

Christendom, Nationalism and the Fate of the Nineteenth Century Evangelical Consensus

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Christendom, Nationalism and the Fate of the Nineteenth Century Evangelical Consensus

“He that breaks a thing to find out what it is
has left the path of wisdom.”¹

BEFORE 1812, THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING was a revolutionary, populist presence in the society and culture of British North America.² By mid-century, revivalism had blended chameleon-like into the cultural and social terrain of middle-class British North Americans. The intervening period had witnessed the rise of a vision of Christendom within the evangelical community, which found expression in an evangelical consensus dedicated to the task of nation-building. Seeking to achieve an enclave of peace and order, Canadian nationalists encouraged the pursuit of economic self-interest, the rise of an iron and steel industry, military enterprise, the production of an endless array of consumer goods and, finally, the creation of a social safety net. An interventionist nation state played an instrumental role in promoting such developments.³ The leaders of this nation state perceived the world as rational and orderly. In the period of intimate Church-state relations in British North America prior to 1840, statesmen were informed by the 18th century notion that facts and people had significance only because they had or could be assigned a place in the order of nature. However, by the 1840s, as evangelicals sought to challenge the power of the Anglican establishment in the public sphere, they subordinated their primary mission to the goals of nationalism for the sake of cultural influence.

This capitulation to the assumptions and goals of nationalism inevitably transformed the nature of evangelical Protestantism. Underlying this transformation was a shift in evangelicalism from an oral, experiential and anti-intellectual to a literate, objective and systematic discourse more conducive to rational analysis. But confidence in the power of analysis came at a steep price; the evangelical custodians of the nation were forced to exercise moral judgement. According to Michael Howard and others, nationalism is characteristic of “self-identification”,

- 1 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: Being the First Part of the Lord of the Rings*, 2nd. ed. (Boston, 1965), p. 273. Many thanks for helpful advice go to Paul Bowby, Paul MacKenzie, Brook Taylor and John Reid. I tried, though perhaps not always successfully, to follow their suggestions.
- 2 Nancy Christie, “‘In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion’: Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order, 1760-1815”, in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760-1990* (Burlington, 1990), pp. 32-7. Much of the revivalist activity, especially in Upper Canada up to 1812, was an overflow from the United States. See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London, 1989), p. 201. For the revolutionary and populist character of the Second Great Awakening, see pp. 5-6, 8-9, 14, 224-6.
- 3 See Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *True Patriot Love: The Politics of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 4, 7-9, 13 and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York and London, 1990), pp. 18, 132.

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which is grounded in alienation from other external communities.⁴ Dependence on the nation state as the most effective guarantor of peace, justice, economic prosperity and social welfare meant not only rejecting members of rival nations as morally inferior, but also circumscribing the lives of unco-operative, internal minorities.⁵ To the extent that the church initiated and supported these objectives of nationalism, moral judgement became the touchstone of Christian freedom. Since it accepts disunion with other human beings as inevitable and always on arbitrary grounds, such judgement illustrates apostasy or a freedom other than that found in intimacy or oneness with God in Jesus Christ.

The possibility of summoning the rational order inherent in the cosmos for the purpose of control and domination shaped the hope of nationalism. The credibility of nationalism in Canada depended on the expansion of entrepreneurial and corporate forms of industrial development.⁶ With the coming of the 20th century, the custodians of the nation state in Canada sought to retain the allegiance of its citizenry by enhancing industrial capacity in order to feed the insatiable appetite for consumer goods and to support two war efforts. Faced with the revolutionary implications of industrialization and of establishing mastery over the world by rational means, the evangelical consensus disintegrated. The evangelical nationalism sustained by the objectivity of a science-based culture gradually gave way to a subjective nationalism which transformed the language of revivalism by exchanging its traditional content for social reform values.⁷ The rise of fundamentalism in concert with this subjectivist liberal Protestantism marked the fragmentation of the evangelical consensus formed in the 1840s. Yet neither the emergence of a nationalism based on an evangelical consensus, nor the fragmentation of that consensus ever entirely eradicated the potentially subversive power of Protestantism to influence national culture. This was achieved by revival movements in the 1830s, 1840s, 1880s, 1920s, 1940s and in the 1970s, which reaffirmed Protestants in their continued reliance on liturgical-eucharistic practice and on the preaching of the word of God. The liturgical-eucharistic emphasis in Christian practice negated the deistical implications of a hierarchical order based on national ideas much as the proclaimed or spoken word kept the reductionism involved in seeing and studying God's word in print from totally dominating

