

**“Religious Duties and Patriotic Endeavours”:  
The Catholic Church Extension Society,  
French Canada and the Prairie West,  
1908-1916**

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At the turn of the century, Canada witnessed the beginning of a dramatic transformation that would alter her destiny. Between 1896 and 1914, over three million people, predominantly of Eastern and Southern European origin, ventured from their homelands and carved out a place for themselves in the Canadian urban heartland and the Prairie West. Considering that many of these new Canadians were either Roman Catholic or Catholics of the Eastern Rites,<sup>1</sup> the Church in Canada was faced with the task of having to integrate numerous non-English-speaking and non-French-speaking adherents. As language rather than religion became the primary axis of Canadian loyalty in that generation, the presence of these newcomers threatened the fragile balance existing between French Canadian and Anglo-Celtic Catholics. Nevertheless, concerned with the spiritual and material welfare of the immigrants and fearful of Protestant mission initiatives in the West, the Catholic Church undertook several ventures to Canadianize and preserve the Catholicity of these new Canadians.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps one of the most overlooked of these efforts has been the Catholic Church Extension Society of Canada. Established in 1908, and granted its Pontifical Constitution in 1910, the Extension Society was a fundraising organization dedicated to “cultivating the missionary spirit in the clergy and the people,” and “preserving the Faith of Jesus Christ” among Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> Eastern Rite or uniate Churches are those Churches of Eastern Christendom in union with Rome, which retain their own liturgy. Within the Canadian context, between 1896 and 1914, many newcomers were of the Byzantine or Ruthenian Rite. Most of these uniates hailed from Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian empire, and were of either Ukrainian (Ruthenian) or Hungarian origin. Although there are differences in liturgy and canon law with Rome, the Eastern Rite Churches adhere to the authority of the Pope and the doctrines of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>2</sup> *Toronto Star*, 20 September 1909; clipping found in Catholic Church Extension Society Papers, Box 1, 1909 File, Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto. (A.A.T.)

immigrants.<sup>3</sup> While actively engaged in financing and defending the Catholic Home Missions, this clerical and lay Society became the focus of tension and debate between French and English-speaking Catholics and their competing visions of Canada. An examination of the Extension Society's first decade of operation provides a glimpse of both the complexities of missionary endeavours in the West and, more important, the ethno-cultural strain between the two largest linguistic groups in Canadian Catholicism. Between 1908 and 1916, the Extension Society's effort to fortify the Catholic home missions in the West was repeatedly frustrated by its involvement in the ethno-cultural issues which affected the Church as a whole.

The concept of Church extension was by no means new to Canadian Catholics. In 1905, the Catholic Church Extension Society of America was founded in Lampeer, Michigan, by Father Francis Clement Kelley, a native of Prince Edward Island. Kelley maintained his connections with the Canadian clergy, encouraging their individual membership in his venture. Eventually Canadian concern for the material and spiritual well-being of Catholic immigrants in the West provoked a healthy correspondence between Kelley and the Archbishop of Toronto, Fergus Patrick McEvay. Together, they engaged the support of the Canadian members of the American Society, and gathered a virtual "who's who" of prominent Catholic laymen for the purpose of founding an autonomous Extension Society in Canada. By June, 1908, McEvay organized the first Board of Governors, which included Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Charles Fitzpatrick, noted brewer Eugene O'Keefe, prominent engineers Michael Haney and Michael Davis, Monsignor Alfred E. Burke, the Honourable Alexandre Taschereau, and Judge Nicholas Beck. In the autumn of that same year, these gentlemen prepared a constitution and made arrangements for the purchase of the *Catholic Register*, which would serve as the Society's official organ under the new title, *The Catholic Register and Canadian Extension*.<sup>4</sup>

Although Archbishop McEvay became the overall Chancellor of the Society, Monsignor Alfred Burke, as expected, was appointed President of the Society, and assumed duties as the new editor of the *Register*. Born in Georgetown, Prince Edward Island, in 1862, Alfred E. Burke studied at St. Dunstan's College, Charlottetown, and later pursued his theological training at Laval University. As a pastor and community figure, Burke gained notoriety for his boundless energy and his articulate interjections on ecclesiastical, economic, agricultural and political matters. Early in his career, for example, he became the focus of much attention and earned the nickname "tunnel-Burke" for his proposition that a tunnel be built under the

