



Presbyterian History

A Newsletter of the Committee on History
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Volume 59, Number 2

Fall 2015

The Armenian Genocide and the Chambers family, 1879-1923

by Peter Bush, Winnipeg

In April 2015, Armenia and the world marked the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. While 1915 was beginning of the systematic elimination of the Armenian intelligentsia and the start of the forced expulsion of Armenians from Turkey, the Armenian community had faced persecution which ebbed and flowed over a period of nearly forty years. Historians have marked points of severe persecution in 1877-1878, in 1895-1896, in the region around Adana (south-eastern Turkey) in 1909, and the period being marked by this year's anniversary, 1915-1923.

Armenia, located in what we would now call eastern Turkey and north into the former Soviet Union, is an ancient country with a national history dating back 2,500 years. For much of that time it has been controlled by various non-Armenian nation states and empires. The Armenian Apostolic Church dates from the 1st century AD, and Armenia identified itself as a Christian nation in 301, the first in the world to do so.

Canadian Presbyterians over more than four decades sought to support the Armenian community through financial support to provide material aid; welcoming refugees, particularly orphans, into Canada; and encouraging international diplomacy. The Armenian Crisis was the first international humanitarian crisis the fledgling Presbyterian Church in Canada faced, having been formed from the union of four predecessor denominations in 1875.

On one level this support was not surprising since the vast majority of Armenians were Christians. On another level the support was unexpected for the Armenians were not Protestants. Primarily Armenian Orthodox, Armenians were from the Middle East, with a different culture and way of life which would have seemed strange to most Canadians. Nonetheless Presbyterians and other Canadians raised money, prayed, mobilized members to put political pressure on government, and helped fund a farm for Armenian orphans near Georgetown, Ontario.

Canadians in general and Canadian Presbyterians in particular knew about the events in Turkey through the writings of the Chambers brothers and their families, and the influence of their contacts in Canada. This essay uses the writing of the Chambers clan and their circle of friends as a window through which to look at the Armenian genocide and the response of Canadian Presbyterians.

On Nov. 7, 1879 Robert Chambers, Robert's wife, Elizabeth, and their son, Lucas, along with Robert's brother, William Nesbitt Chambers arrived at the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions mission station in Erzroum in (present-day eastern Turkey) the Ottoman empire. The Chambers brothers and Elizabeth had grown up in that hotbed of Presbyterianism and missionary fire, Oxford County, Ontario. Raised within the Church of Scotland, the brothers, not surprisingly, attended Queen's University.

Robert, born in 1849, graduated from Queen's University in 1866 and went to Princeton Seminary, completing his theological training in 1870. He returned to Canada and served the East Williams congregation north of Whitby, Ontario, for nine years. Robert married Elizabeth on Dec. 31, 1872. William Nesbitt (usually called by his middle name), five years Robert's junior, graduated from Princeton in 1876, doing post-graduate studies at Princeton College in medicine and Union Seminary in New York City in theology.

Erzroum, a community 6,000 feet above sea level (higher than Denver), near Mount Ararat, had a population made up of ethnic Turks and Armenians, both present in significant numbers. The missionary effort which had made little headway among the Muslim Turks found a more hospitable welcome among the Armenian community.

The brothers arrived just after the signing of the Treaty of Berlin ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. The Ottoman Empire covered a vast region extending from Eastern Europe through Turkey and into the Middle East. The Ottoman Empire (an Islamic state) had lost to the Russian Czarist regime (a Christian state). The defeat was a humiliation to the Turks and many questioned the loyalty of the Christian Armenians living in Turkey, denouncing them as traitors. Most Armenians had been loyal to the Ottomans during the war, although some had welcomed the Russian army with open arms. The concerns about the Armenians' loyalty coincided with a food shortage brought on by the war and a poor crop. While many living in the Ottoman Empire felt the pain of the famine it was particularly severe for Armenians who had their access to food curtailed as they were accused of being in league with the Russians who were said to be responsible for the famine.