4 Michael Howard, *The Causes of War*, 2nd. ed. (Cambridge, 1984) p. 26. S.M. Lipset, though less aware than Howard of the association of self-identification with nationalism, makes the same point. Lipset, *Continental Divide*, pp. 53-5. See also, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1958), pp. 172, 176.

5 For the linkage between nation, bureaucratic power justified in the name of rationality, war and the oppression of internal minorities see Michael Howard, "Empires, Nations and Wars", in *The Lessons of History* (New Haven, London, 1991), pp. 29-48.

6 For a different interpretation which also recognizes the importance of scientific rationality to industrialization see Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York and London, 1991), pp. 518-29.

7 N. Keith Clifford, *The Resistance to Church Union in Canada, 1904-1939* (Vancouver, 1985), p. 18; Kenneth Hamilton, *Words and the Word* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971), p. 31, and *To Turn from Idols* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973), pp. 35-6.

Protestant churches.

Brian Cuthbertson, in *The First Bishop: A Biography of Charles Inglis* (Halifax, Waegwoltic Press, 1987), and Curtis Fahey, in *The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* (Ottawa, Carleton University Press, 1991), demonstrate that an 18th century notion of rationality, reinforced by success in warfare, shaped the conduct of the Church of England in Nova Scotia and Upper Canada. British success in Upper Canada during the War of 1812 confirmed the British North Americans' belief in the morally debilitating influence of the Revolution and its ideology on American society and politics. This development guaranteed the anti-revolutionary and conservative ideology of the Upper Canadian elite a popular constituency.⁸ In demonstrating the "degeneracy of American society", the War of 1812, Fahey argues, became "linked with a nascent sense of Upper Canadian identity", adding a new twist to the "messianic perception of the British cause" prevalent within the Anglican church (pp. 123-4).

The need for a mutually supportive relationship between church and state was thus seen as essential for the preservation of the distinctive civil and religious institutions Britain's North American colonies had developed under the protective umbrella of the Imperial government. Peace was dependent on conformity with the ordered structure, which encompassed both nature and society. The Anglican elite advocated the establishment of a state church, with its concomitant social hierarchy and habits of deference (Cuthbertson, p. 93; Fahey, pp. 1-5, chapter 5). It was not from scripture alone that the Church of England drew the appropriate moral sanctions to ensure compliance with the social and political order. The religious practice of the Church of England was as important to the realization of its cultural and social goals as fostering in the individual the expectation of the life to come (Fahey, pp. 117-19).⁹ By stressing infant baptism, catechetical instruction for confirmation and a liturgical tradition focused on the celebration of the Eucharist, Anglican religious practice emphasized the spiritual welfare not only of the private person but of the public community (Cuthbertson, pp. 98-100; Fahey, pp. 99-100, 241, 244, 253-4, 257). Bishop Inglis deliberately intended to elevate the celebration of Holy Communion above the preaching of the word (Cuthbertson, p. 128; Fahey, pp. 99, 101), no doubt to accent the communitarian above the individualistic emphasis in revivalistic piety. Thus, the 41 churches built in Nova Scotia under the supervision of Charles Inglis, Cuthbertson points out, were designed with "a more defined liturgical space".