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<sup>3</sup> Catholic Church Extension Society, Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Governors, 23 September 1908, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Northumberland Strait, connecting his native Island with the mainland.<sup>5</sup> As years progressed, Burke earned the reputation of being a vociferous imperialist and temperance activist, whose manner was honest, fervid and often uncompromising.<sup>6</sup> Reflecting on Burke's life at a later date, his former altar boy, Father Francis Kelley, asserted: "His opinions were like dogmas of Faith. No wonder Canada split over him. Half of his world swore by him and the other half at him."<sup>7</sup>

Burke and the other Founders of the Extension Society were motivated by both a Christian and humanitarian desire to aid their coreligionists, and by an intense zeal to halt the Protestant advances among the newcomers to the West. The numerous Ukrainian Catholics of the Eastern Rite, for instance, were of particular concern to the Society because of their desperate need for clergy, chapels, schools and religious items for the celebration of the Mass. In his address to the First American Catholic Missionary Congress, in 1908, Burke was emphatic in his belief that if Catholics hesitated in their duty to redeem and care for the souls in the West, thousands would be lost to the Church.<sup>8</sup> In an effort to remedy this emergency, the Extension Society pledged itself to the founding of a missionary college, to the training of clergy for the West, to the dissemination of Catholic literature, to the collecting of funds for the building of chapels and schools, and to the financing of the everyday needs of missionaries working with Catholic immigrants.<sup>9</sup> Through this programme of education and action, the Extension Society hoped to fulfill its motto: "Convert the World to God in the Twentieth Century."<sup>10</sup>

These aspirations to build and nurture the Church in the West were accompanied by Canadian nationalist sentiment. The Founders of Extension hoped that awareness and participation by Catholics in the home missions would create a great Catholic solidarity from east to west, and advance the strength of the Church in the Dominion.<sup>11</sup> On several occasions, the Society's

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<sup>5</sup> Fact sheet by Reverend James McGivem, s.j., Burke Papers, A.A.T.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Clement Kelley, *The Story of Extension* (Chicago: Extension Press, 1922), pp. 159-62; see also Kelley, *The Bishop Jots it Down* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1939), p. 148.

<sup>7</sup> Kelley, *The Bishop Jots it Down* ... p. 149.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred E. Burke, "The Need of A Missionary College" in *First American Catholic Missionary Congress, Official Proceedings* (Chicago: J.S. Hyland and Co., 1909), p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> Catholic Church Extension Society, Minute Book, p. 17

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4; also see Letter from Alfred E. Burke to Charles Fitzpatrick, 6 November 1908, Sir Charles Fitzpatrick Papers, LXXXII, p. 45514, Public Archives of Canada.

<sup>11</sup> George Daly, c.s.s.r., *Catholic Problems in Western Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan Co., 1921), pp. 48-54.

official organ, *The Catholic Register*, reiterated this patriotism, commenting: “This country should be Catholic. The Catholic Church alone can make it (Canada) ... a home of a race destined to attain the highest ideals in religion and civicism.”<sup>12</sup> Such comments amplified the Society’s implicit vision of Canada and its own mission as “purely and simply Canadian and patriotic, as well as religious.”<sup>13</sup> In this spirit, the Extension Society set out to Christianize and “singly uplift Canadian civilization,” secure in the belief that Catholicity and citizenship were complimentary.<sup>14</sup>