In Feb. 1880, the Chambers and three other Canadians in Erzroum wrote an open letter "To the Canadian Public", containing the following, "We appeal to the Canadian public for much needed aid. Give, and God will bless you; for "he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." The call to help was picked up by George M Grant, Principal of Queen's University. Grant, one of the most influential Presbyterians in Canada, adding material contained in a personal letter received from

Robert, wrote a letter to the editor of the Globe. Grant's letter was then widely distributed through regional and denominational publications. Citing Biblical references to the region, Grant argued the Christian community in Canada should respond to the need because,

Those peoples and lands are linked to us by a thousand human, historical, and spiritual links. Towards them a mighty unseen power seems drawing all the great world forces... The only gleam of hope for the future of those lands that we can discern in the confusion and present despair are in the mission churches, schools, and colleges.

Grant concluded that now was the time to give to the missionaries the resources they needed to "be saviours to the helpless, and so to strengthen their influence for the future." Grant believed Christian mission was the hope of the world, it was imperative for Canadian Presbyterians to respond to the need, impacting world events for good. Canadians did respond.

The Chambers settled into work in Erzroum. Their personal lives bore witness to the cost of mission work even in the late 19th century. Robert and Elizabeth had come with their infant son, Lucas, who died six weeks after their arrival in Erzroum. The sorrow of the loss would have been somewhat displaced when on May 22, 1880 Nesbitt married Mary F. Bliss, a missionary in Erzroum who had arrived in 1878. Tragically Mary died just over a year later on May 28, 1881. Robert and Elizabeth had three more sons, one of who died in infancy. Nesbitt remarried in 1884 to Cornelia Pond Williams, the daughter of long-time missionaries to Beirut. Nesbitt and Cornelia had four children, two boys and two girls, the boys died before reaching adulthood, their daughters survived to adulthood. Over the course of sixteen years in Erzroum the Chambers clan buried four children and a spouse. In addition, Robert and Elizabeth were forced to leave in 1888 due to ill-health. The doctors consulted in the United States believed Erzroum's elevation was a contributing factor to the couple's health issues and so when the Chambers returned to Turkey in 1891, Robert was assigned to the Bithynia High School in Bardizag which was at sea level.

Bardizag, south of the Bay of Izmit (or Izmid), was nestled in the hills along the coast of the Sea of Marmora. In 1873, a boys' school was built adjacent to the American mission's girls' school. In addition to the standard academic stream, the school offered vocational training in wood-working and carpentry; cobbling and shoe-making; and basket-making. As Director of the school managing this increasingly complex operation was Robert's primary responsibility. As in Erzroum, the population was a mixture of Turks and Armenians, and Chambers' presence, as a foreign missionary, offered credibility and support to the Armenian faith community in the district. At its peak enrollment, the Bithynia High School had 300 students in the academic stream and 100 in the



trades programing. Following the massacres of Armenians in 1895-1896, the school started an orphanage for boys, with a new building dedicated to housing Armenian orphans opening in 1904. During Chambers' two decades of leadership the campus grew dramatically. (A post-1904 photograph of the campus is above.)

As the Ottoman Empire continued to unravel through the late 19th century, Sultan Abdul Hamid II sought to strengthen his hold on power; turning his back on European influences he moved towards an increasingly Islamic state. To encourage conversion to Islam, non-Muslims faced double taxation. In addition, government officials turned a blind eye to the pogrom-like marches and riots occurring in Christian neighbourhoods, as supporters of a pan-Islamic Ottoman Empire sought to intimidate Christians.

In 1894 some Armenians, tired of the intimidation and the unfair tax system, refused to pay the double tax, the military was sent to enforce the tax.

Bloodshed occurred as some Armenians resisted. Pan-Islamists now had a scapegoat to blame for the collapsing empire: the Christians. Between 100,000 and 300,000 Christians were killed, both Armenians and Assyrians. In addition, 50,000 children were left orphaned.

As Nesbitt wrote in his memoirs, tension was widespread in the fall of 1895, in Erzroum 80 military patrols of 20 soldiers each patrolled the city, ostensibly to keep the peace. On Friday, Oct. 25, 1895, the mosques in Erzroum had unusually long noon-day sermons. Shortly after the bugle call at

the end of noon-day prayer, the military patrols turned from keeping the peace to looting and murder in the Armenian section of town. The massacre ended with the sunset bugle call, a call to prayer.

Nesbitt described a scene encountered in an Armenian home he knew,

The windows were smashed, the furniture in pieces, the bedding and clothing and other valuables plundered. The walls of one room ploughed with bullets and the floor and walls all stained with great blotches of blood. But the most pathetic sight was in the place used as a kitchen. An aged woman was sitting moaning as if in pain, keeping time with the sway of her body...Lying on mats and covered with mats were the bodies of her two daughters-in-law...