Both the bishop of Nova Scotia and the Anglican communion in Upper Canada were unalterably opposed to revivalism. In their individualistic rather than communal appropriation of the gospel, as much as in their egalitarian inspired opposition to the privileged position of the Church of England in society and politics, the evangelicals threatened the Anglican vision of Christendom. At the outset, the Church of England's treatment of dissenters was inspired by the hope of

8 Christie, "In these Times of Democratic Rage", pp. 41-3.

9 See also William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Kingston & Montreal, 1989), pp. 30, 32.

winning them back into the fold. When this plan failed, in Nova Scotia well before the elevation of Inglis to episcopal office in 1787 and in Upper Canada in the 1820s, the practice of denying revivalist dissenters access to higher education, to political patronage and to civil rights was continued *de rigeur*. Until the 1850s, this attempt to negate the influence of evangelicals overshadowed the anti-Catholicism that was as traditional to the Church of England as to other Protestant denominations of reformation origins (Cuthbertson, chapters 4, 7 and 10 and pp. 3, 93, 214-7; Fahey, chapters 4 and 5 and pp. 243-4).

The threat to Anglican hegemony posed by evangelicalism is effectively illustrated by James Dale's suggestive article in *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada* (Kingston & Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992) edited by Charles H.H. Scobie and John Webster Grant. By examining Charles Wesley's Hymns of invitation, Dale provides the evidence, though not the most appropriate interpretive framework, to explain the voluntary character of Methodist audiences.¹⁰ These hymns, with their biblical content conveyed in simple language, their catchy tunes and their message that God personally attends the proclamation of his word, turned captive into voluntary audiences. Charles Wesley's hymns thus turned every meeting into an event by eliciting from the individual participant a personal response to the word transformed into flesh in the singing presence of the gathered. Hymn singing, perhaps even more than preaching, made it possible for the word of God to speak repeatedly to the inner self and to take an individual willing to answer the call to obedience into a new relationship with God in conversion, and from there into the maturity of sanctified life (pp. 237, 240).¹¹ Individuals awakened to their freedom by encountering the living God rejected the authority of an educated and socially superior elite and its institutions. The mediating presence of a state church imperilled the evangelical pursuit of a vital, personal relationship with God. Such a relationship was incompatible with a method of instruction and practice designed to stress the salvation of the community more than that of the individual.¹²

Their opposition to the principle of an established church notwithstanding, evangelical Protestants in the period 1844-1850 accepted and sought to maintain the idea of a single national culture. With consummate skill, a wide-ranging knowledge of transatlantic intellectual and religious developments, and an exhaustive thoroughness, Michael Gauvreau, in *The Evangelical Century: College*

10 The success of evangelical Christianity was based on oral not literate means of communication. See James Dale, "The Singers Response to the Word: Charles Wesley's Hymns of Invitation", pp. 238, 242-3. Eighteenth century Slovakian pietists, for instance, insisted "that faith originates in hearing, not in reading" scripture and from meditating on prayer books. This is my translation of "dass der Glaube aus dem Hören, nicht aus dem Lesen stamt". See Joseph Smolik, "Das innere Leben der Toleranzkirche", in Peter F. Barton, ed., *Im Zeichen der Toleranz: Aufsätze zur Toleranzgesetzgebung des 18. Jahrhunderts im Reichen Joseph II, ihren Voraussetzungen und ihre Folgen* (Vienna, 1981), p. 335.

11 See also John Webster Grant, "Introduction", in Scobie and Grant, eds., *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada*, p. 6; and Christie, "In these Times of Democratic Rage", p. 32.

12 Karl Holl, *The Cultural Significance of the Reformation* (Cleveland & New York, 1959), Karl and Barbara Herz trans., pp. 69-70; Christie, "In these Times of Democratic Rage", p. 26.