Motivated by this Catholic zeal and patriotic vision, the years of Burke’s presidency, from 1908 to 1915, were marked by a flurry of activity. Although much of the Society’s attention was directed to the Ukrainian Catholics of the West, chapels and financial assistance were arranged for Hungarians, Italians, Poles, Germans, Celts and Amerindian peoples. In addition, Burke frequently utilized the pages of the *Register* for fund-raising drives, and he engaged his acid pen in vehement attacks against the “Wolves in sheep’s clothing,” namely, the Protestant missionaries who tirelessly evangelized the new Canadians. In 1910, the Society was given energetic support by the recently formed Women’s Auxiliary, a group that enabled the Society to send tons of toys, books, altar linens, vestments and funds for seven chapels to the West.<sup>15</sup> Combined with these efforts, the Extension Society under Burke raised roughly \$94,000.00 for the home missions.<sup>16</sup>

Despite reports from the *Register* that “Peter has looked forth from his watch tower... and all is well,” by 1915 the programmes initiated by the Society could only be considered minimally successful. Although Burke was not forthright in admitting such, between 1908 and 1915 the Extension Society never collected more than \$17,000.00 annually. Considering that by 1911 the 2.8 million Catholics in Canada constituted nearly forty percent of the population, the average annual collection represented a scant 1/2c per Catholic. Moreover, the net collection from 1908 to 1915 amounted to only 3¢ per Catholic.<sup>17</sup> When these figures are compared to concurrent Protestant mission efforts, the work of the Extension Society appears humbled. In 1909, for example, the Protestant Canadian Missionary Congress reported that the average contributions for home missions in 1908 amounted to \$1.19 per

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<sup>12</sup> *Catholic Register*, 18 February 1909.

<sup>13</sup> *Catholic Register*, 12 November 1908.

<sup>14</sup> *Catholic Register*, 12 November 1908; 26 February 1920.

<sup>15</sup> *Catholic Register*, 3 August 1911 ; also C.C.E.S. Minute Book, 4 April 1915, pp. 47-51.

<sup>16</sup> Financial Reports of the Catholic Church Extension Society, 1918-1929, C.C.E.S. Papers, Boxes I-III, A.A.T.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1918, p. 3.

Protestant communicant.<sup>18</sup> Directors of the Extension Society, embarrassed by the weak Catholic effort, attempted to spark more Catholic activity by openly comparing their paltry sums with those of the Protestants. Annual financial reports contained overt challenges such as: “The Presbyterian Home Missions double this amount in one year... our total does not represent donations from five percent of the Catholic population.”<sup>19</sup> As late as 1915-1916, Archbishop Neil McNeil lamented that while the Presbyterians raised \$400,000.00, the Extension Society could only manage about \$17,500.00.<sup>20</sup>

Despite their grand strategy to spearhead a national Catholic effort to build and fortify the Home missions in the West, the Extension Society fell short of its expectations. Canadian Catholics had not rallied behind its banner, and the Extension concept failed to acquire a national voice. Two major reasons may be cited for the Society’s limited success. To begin with, it suffered from several internal problems, including a crisis of leadership. Burke’s comments, methods and personality caused a great deal of anxiety and strong feelings among the French-Canadian and Anglo-Celtic bishops. The most far reaching problem, however, was the cultural and linguistic fragmentation between French and English-speaking Catholics; ethno-cultural squabbling in the East divided the Society’s potential base of support and, in the long term, weakened its projects in the West.

From its inception, the Extension Society repeatedly failed to capture the interest of most French-Canadians. As early as 1908, Burke had wanted to establish the Extension Society’s headquarters in Montreal, but Archbishop Paul Bruchesi, conscious of Burke’s reputation as an imperialist and English Canadian nationalist, refused to give his permission for the venture. Later, when Burke visited Ottawa with a similar proposal, Archbishop Thomas Duhamel, “as suspicious as Bruchesi,” refused his consent.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, at St. Boniface, Archbishop Adélarde Langevin OMI, criticized the Society for not including him in its founding, claiming that he should have been notified of the Society’s intentions to initiate projects in his Archdiocese.<sup>22</sup> He also took umbrage to the selection of St. Dunstan’s, Burke’s *alma mater*, as the missionary training college, on grounds that its graduates would “not (be)

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<sup>18</sup> “Report of Committee of Statistics” in *Canada’s Missionary Congress* (Toronto: Canadian Council, Laymen’s Missionary Movement, 1909), p. 323.