As accounts of what was happening in Turkey filtered to Canada *The Canada Presbyterian*, a Toronto-based weekly, took a special interest in the Armenians' cause of the Armenians. A Dec. 4, 1895 editorial described what was happening, ...the details which reach the outside world from Armenia...get every day...more horrible, outrageously and wantonly cruel...and not only that, but evidence is steadily accumulating of a

deliberate purpose in the butchery of that poor, defenceless people, to exterminate them or render them utterly powerless in the grasp of their implacable foe, so that at any time the work of extermination can be completed.

Writing before the word "genocide" had been coined, the editorial highlighted characteristics which would warrant the use of the word. Further, the editorial showed foresight suggesting at a later date there might be an attempt to completely annihilate the Armenian community.

A fund-raising campaign was launched so the Red Cross could purchase needed materials as they responded to the presenting situation. Women's Missionary Society's, Sunday Schools, youth groups, and individuals responded along with congregations. Robert again contacted George M. Grant, who again was a leading figure in the fund-raising. The Queen's University student paper *The Journal* contended, "The duty of the hour is to save the Armenian. This demands the prompt liberality of the Christian people of all lands....The need is urgent and the response should be generous and prompt."

At his brother Robert's urging, James N. Chambers wrote to his Member of Parliament, W. H. Montague, in 1896, asking that the government help pay the travel costs for refugees seeking to come to Canada. James had remained on the family farm in north Norwich Twp., Ontario while his brothers had left. James quoted from his brother's letter, "The Armenians as you know are tremendously cut up. Very many of them are anxious to emigrate. They make good settlers. If the Canadian government would offer assistance to them very many would take advantage and go." Robert's idea was for Canada to open the Prairies to large scale Armenian migration. The assistant secretary, Department of the Interior replied the government did not have funds to guarantee new settlers' trip across the Atlantic, yet any Armenian who did arrive might qualify for settlement under the Dominion Lands Act. Undeterred in his desire to help, in 1924 James Chambers attempted sponsoring S. B. Tatarian, an Armenian refugee residing in France, as a farm labourer. His efforts receive little encouragement from the Canadian Immigration Service.

Programs designed for sponsoring refugees were a thing of the future.

While the international community did its hand wringing they provided little direct support for the Armenians. The massacres ended in 1896, and things returned to a more peaceful state. Queen's University bestowed an honorary Doctor of Divinity on Robert in 1897 in recognition of his work in Turkey and efforts in mobilizing support for the Armenian cause. The doctorate was a sign of Queen's support for the Armenian cause.

Lawson (Robert and Elizabeth's youngest son) and his wife, Ada Pierce, joined the mission staff at the Bithynia High School in 1905. The younger Chambers served there for three years, before J. R. Mott appointed Lawson non-stipendary YMCA staff in Turkey. The younger Chambers also helped the senior Chambers prepare for a return to North America in 1912.

Nesbitt and his family were transferred, in 1899, to Adana, in the province of Cilicia. On the Mediterranean Sea coast, Adana and the surrounding area was home to a large Armenian population.

The continuing collapse of the Sultan's power led to a revolt by the Young Turks, a coalition of workers' parties and political liberals supported by some of the military. They came to power in July 1908, overthrowing Sultan Hamid. The Young Turks rise to power was welcomed by the Armenian community who hoped for religious freedom, the end of unfair taxation, and a turning towards European patterns of life. A counter-revolution was launched by the Sultan in April 1909, supported by those wanting a pan-Islamic state and those in the military dreaming of the Ottoman Empire's return.

News of the Sultan's return to power led to anti-Armenian violence in Adana and the surrounding province. Over the course of two weeks in April 1909 20,000 people, both Armenians and Turkish Muslims were killed. Some Armenians sought to defend themselves by killing their attackers.

As night fell on the first day of the massacre Nesbitt and Cornelia's house and yard were crammed with 1,000 people seeking refuge from the violence, including students from the nearby girls' school. Part of the school had been set on fire by

looters. Among those seeking safety was an Armenian pastor who was stabbed while Nesbitt was pulling him into the compound's safety. The pastor died in Nesbitt's arms.

