centennial, and, as a result, through the skill of the French Executive, funds were provided from the Canada Council for that special issue.⁹ The society began with a membership of 134; two corresponding members, one in France and one in the United States, were listed – the Association had this category for some time: amongst corresponding members for some years were Father Candide Cause, O.M.Cap., of Toulouse, France, the biographer of Archbishop Charbonnel; Monsignor Tracy Ellis, the famous historian of the Catholic Church in the United States, and, in 1947, Archbishop Luis M. Martinez, of Mexico City, joined this small but elite list. By 1945, the Association had a membership of 1,200, about evenly divided between the French and English Sections. Today, the membership of the English Section is around 260 people and institutions.

The first secular institutional library to subscribe was that of the University of Western Ontario in 1938. The Parliamentary Library of Canada followed in 1939. The first such institution outside of Canada was that of the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1941; in the same year, the Toronto Public Library became a subscriber. By 1948, a large number of Catholic institutions throughout Canada and various chapters of the Catholic Women's League and the Knights of Columbus had become subscribing members. Although in time many of the Canadian bishops also subscribed, the first members of the hierarchy to support the English Section were Bishop John T. Kidd of London, Ontario; Bishop P. J. Monahan of Calgary; and Archbishop Henry J. O'Leary of Edmonton. One seminary, St. Augustine's

⁸ See Agnes COFFEY, B.A., B.L.S., "George Edward Clerk, Founder of the True Witness, a Pioneer of Catholic Action," *Report*, 1934-35, C.C.H.A., pp. 46-59. George Edward Clerk was born on 18 March 1815 at Penicuik, Scotland. A second son of the sixth baronet of Penicuik, Sir George Clerk, he immigrated to Australia around 1840. After having become interested in Catholicism, he returned to Scotland in 1844. In Scotland, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church on 28 June 1847. Clerk, then, immigrated to Canada, and arrived in Montreal on 7 October 1847. In 1849, he married Marie Louise Elizabeth Dupuis. On 16 August 1850, he founded the *True Witness and Catholic Chronicle*. An antidote to the alleged anti-Catholic bias of the *Montreal Witness*, the first edition of the *True Witness* appeared on 16 August 1850. Sir George Edward Clerk, K.S.G., so honored by Pope Pius IX, died on 26 September 1875.

⁹ The Association received assistance, as well, from the Canada Council for the publishing of the *Index* volume.

of Toronto; two universities, Ottawa and Montreal; the Public Archives of Canada and one newspaper, *The Catholic Record* of London, Ontario, were the first institutions to belong. By 1973, the list of libraries of universities both in Canada and in the United States, and of other types of educational establishments in both countries and in England which now subscribe is most impressive. Yet, the need for more and continuing support from our members is paramount. The Association has, in the past, the year 1963-64 is an example, been more than once saved from financial shipwreck by generous donations from various Canadian Catholic educational institutions. This source is now, however, less likely to be so available.

However fearful the financial picture can be from time to time, from an academic and historical point of view, the Association has had a new energy and direction since the first meeting with the Learned Societies at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, in 1962. The ecumenism promised by an article in the *Report*, 1937-38, by Thomas F. O'Connor, entitled "Some non-Catholic Contributions to the Study of the Canadian and American Missions," had blossomed into a paper of major importance given on a similar subject at the Winnipeg Meeting of 1970, by William H. Brooks, on "British Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Activities in the Hudson Bay Company's Territory, 1843-1854." The outstanding achievement of the *Report* in the sixties, and of the *Study Sessions*, the new name of the journal adopted in 1966, is surely that of the "Bibliography of Canadian Church History" introduced and continued by Dr. Michael Sheehan, C.S.B., of the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, in the 1964 *Report*. In 1971, the annual production and updating of this "Bibliography" had become the responsibility of another Basilian, Father T. J. Hanrahan, C.S.B., of St. Basil's College, Toronto. This annual "Bibliography" includes known and available historical sources of all the Christian communions in Canada since 1963. Should our *Study Sessions* and the "Bibliography" be blessed with a lengthy life, this annual list will come to be invaluable and indispensable. Father G. A. Bean, Archivist of the Archdiocese of Toronto, began this series with an account, in the 1970 issue, of the Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto.

If the Founders of our Association could be with us today to survey the forty years of their unpredictable infant, they would surely be vexed with the various problems of finance and personnel which their child has had to face; yet, they would likely feel a warm glow of deep pride at the maturity and legacy which their offspring has given to the fraternity of Canadian Church History, especially, and generally, the History of Canada.