<sup>19</sup> C.C.E.S. Annual Report, 1918, A.A.T., p. 3. Note: the same comment is contained in many previous reports.

<sup>20</sup> Neil McNeil, “Bulletin to Clergy,” 8 April 1916, Neil McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.

<sup>21</sup> Kelley, *The Bishop Jots it Down...* pp. 146-47.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Adélarde Langevin to Fergus McEvay, 16 January 1909, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.

much use” to the West. Langevin preferred that the Society send him foreign clergy or submit candidates for training at le College de St. Boniface.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, this largely anglophone organization threatened Langevin’s vision of a Catholic West, which deemed that the Prairies and its inhabitants were to be evangelized and nurtured, as they had always been, by French-Canadian Catholics.<sup>24</sup>

For many French-Canadian bishops, clergy and laymen, the Extension Society appeared to be a front for the “anglicization” of the new Catholic Canadians. Patrick Ryan, Auxiliary Bishop of Pembroke, captured the essence of the Society’s problem when he asserted: “it was regarded as an organized attempt to forward the interest of the English language and English influence ... in the Canadian West.”<sup>25</sup> Many characteristics of the Society reinforced this image among the prelates of French Canada. The choice of Toronto as the permanent headquarters for the society, and the role of the Archbishop of Toronto as permanent Chancellor became illustrative of the English Canadian orientation of the Society. Likewise, the presence of only four francophones on the Board of Governors and Burke’s preference for St. Dunstan’s as the official mission college, reinforced French-Canadian suspicions of “anglicization.”<sup>26</sup>

The *Catholic Register’s* numerous articles and editorials extolling the benefits of introducing English into the mission field did little to arrest the fears of French Canada. Burke’s editorials, for example, frequently contained pleas for western missionaries who could speak both the language of the immigrants and English.<sup>27</sup> His comments were occasionally supplemented by pro-English statements from other sources. In February, 1910, for instance,

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Raymond Hue], “*Gestae Dei per Francos: The French Canadian Experience in Western Canada*,” in B.G. Smillie ed. *Visions of the New Jerusalem* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983), pp. 42-45; also several other articles discuss the French Canadian activity in the West: Raymond Huel, “French-Speaking Bishops and the Cultural Mosaic in Western Canada,” in Richard Allen ed. *Religion and Society in the Prairie West* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1974): 53-64; Arthur I. Silver, “Some Quebec Attitudes in an Age of Imperialism,” *Canadian Historical Review*, LVII (December, 1976): 440-60; Robert Painchaud, “French Canadian Historiography and Franca-Catholic Settlement in Western Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* LIX (December, 1978): 447-66; Martin L. Kovacs, “The Hungarian School Question” in Martin Kovacs ed. *Ethnic Canadians: Culture and Education* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1978): 333-58.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Bishop Ryan to Neil McNeil, 26 February 1915, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Archbishop Langevin to Archbishop McEvay, 16 January 1909, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.

<sup>27</sup> *Catholic Register*, 16 September 1909.

a letter from Ivan Komarinzka, President of the Ruthenian Educational Society, informed the *Register* that Ukrainians “have to adapt themselves to Canadian customs (and)... learn the English language.”<sup>28</sup> In another issue the same year, the editors published a less tactful excerpt from the *Tablet* stating:

... it is plain that English will be the language of the West as French is the language of the East; and it is hoped that the splendid example of those who did settle in days gone by in Quebec ... will be followed by a new English speaking race of settlers.<sup>29</sup>