Lawson, present in Adana during the massacre, had witnessed the start of the violence. His excellent command of Armenian made him invaluable as a translator for the British envoy seeking to determine what had happened.

The Toronto *Globe*, under the editorship of the Rev. James Macdonald, a Presbyterian minister concerned about the violence in Adana, carried numerous stories about the situation. *The Globe* launched a fundraising campaign to provide support for the survivors. Eventually the Turkish military stepped in and brought an end to the violence. A military court tried and convicted some of the perpetrators. The violence left a deep mark on many, including Cornelia who returned to America with her youngest daughter to deal with what would now be called post-traumatic stress disorder.

Queen's University bestowed an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree on Nesbitt in 1911, a recognition of his extraordinary bravery and statesmanship during both the 1895-1896 and the 1909 massacres. But 1909 was not the end of the violence.

Robert and Elizabeth returned to Turkey in 1914, serving as evangelists in Constantinople. Robert sensed Turkey was on the edge of something new and with great hopefulness wrote an article for the *Queen's Quarterly*. Canadian Christians should take an interest in the Ottoman Empire because of "the sacred associations of the lands" within its bounds and due to the presence of "remnants of the Christian church of the first centuries." To those two old arguments he added "the intellectual and spiritual crisis" presently impacting the people of the Empire including the Muslims. Christians had a duty to "comprehend" this "important human movement" and to make the "sacrifice" needed to put it "the right direction."

The start of World War I, as Turkey aligned itself with Germany, dashed Robert's hopes. As the war started, most Armenians fought on the side of the Ottoman Empire, although some joined the Russian army in its war against Turkey. The Turkish leadership was able to question the loyalty of

the Armenians, and suggest they were traitors. By the start of 1915 Armenians in small communities in eastern Turkey faced forced expulsions from their homes and the executions their leaders. In April 1915, 250 Armenian intellectuals were arrested in Constantinople and eventually killed, the event most often pointed to as the start of the genocide. Over the next three years Turkish and German military drove Armenians from their homes forcing them to march to Iraq and Syria, many died en route. Thousands were killed. Thousands of young women were forced to convert to Islam before becoming the wives of Muslim Turks. The Armenian population in many communities was obliterated, Bardizag, home to Bithynia High School, went from 12,000 Armenians in 1912 to 500 in 1919. Between 800,000 and 1,500,000 Armenians were killed. Greeks and Assyrians living in Turkey were also killed.

The Chambers did not witness the worst of the violence, for they, like most missionaries, were pulled out of Turkey by their mission boards by the end of 1915. Nonetheless through their networks they heard what was taking place. And through their networks in Europe and North America they sought to help the Armenians.

Nesbitt gave a statement to the British investigating team. He wrote,

...it would appear that the whole scheme was intended to be a relentless effort on the part of the central authorities either to exterminate the Armenian nation or to reduce them to... "A remnant very small and of no account." The enormity is not so much in the torture, massacring, outrage, etc., as in the intention and effort to exterminate a nation.

Nesbitt was clear this systematic attempt to eliminate the Armenian nation was qualitatively different than the events of 1895-96 and 1909. The goal was to crush "all hope of life and a future." Having come to this conclusion he wrote to an old classmate from his Princeton College days, Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States, expressing the hope, "Would that your influence could be exerted in some way to stay the spoiler and rescue the miserable remnant." Wilson re-

plied, “we have been doing everything that is diplomatically possible to check the terrible business.”

Robert and Elizabeth left Turkey in the summer of 1915 and Robert died in Newton, Mass. in 1916. Lawson took up his father’s pen joining with many other church people in calling the Canadian public to the Armenian cause. In two issues of the *Queen’s Quarterly* in 1917 Lawson framed the Armenian genocide in larger terms arguing the lands of the Armenians, Greeks, Syrians and Jews should be “restored to their rightful owners.”

Lawson’s voice joined others in seeking justice for Armenians, including the Rev. S. H. Sarkissian, an Armenian and a Presbyterian minister serving at Oak Lake, Manitoba. Sarkissian was invited to address the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1916.

The end of World War I witnessed the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire. In May 1918 a new Armenian state declared independence, located in eastern Turkey and extending into the Russian Caucasus. Within a year it had been recognized by a number of countries including the United States.

