

The reader is immediately immersed in the controversies that enveloped — and often destroyed — the universities of nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada. What balance should be struck between British and American influences, between aristocratic and egalitarian positions, between a classical and a “practical” curriculum, between the centrifugal force of the church and the centripetal pull of society and the state? Most pronounced in the case of a Baptist university, controlled by an evangelically-inclined denomination, is the tension between fundamentalist and modernist tendencies. How can intellectual freedom and scientific enquiry co-exist with revealed Christian truth? Johnston carefully illustrates how this controversy coloured every aspect of the university — from decisions on physical location to appointments of administrators, from the activities of student societies to curriculum building, and especially its influence on the freedom of faculty members both inside and outside of classroom. The villain in the story is T. T. Shields, the fiery pastor of Toronto’s Jarvis Street Baptist Church, who constantly fought the university’s modernist tendencies throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. The hero is obviously the university itself, which (just barely) survived the onslaught and sought refuge in Hamilton when the first volume ends in 1930.

The central issue with McMaster University, as with any church-connected college competing in the public domain for both students and money, is that of discharging its obligations to both the Baptist constituency and to the larger society. In another sense this is also the challenge facing the author of a university history. Johnston has served well the McMaster constituency with this thoroughly researched, well written objective account. And by concentrating on intellectual rather than administrative history, he has gone a long way towards discharging his obligations to the larger society. But intellectual history can only go so far; it can penetrate in only a limited way those murky socio-economic questions that need to be raised and answered about the history of higher education in this country. What was the social class stratification, the sex ratio, the ethnic composition of the McMaster student population? How did the university experience affect their lives? Historians of higher education in this country need to confront such issues. Perhaps Professor Johnston’s second volume on McMaster’s Hamilton years might move us in this direction?

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C.P. STACEY. — *A Very Double Life*. Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1976.

This book sets out to remedy the gap in our understanding left by R. MacGregor Dawson’s focus on William Lyon Mackenzie King the politician rather than King the man in the official biography. Stacey introduces us to the young Rex King, student and man about town, and leads us through the realms of prostitution, adultery, romantic love, mother love and even ‘doggy’ love before launching the reader into the complex world of the occult. Stacey answers our questions about the Misses A,B,C, etc. who dotted the pages of F.A. McGregor’s study of the fall and rise of Mackenzie King; the ancestry of these various ladies is thoroughly documented in Stacey’s book. He serves us large doses of King’s torturous prose, a delight hitherto restricted to those ‘hardy’ individuals who had tackled the King diary. In all, he has written a lucid and absorbing narrative of the private world

of Mackenzie King; and his book will have considerable popular appeal. To look for more is to be disappointed or even seriously misled.

Before considering Stacey's portrayal of King's life we must touch on two points. The first relates to the extent to which we should concern ourselves with the private lives of politicians. My own opinion is that studies such as this are justifiable academically only to the extent that they establish that the individual's private life significantly affected his public actions. Stacey obviously disagrees for he does not make this claim and therefore undermines the utility of the whole exercise. Secondly, one wonders if it is possible to explore such a complex private life using nothing more than a common sense view of what constitutes an integrated human being. All historical biography need not be psychobiography but surely for any study that purports to deal with the personality of the political actor, rather than the political office, must have a base more scientific than the personal opinion, no matter how perceptive, of the author. The need for a sound theoretical base for personal analysis is vital especially where there is a lack of empathy between the author and the subject.

With regard to the specific content of the book one is left wondering why Stacey chose to write about Bert Harper and Marjorie Herridge and not about other equally important individuals in King's life. I realise that an author must be selective but I also desire to know what criteria the author used in making his selection. Similarly, I wonder if King's spiritualism is really worth the attention that Stacey gives it. Once we are aware that King had a leaning to the occult is it necessary to explore every area in which this tendency manifested itself? Is the general emphasis of King's spiritualism more a reflection of its bizarre nature rather than its importance? There were a significant number of prominent individuals in the society in which King lived who shared this interest and it is doubtful if it constitutes a dimension of a "double" life to the extent indicated in this work.

More seriously, I cannot agree with the interpretation that Stacey places on King's actions as a social reformer or with the portrayal of the relationship between King and Marjorie Herridge. I have since re-read the relevant passages of the King diary and the entries which precede and follow those quoted and find my initial disquiet confirmed. King's diary is a very ambiguous document and it is not clear what King means by phrases such as "worse than wasted" and "I have sinned," phrases on which Stacey builds much of his case that King frequented houses of prostitution for sexual purposes and conducted an adulterous relationship with Mrs. Herridge. The reader who wishes to understand King's inner turmoil is better advised to go to the diary itself than to depend wholly on Stacey's culling and interpretation of the material.

As a young student I was intrigued by the task faced by those who devoted themselves to redeeming the reputation of Richard III in the face of Shakespeare's vivid portrayal of the villainous hunchback. Charles Stacey may, in this dimension, become the 'Bard of Hog's Hollow' for I can foresee generations of young Canadians fighting a futile battle to re-establish King's celibacy and sense of Christian mission in the aftermath of Stacey's creative writing.

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