All things considered, by 1910, the editorial policy of the *Register* demonstrated its implicit allegiance to a vision of Canada that aspired to an English-speaking and Catholic Prairie West. This was confirmed later by Bishop Ovide Charlebois, the Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, when he informed Burke’s successor that: “‘Il est certain que votre prédécesseur s’est souvent servi du *Catholic Register* pour favoriser la cause anglaise au détriment de la cause française.”<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly enough, details from the backrooms of the Extension Society confirm many of the suspicions concerning “anglicization.” In a fateful memorandum to the Duke of Norfolk, dated 6 April 1909, Father Burke requested that the Duke help recruit English clergy for the missions of the Canadian West: “If we could get some few priests from any of the colleges you name... who would be willing to go over to the Ruthenian Rite, they could save the people religiously and conform them to English in a relatively short period.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, he encouraged the Duke to consider the Extension Society’s programme “to direct desirable colonization,” which of course was an invitation to Norfolk to stimulate Catholic emigration from England to the Canadian West.<sup>32</sup> Burke knew full well the implications of his memo, and later he admitted to Charles Fitzpatrick that his letter was “only intended for friendly eyes, and might tend to arouse the national spirit in some people, however, let the results be what they will.”<sup>33</sup> Burke was not alone in his sentiments or his vision. Several bishops, laymen and other clergy expressed similar sympathies. Redemptorist Father George Daly, who himself was an active supporter of Extension, publicly advocated the “healthy

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<sup>28</sup> *Catholic Register*, 3 February 1910.

<sup>29</sup> *Catholic Register*, 13 October 1910.

<sup>30</sup> from Ovide Charlebois, Vicar Apostolic of Keewatin, to Thomas O’Donnell, 4 January 1918, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.

<sup>31</sup> Memorandum from Alfred E. Burke to the Duke of Norfolk, 6 April 1909, Sir Charles Fitzpatrick Papers, LXXXII, p. 45454, P.A.C.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45453.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Alfred E. Burke to Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, 9 April 1909, Fitzpatrick Papers, LXXXII, p. 45458, P.A.C.

assimilation” of immigrants into the English Canadian milieu, claiming that: “There is no reason why our religious duties and patriotic endeavours should work at cross-purposes.”<sup>34</sup>

Despite Burke’s unpopularity among the prelates of Quebec and St. Boniface, he was not singularly responsible for the growing rift between the Extension Society and French Canada. In fact, much of the Extension Society’s difficulty came as a result of its involvement in the French-English clashes within the Catholic Church as a whole. To begin with, the ethno-cultural tension over the appointment of a bishop for the new diocese of Regina in 1910 was viewed by Burke as a great stumbling block to the Society’s work in the West.<sup>35</sup> In September of that same year, however, ethnic relations in the Church were aggravated further when Cardinal Bourne of Westminster addressed the XXI Eucharistic Congress in Montreal. Bourne’s comment that: “It is only by bringing the English tongue to render service to the cause of truth that Canada can be made a Catholic nation”<sup>36</sup> drew heavy criticism from the French-Canadian clergy, and further polarized the Church along linguistic lines. With Bourne’s irritating speech fresh in their minds, it is not surprising that French-Canadians were cautious, suspicious and often hostile to the appeals and aspirations of Burke and the largely anglophone Extension Society.

In retrospect, however, the bilingual schools issue in Ontario was the most explosive French-English struggle that directly influenced the fortunes of the Society. Bishop Michael Fallon of London, an ardent supporter of Extension, became the chief spokesman of the English-speaking hierarchy’s opposition to the expansion of bilingual education in Ontario. In May 1910, he met secretly with H.J. Hanna, a provincial government official, and vowed to: “cause to disappear every trace of bilingual teaching in the public schools of his diocese.”<sup>37</sup> Later, in August, the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Kingston and Toronto delegated Fallon to relay their disapproval of bilingual schools to Premier Whitney. When the affairs of his private meetings with Provincial authorities were leaked to the newspapers, French-Canadian prelates and the Quebec press heaped indignation on Fallon,<sup>38</sup> and ethno-cultural relations in the Church took a turn for the worse.