The collapse of the Sultan’s power created a vacuum among Turkish Nationalists and into the gap stepped Mustafa Kemal Ataturk who with military genius and organizational ability forged a new political party out of various factions. Rising quickly in political influence and with the military firmly on his side Ataturk sought to maintain as much of Turkish landmass as possible. His vision came into conflict with the newly formed Armenian state. The result was another round of battles frequently followed by massacres of unarmed Armenians. The Armenian state was overrun and the western powers did nothing in response, they had no appetite for another war and their attention was on what was happening in Russia as the Czar was overthrown and the Communists came to power.

Lawson’s 1921 plea, published in *The Globe*, urging Canada to protect the rights of the Armenia state fell on largely deaf ears. He argued,

What would Canada get out of this?...she would get a new sense of nationhood, international recognition, an opportunity for enterprise and energy,...finally, she would have the consciousness of having tackled a job which humanitarian

considerations make imperative...to assure the existence of a plucky but unlucky race which would not be slow to express its gratitude in substantial form.

The Canadian Government was unprepared to do more, unwilling intervene militarily and unprepared to recognize Armenians as anything but ethnically Asian. This latter decision made it difficult for Armenian refugees to enter Canada.

If the Canadian Government was unwilling to act, individual Canadians did respond, raising just over \$1 million (about \$12 million in 2015 dollars) in aid, and enthusiastically supporting the Georgetown farm for Armenian orphans.

Nesbitt returned to Adana in 1919 to take up his work, Lawson was teaching Philosophy at Constantinople College in 1920. In 1922, Nesbitt and Cornelia retired to Beirut, where Nesbitt died in 1934. In 1923, Lawson and Ada returned to North America permanently. The Chambers’ presence in Turkey was now at an end. Kate, Nesbitt and Cornelia’s daughter, was in Beirut where her husband taught at the American University of Beirut. Kate’s son, Talcott, served in the American diplomatic service, being the United States ambassador in Tunisia and Syria during the 1970’s. William and Cornelia’s great-granddaughter, Kate Seelye is a reporter with NPR specializing in the Middle East.

This limited account has presented the story of the Armenian genocide from one Canadian family’s perspective. Other Canadian missionaries were in Turkey at the time. A future researcher may take up the challenge of documenting the work of Canadian missionaries in the final decades of the Ottoman Empire, a largely unknown story.

Postscript: Three members of the Chambers clan wrote “memoirs” about Turkey. Nesbitt’s slim *Yoljuluk: Random Thoughts on a Life in Imperial Turkey* was published in 1928 and re-printed in 1988. Ada, wife of Lawson, wrote a novel, *In an Anatolian Valley*, published by Ryerson Press in 1955. Dorothea Chambers Blaisdell’s, daughter of Nesbitt and Cornelia, memoir *Missionary Daughter: Witness to the End of the Ottoman Empire* was published posthumously in 2002.

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HISTORICAL VIGNETTE

The Board of Social Service and Evangelism struggled in 1915 with the question of unemployment in industrializing Canada. The Board offered a number of suggested solutions, including providing land to the poor so they might make a living, rather than leasing land to corporations for speculative purposes. (Report of the Board of Social Service and Evangelism, *Acts and Proceedings*, 1915, pp. 359-360; 363.)

Unemployment has been the lot of tens of thousands of able-bodied and willing-minded [people]. The majority of these had no savings to fall back upon. Some had bought homes on which they had made small payments. These have had to be sacrificed. In many cases the women or children have had to become the breadwinners.

Many have suffered sorely from cold and hunger, ill-clad and ill-sheltered. Two or more families have lived where only one should have lived for comfort and health. Not a few have gone to the front primarily to save their families from starvation.

This problem of unemployment is one calling imperatively for solution. It must be solved. It is the duty of Society to solve it. To recognize this is to take the first hopeful step toward the solution. The following things also seem clearly hopeful and possible.