and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression (Kingston & Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), traces the origin of Methodist support for a national culture to the founding of Victoria College in the early 1840s. Founding a college, Gauvreau maintains, "reveals the mind of Methodism in a process of transition from the world of the camp meeting to a society committed to scientific progress and rationality of both divine and human knowledge" (p. 52).¹³ Ryerson's school legislation was an important part of this transition. The Christian, but not denominational, public schools, propagated by Ryerson in Canada West and subsequently adopted elsewhere, contributed to the creation of a national allegiance capable of satisfying and possibly of transcending a marked localism in Canadian politics.¹⁴ Ryerson achieved his goal in the quintessentially Canadian way; he recognized the need for a greater degree of separation between church and state, but kept the boundaries between church and state intentionally vague and imprecise.¹⁵ In the interest of preserving the nation, evangelicals refused to allow religious pluralism to become as unqualified in British North America as it was constitutionally, though not always in practice, south of the border.¹⁶

In comparison with the episcopal Methodism of Upper Canada, Wesleyan Methodism in the Atlantic colonies faced the more difficult task of sustaining British institutions while, at the same time, incorporating the American tendency toward greater religious equality. In his significant article, "The Problem of Methodist Identity in Nineteenth-Century New Brunswick", in *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada*, T.W. Acheson points out that Methodism in New Brunswick began to flourish in the 1850s only after changing its focus from pietism to political activism (p. 117). In 1830 the New Brunswick Wesleyans began to retreat from their interactive and deferential co-existence with the Church of England and from the pronounced political and social conservative influence of the Wesleyan Conference in England. According to Acheson, the severance of these ties was motivated by the rejection of an "intense pietism" previously prevalent in New Brunswick Methodism (p. 114).

By 1844 "a large number of Methodist laity", though not always their clergy,

13 This is a pattern followed by every other Protestant denomination strongly committed to revivalism and even by denominations formerly committed to church establishment. See Michael Gauvreau, "Protestantism Transformed: Personal Piety and the Evangelical Social Vision, 1815-1867", in Rawlyk, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience*, pp. 67-8.

14 In this respect evangelicalism represented an alternative to the patronage politics sustained, in Gordon Stewart's opinion, by a statism increasingly given over to internal improvement. Gauvreau, "Protestantism Transformed", pp. 89-92. See also Gordon T. Stewart, *The Origins of Canadian Politics: A Comparative Approach* (Vancouver, 1986), p. 95.

15 John Webster Grant, "'At Least You Knew Where You Stood with Them': Reflections on Religious Pluralism in Canada and the United States", *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, II, 2 (Spring 1973), p. 241, see also footnote 8, pp. 249-50.

16 Fahey, *In His Name*, p. 74; Grant, "'At Least You Knew Where You Stood with Them'", pp. 340-1; Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York, 1971), p. ix; Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, 1992), pp. 146-8, 161, 272, 398-400; Westfall, *Two Worlds*, p. 84.

were ready to use political means to achieve true religious equality. By the 1850s Methodists accepted the idea that state directed temperance reform could create a better society in New Brunswick (pp. 114-17). Most significantly, by 1850, Methodists in Atlantic Canada, according to Goldwin French, officially began to support a non-denominational but Christian elementary school system, which, despite the opposition of the Roman Catholic Church, was, by the 1870s, successfully imposed in the three mainland colonies, though not in Newfoundland.¹⁷ This shift from revivalism to a preoccupation with national culture and social reform is also evident in internal developments within Methodism. Peter Penner's *The Chignecto "Connection": The History of Sackville Methodist/United Church, 1772-1990* (Sackville, United Church, 1990) indicates that from the 1770s to the 1830s a shift away from mutuality and fellowship towards conformity and inquisitorial scrutiny was evident in the class meeting¹⁸ of the Sackville Methodist church. By the 1870s the editor of the *Wesleyan* believed that the class meeting could no longer be sustained as a test for membership (pp. 8, 29-30, 73).