In the midst of this heated battle over bilingual schools, the *Catholic*

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<sup>34</sup> Daly, *Catholic Problems in Western Canada*, p. 85.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Alfred E. Burke to Charles Fitzpatrick, 22 July 1910, Fitzpatrick Papers, XIII, p. 5656, P.A.C.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Robert Choquette, *Language and Religion: A History of English-French Conflict in Ontario* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975), p. 91.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*



*Register* rushed to the aid of Fallon, publishing his photograph in several issues and offering him front-page space in which to refute his opponents. In September 1910, for instance, he accepted the *Register's* offer, and openly denied the “false” accusation that he was “unfriendly to the interests of the French-Canadian people.”<sup>39</sup> Later, in October, he was again given front-page space, in which he criticized bilingual schools as substandard and therefore futile and hostile to the interests of both French and English-speaking children.<sup>40</sup> The *Register's* support of Fallon comes as no surprise when it is realized that as early as January, 1910, Burke had editorialized that bilingual schools were impractical, and that “the imposition of another language” on English-speaking children was “unjust, unwise and unjudicious.”<sup>41</sup> Considering this visible lack of impartiality by the Extension Society’s official organ, it is little wonder that the motives of the Society were construed as unfriendly to French Canada, and the hope of a united effort for the home missions fizzled as early as 1910.

The accumulation of mistrust for the Society’s motives and the eruption of the schools issue created a major rift in the ranks of Extension. On November 19, 1910, at a special session of the Board of Governors, Burke read letters of resignation from Archbishop Archambault, the Society’s vice-president, and Archbishop Bégin, a Governor of Extension. Reasons for the resignations were not stated at the time, but later correspondence reveals that the apparent “anglicization” by the Society, the tone of the *Register*, and the presence of many opponents of bilingual schools on the Board of Governors accounted for the departure of the Society’s key representatives from French Canada. Interestingly, at that same meeting, Bishop Michael Fallon was elected to the Board of Governors.<sup>42</sup>

After the resignations of Bégin and Archambault, Archbishop McEvay penned two letters to each man, one in his function as Chancellor and the other as Archbishop of Toronto. In both epistles, he stressed that neither he nor the Society were prejudicial to French-Canadians, and added that ‘nationality and sectional ambitions’ had to give way to the common bond of the Faith.<sup>43</sup> In light of the dangerous activities of Protestant proselytizers and the weak state of the Western missions, McEvay referred to their resignations as “most ill-timed and unfortunate.”<sup>44</sup> However, while remind-

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<sup>39</sup> *Catholic Register*, 10 September 1910, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Catholic Register*, 20 October 1910, p. 1 .

<sup>41</sup> *Catholic Register*, 27 January 1910.

<sup>42</sup> C.C.E.S. Minute Book. 19 November 1910, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Archbishop McEvay to Archbishop Louis N. Bégin, 27 December 1910, C.C.E.S. Papers, Box 1, A.A.T.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Chancellor Fergus McEvay to Archbishop L. Begin, 27 December 1910, C.C.E.S. Papers, Box I, A.A.T.

ing the dissenting bishops of the necessity of subordinating linguistic and cultural issues to the considerations of Faith, he informed them of the practical necessity of recruiting English-speaking clergy, and introducing English to the home missions. According to McEvay, the immigrants could be reached only:

through the medium of those who could speak their own language, or through the offices of those who speak the English language which is that of the majority in the West and which is the language these foreigners learn of necessity if they are successfully to procure a livelihood.<sup>45</sup>

McEvay's admission of the inevitable "anglicization" of immigrants appears almost counter-productive. Obviously he underestimated the fact that French-Canadian Catholics were not likely to support the deliberate anglicization of the West, and the expense of their vision of a *Gestae Dei per Francos* – the Provincial mission of the French to spread, nurture and defend Catholicism in the Canadian West.<sup>46</sup> Needless to say, McEvay's letters accomplished little, and the gulf between the Society and French Canada persisted well into the 1920's. Beneficiaries of the Society, such as Bishops Émile Légal of St. Albert, Olivier-Elzear Mathieu of Regina, Ovide Charlebois of Keewatin and Albert Pascal of Prince Albert, were obvious exceptions to this phenomenon.