- 1. A Dominion-wide system of Free Labour-Bureaux, Federal, Provincial and Municipal to serve alike potential employers and employees by bringing the vacant job and the workless...together to save the latter from needless unemployment on the one hand, and from exploitation, deception and robbery at the hands of profit-making Labour Bureau sharks;*
- 2. Federal, Provincial and Municipal authorities should also co-operate in providing employment on needed and desirable public works. If the prisoners from hostile nations [Prisoners of War were put to work during World War I] are so utilized, surely unemployed Canadians can and should be utilized and provided for.*
- 3. Something has been done and much more might be done by getting the unemployed onto the land, either temporarily or permanently.*
- 4. Might not governments devise a system of credit to make possible the starting of poor [people] on small farms? And by withholding from rapacious, speculative control the national domain, and opening the land to settlement on terms within reach of the poor?*
- 5. For temporary relief it would be much better if the charitably disposed would exercise themselves to provide odd jobs for underemployed rather than simply to give charity. Uptown churches might do much more than at present is done in this way by utilizing our own institutions such as settlements and institutes as mediums, thus at once (a) providing relief, (b) avoiding pauperizing of the needy, and (c) giving an added leverage to our down town workers upon those they seek to serve and save.*

Assembly Resolution on the Land Question:

The Assembly call attention to the serious social evils and injustices arising out of or accentuated by our system of land tenure; lament the reckless grants by Dominion and provincial authorities to individuals and companies of agricultural, timber and coal lands, thus discouraging settlement, and imposing for all time a toll on the legitimate industry of the country; believe that speculation in farm lands has contributed directly and indirectly to the demoralization of rural life, and that land speculation in our cities has contributed to the unhealthy congestion of population, the evil of high rents and the high cost of living which presses sorely on the working classes of our country; and express the conviction that vast values created by the community ought not to go into the pockets of individuals thus stimulating the gambling propensity in human nature and discounting honest work.

BOOK NOTES

Dimitry Anastakis, ed., *The Sixties: Passion, Politics, and Style*, (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 197 pgs., index

The 1960's were both iconic and ambiguous. This collection of nine essays well demonstrates the tensions that were the 1960's. From discussion about the limits of protest when has the passion gone too far, to the clash between the urban planners' vision of a person friendly city and the freedom young people (young men, in particular) experienced in being able to drive their own vehicles, readers are confronted with the range and challenge that was the 1960's. The collection is remarkably silent about the place of the church in the "triumphal failure" that was the 1960's. This oversight may say more about North American academics at the start of the new millennium than it says about the church in the 1960's

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David M. Tripold, *Sing to the Lord a New Song: Choirs in the Worship and Culture of the Dutch Reformed Church in America, 1785-1860*, (Eerdmans, 2012) 279 pgs, index, CD

Music is often a source of contention in church life, for immigrant faith communities it is particularly challenging. What language will the congregation sing in? Will the great hymns of the faith from home be lost? Tripold describes how one immigrant faith community, Dutch Calvinists, made its way through these questions. Adopting English, developing singing schools to enhance congregational singing, and ultimately introducing professionally led choirs. Singing schools became a means to hold on to young people, as young people taught the older generation a new musically style.

The final chapter of the book is a case study of musical life of one congregation, First Dutch Reformed Church, Albany, New York. In a fascinating appendix, Tripold explores how the development of choirs changed church architecture.

While the book has sections aimed at the music specialist, the general reader will find it interesting as well.

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A. G. Roeber, *Hopes for Better Spouses: Protestant Marriage and Church Renewal in Early Modern Europe, India, and North America*, (Eerdmans, 2013) 289 pgs, index

Roeber carefully traces a line of thought present in Lutheran Pietism and among Moravians, starting in the late 17th century, which viewed marriage not in terms of submission, but rather as a friendship rooted in the mutual pursuit of holiness. Roeber makes his case not just for Europe but also for Lutherans in North America and missionaries in India.

While readers may get bogged down in the historical detail presented, the pastoral question remains, "Do I articulate a vision of marriage that upholds the pursuit of holiness as the couple's common aim? Or is marriage simply an expression of the couple's love?"

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Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970*, (McGill-Queen's UP, 2005) 501 pgs, index

The Quebec Question which so dominated Canadians' awareness in the latter decades of the 20th century appears to be a piece of history. The generally accepted view has been the Quiet Revolution in Quebec which brought Quebec exceptionalism to the fore was a rebellion against and rejection of the Roman Catholic Church's hegemony. Gauvreau, a leading Church historian, challenges that view. He contends that the seeds of the Quiet Revolution were planted, often intentionally by the church. And that it was the church that made possible the explosion of cultural and intellectual ferment which was the Quiet Revolution.

This radically different understanding of the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and Quebec culture, opens new ways of thinking about the relationship between the church in general and other modern cultural movements.

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Presbyterian History – ISSN 0827-9713