The Presbyterian Free Church tradition in British North America came closest to capitulating to the allure of a Protestant commonwealth in which Roman Catholics were denied a place. Richard W. Vaudry's *The Free Church in Victorian Canada, 1844-1861* (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989) shows that, of all the evangelical churches, the Free Church,¹⁹ despite the "deeply pietistic dimension" of its evangelicalism (p. 49), sought to pursue the vision of a national state governed by righteousness defined exclusively in evangelical terms. At first the Free Church rejected voluntarism in favour of an established church supported by the state but free from all state interference in ecclesiastical matters (p. 112). Voluntarism was to be opposed, in the opinion of Dr. Robert Burns, Professor of Church History at Knox College and minister of Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto, because it removed the nation from the influence of revelation, putting "into the hands of the infidel an instrument of mighty potency". For this combative

17 See Goldwin French's important essay "Methodism and Education in the Atlantic Provinces, 1800-1874", in Scobie and Grant, eds., *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada*, pp. 159-61; see also Margaret Conrad, "'An Abiding Conviction of the Paramount Importance of Christian Education': Theodore Harding Rand as Educator, 1860-1900", in Robert S. Wilson, ed., *An Abiding Conviction: Maritime Baptists and their World* (Wolfville, 1988), pp. 155-95.

18 As originally contemplated by John Wesley, the class meeting acted as a sub-ecclesiastical structure of a church-within-a church. The class meeting was intended to achieve two purposes. It brought new Christians into maturity through mutuality and fellowship and freed the laity for ministry in a way not possible in the general church gathered for corporate worship and for participation in the ordinary means of grace. See Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns of Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, Illinois, 1980), pp. 119, 140.

19 The disruption of the Church of Scotland, which created the Free Church, occurred on 18 May 1843. The Free Church delegation defended the principle of the spiritual independence of the state church against state interference in ecclesiastical matters. This disruption spread to the Canadas in July of 1844 and subsequently to other parts of British North America. See Vaudry, *The Free Church*, chapters 1 & 2, and J.S. Moir, *Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto, 1976), ch. 6.

cleric the nation was “the most extensively influential of all agencies known among men” (p. 115).

For the leaders of the Free Church, evil was readily identifiable. Godlessness occupied space, and had both a polity and followers prepared to dedicate their lives to its triumph. This outlook seemed to be confirmed when the governments of the empire and of the Canadas decided to endow the Roman Catholic Church (pp. 66-67). For the Free Church this was proof positive that both governments were incapable of distinguishing between true and false religion. With their hopes for church establishment disappointed, Free Church leaders adopted voluntarism for the sake of creating an evangelical alliance against the Roman Catholic Church, referred to in the *Record* of 1848 as “the masterpiece of Satan’s policy in the world” (p. 73). As an expression of these newly-adopted voluntarist convictions, the Free Church pursued the secularization of the reserves, the establishment of Ryerson’s educational system and the campaign against intemperance and Sabbath desecration. These political goals had but one fundamental objective: to cleanse both English and French Canadian society of the nefarious presence and influence of Roman Catholicism (chapter 5; pp. 45, 73-74, 110).

The mediating link evangelicals sought to establish between Christianity and national culture also finds resonance in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1991), edited by Barry Ferguson. Robert Coutts’ contribution to this book reflects better than any other the unresolved problem of assessing the role the churches played in the on-going interaction between Native and non-Native peoples.²⁰ On the one hand, Coutts’ argument that the evangelical Church Missionary Society challenged the Native world view in the interest of the cultural and economic imperatives of nationhood seems incontestable to Ferguson. He notes that this social control theory is supported by George Ladd’s interesting article on the “poisonous pedagogy” of Father Cochran.²¹ On the other hand, in pointing to the scholarly neglect of church records,²² Fritz Pannekoek’s essay in the same volume suggests that Coutts’ thesis should be accepted only with some qualifications (p. 50-51). Certainly Coutts’ singular reliance on “economic inequalities or class division” to explain the attitudes among St. Andrew’s mixed bloods towards joining Canada (p. 58) raises some significant questions. For, although he allows them no role in influencing attitudes towards joining Canada, Coutts holds evangelical missionaries of the Church of England solely responsible for the disintegration of Métis society (p. 57). In contrast, Pannekoek convincingly demonstrates that attitudes towards union with Canada were influenced by deeply rooted religious divisions “between English-speaking mixed bloods of Protestant heritage and

20 Robert Coutts, “Anglican Missionaries as Agents of Acculturation: The Church Missionary Society at St. Andrew’s, Red River, 1830-1870”, in Ferguson, ed., *The Anglican Church*, pp. 50-60.