Aside from the Extension Society's obvious entanglement in the racial and linguistic politics of the Church, its own internal problems greatly diminished its effectiveness between 1909 and 1916. The death of Archbishop McEvay on May 11, 1911, for instance, left the Society without a Chancellor and, as a result, the bureaucratic and administrative mechanisms of the Extension Society slowed considerably. When the new Chancellor of the Society and Archbishop of Toronto, Neil McNeil, finally arrived in Ontario's capital in December, 1912, he immediately undertook a comprehensive investigation of the Society's activities. Requesting information from the Canadian Hierarchy, he wrote: "It is to be deplored that it has not received the general support it deserves, but has frequently encountered opposition and discouragement."<sup>47</sup> Speedily, the bishops returned massive letters, outlining the major problems of the Society, which included its alienation of French Canada, the leadership skills of Burke, the breakdown of communication between the Society and the episcopacy, and the "rough

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Huel, "*Gestae Dei per Francos...*", pp. 39-50.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Archbishop McNeil to the Canadian Catholic Bishops, 17 January 1913, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.

and quite too belligerent” tone of the *Catholic Register*.<sup>48</sup> Somewhat alarmed at these findings, McNeil prepared a package of reforms which he would present to the up-coming meeting of the Board of Governors.

On April 2, 1913, Archbishop McNeil attended his first meeting of the Board of Governors and took the opportunity to propose several reforms to the Society’s operations. His principal suggestion, that the *Register* be replaced by a monthly magazine, similar to that of the American Extension Society, incurred the wrath of Burke, Fitzpatrick, Haney and G. P. Magann. McNeil opted for the reduced format because he felt that the *Register* competed with six other English Catholic weeklies, and consequently its appeals on behalf of home missions went unheard in many Catholic homes.<sup>49</sup> This bitter disagreement over the *Register* precipitated, in part, a split on the Board of Governors between unofficial factions headed by Burke and McNeil. For the next two years, meetings frequently turned sour and tempers flared. In the end, McNeil lost his bid to restructure the *Register*.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, in August 1915, the strain and pressure of the Society took its toll on Burke and he announced his official resignation. Promptly, McNeil arranged that he be given the high honour of Protonotary Apostolic in recognition of his many labours for the Society in its earliest years.<sup>51</sup> Having received this honour, Burke embarked on a patriotic and spiritual mission to serve as an Allied army chaplain in war-torn Europe. In the wake of Burke’s withdrawal, Sir Charles Fitzpatrick resigned his position, marking the departure of the last of the principal founders of the Society,<sup>52</sup> the doors were now newly open for change and renovation.

The years after 1915 marked a dramatic change in the fortunes of the Extension Society. By October, 1915, J.A. Wall, the new editor of the

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<sup>48</sup> Letter from Bishop J. Morrison of Antigonish to McNeil, 29 January 1913, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.; also letters: Bishop Scollard to McNeil, 4 February 1913; P.T. Ryan to McNeil, 26 February 1913; Bishop Latulipe of Hailybury to McNeil, 4 February 1913; Bishop Mathieu of Regina to McNeil, January 1913. Bishop Latulipe’s letter is of particular significance for his comments on ethno-cultural affairs and Extension:

Ensuite je vois franchement que les malheureuses et inexplicables divisions qui existent entre les Catholiques de langue anglaise et ceux de langue française ne sont pas sans exercer une funeste influence sur toutes nos oeuvres Catholiques.

<sup>49</sup> Letter from Neil McNeil to Apostolic Delegate Stagni, 1 March 1913, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.; C.C.E.S. Minute Book, 2 April 1913 and 22 April 1913, pp. 2839; also letter from McNeil to Charles Fitzpatrick, 8 November 1913, Fitzpatrick Papers, XV, p. 6540, P.A.C.

<sup>50</sup> C.C.E.S. Minute Book, pp. 39-51.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from McNeil to Apostolic Delegate, 11 May 1915, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.

<sup>52</sup> C.C.E.S. Minute Book, 12 August 1915, p. 58.

*Register*, had completely transformed the organ into what McNeil described in glowing terms as “the paper we need.”<sup>53</sup> Moreover, from 1916 to 1924, the Society’s second president, Father Thomas O’Donnell of Toronto, expanded the organization’s base of support in English Canada to the extent that by 1918, the Extension Society’s annual revenues exceeded \$100,000.00.<sup>54</sup> In addition, he spearheaded a drive to establish St. Joseph’s College for Ukrainian Boys in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, and initiated a successful *burse* programme in the *Catholic Register*.<sup>55</sup> O’Donnell’s attempts at *rapprochement* with French-Canadian Catholics met with some initial success,<sup>56</sup> but the Society continued to falter in its labours to solicit funds and assistance from Quebec. Efforts to appoint Archbishops Bruchesi and Roy to the Board of Governors and attempts to establish an Extension office in Montreal both ended in failure. In fact, Roy informed the Society that his Archdiocese of Quebec preferred to pursue an independent course in raising money for the home missions.<sup>57</sup> Although the lines of communication had been reopened with the French-Canadian hierarchy, the legacy of the Burke years persisted.

When reflecting upon the Catholic Church Extension Society’s current vibrant activity in the mission fields of the Canadian North and other areas of sporadic ecumene, I suppose one is struck by the incredulity of the

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<sup>53</sup> *Catholic Register*, 7 October 1915.

<sup>54</sup> Financial Reports of Catholic Church Extension Society, 1918-1924, C.C.E.S. Papers, Boxes 1-111, A.A.T.; “Record of Donations sent to Dioceses from March 1, 1919 to March 1, 1928.”

<sup>55</sup> The *burse* programme was a series of burses designed to raise \$5,000 each for the missions: several *burses* were used to help train missionaries, others contributed to St. Joseph’s College, Yorkton. By 1922, \$45,000 had been raised through the successful completion of nine burses. The official names of those *burses* completed were: Blessed Sacrament Burse, Sacred Heart I, Sacred Heart II, Our Lady of Victory, Holy Name, St. Anthony, Chisolm, Souls in Purgatory Burse and later The Little Flower Burse. Check *Catholic Register*, 9 March 1922.

<sup>56</sup> In December 1917, Thomas O’Donnell sent a form letter to the prelates of Western Canada requesting that they sign an enclosed petition defending his claim that the society was not engaged in anglicizing activities. He received a positive response from Bishops Budka (Ukrainian), Charlebois (Keewatin), Mathieu (Regina), Légal (Edmonton), Brunoz (Prince Rupert-Yukon), Grouard (Athabaska) and Breynat (MacKenzie). Many of these prelates qualified their affirmations with short notes doubting as to whether they would have answered the same way had Burke been still President of the Society. Only Archbishop Arthur Beliveau refused to sign, on grounds that he had to respect his predecessor Langevin who continually fought with Burke over the language issue. *Note*: Letter from Thomas O’Donnell to the Bishops of the Prairie West, December 1917, McNeil Papers, Extension File, A.A.T.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Archbishop Roy to Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, 20 January 1920, Fitzpatrick Papers, XXVIII, pp. 15197-98, P.A.C.

Society's early years. However, born of the desire to evangelize and Canadianize the West, the Extension Society, between 1908 and 1916, became part and parcel of a vision of Canada that was both religious and patriotic – the Canadian West was to be both Catholic and English-speaking. It was largely because of this modified form of the English-speaking vision of Canada, and its often explicit tones of anglicization, that the Extension Society failed to acquire a national Catholic consensus. For French-Canadian Catholics the Society posed a threat to their *Gestae Dei per Francos*, their overriding belief that the French were to fulfill God's plan by evangelizing the West. By the same token, the Extension workers underestimated the French-Canadian Catholic ethos, which held Frenchness and Catholicity as integral and inseparable. Consequently, French-Canadians could not possibly support the Extension Society as long as it was perceived as implanting the English language in the West at the expense of both French and other languages of immigrants under the care of the French-Canadian hierarchy. The episcopal succession issue in the West, the controversy over the missionary college, the method of recruiting missionaries, the editorial policy of the *Register*, the bilingual schools issue and the tone of the Society's leadership, only widened the gulf between French Canada and the Extension Society and, as a result, the home missions suffered. In retrospect, it may be lamented that the Extension Society had taken a great potential asset of the Canadian Church, its diversity of language and culture, and turned it into its greatest weakness.