21 Barry Ferguson, “Secular History and Church History: An Introduction”, in Ferguson, ed., *The Anglican Church*, pp. 5-6, and George van der Goes Ladd, “Father Cochran and His Children: Poisonous Pedagogy on the Banks of the Red”, in Ferguson, *The Anglican Church*, pp. 61-71.

22 Fritz Pannekoek, “‘Insidious’ Sources and the Historical Interpretation of the Pre-1870 West”, in Ferguson, ed., *The Anglican Church*, p. 29.

French-speaking ones largely of Roman Catholic origins" (p. 30). The presence of an intolerant, ethnically divisive, evangelical Protestantism within the Métis community makes it difficult to believe in a mixed blood culture which, according to Coutts, was united by the "common heritage forged in the days of the hunt and the fur trade" (p. 57). This is especially the case when the religious sources have not been consulted or have been dismissed out of a secular bias (pp. 34-35).

The literature examined so far suggests that the articulation of the evangelical faith in Canada gave rise to a genuine and intolerant denominational pluralism. Evangelicalism had a moderate as well as a radical — even an activist — profile. This bi-polar tension was evident, though not always easy to separate, in evangelical Anglicanism bent on both Christianizing and assimilating Native cultures in the Prairie West. Ruth Compton Brouwer's *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992) confirms the existence of this ambivalence within evangelical Protestantism. The women who directed the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS), Western Division, of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the missionaries in the field of central India sought the conversion of Indian women and, at the same time, actively pursued the goal of social reform.

If the accent of women's missionary work in central India by 1885 fell more on institutional work, as Brouwer suggests, this did not indicate a rejection of the goal of converting India to Christianity (p. 92). Although the WFMS refused to engage women who lacked professional qualifications as missionaries, a sense of personal calling still took precedence over professional competence (pp. 59-60). The extent of women's involvement in missions was conditioned by the constraints imposed on the missionaries by a paternalistic church, women's own desire for professional advancement, and the peculiar conditions of the mission's host society. In the first place, the possibility of preaching or spiritual leadership in their home communities was denied, since women could not be ordained in any of the major evangelical churches (pp. 68-69). Second, India offered the possibility of professional career fulfillment in education and medicine and satisfied the desire for adventure in a way not possible in Canada (pp. 67-68). Finally, institutional work enjoyed the support of both British and Indian officials, who believed that, of all missionary endeavour, social work was least suspect of proselytizing (pp. 110, 112-15). Only in engaging in rescue work and establishing orphanages during the great famines of 1897 and 1900 did the genuine desire for evangelistic work, which motivated all women missionaries, find its greatest outlet and success (pp. 119-26). Brouwer's study thus also confirms the juxtaposition of greater freedom with imposed constraints in the lives of Presbyterian women missionaries in India.²³

At the heart of revivalist Christianity, and perhaps of western Christianity, is a paradox. Scripture clearly teaches the vanity of human actions, since all human

23. Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven and London, 1977), pp. 155-9; Katherine Ridout, "A Woman of Mission: The Religious and Cultural Odyssey of Agnes Wintemute Coates", *The Canadian Historical Review*, LXXI, 2 (June, 1990), pp. 241-3.

works of a Christian or culturally useful nature have their origins in the prior accomplishment of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, God requires his people to pursue the very tasks of prayer, preaching, evangelizing and charity, with their public dimensions, that he has already provided as a gift.²⁴ The refusal on the part of some evangelicals to address the civil responsibilities of Christian faith on the grounds that such action was futile and vain was tantamount to scorning God and rejecting his word. And, like the refusal to act on the assumption that all pursuits are futile, the decision to act out of a belief in the efficacy of human concerns reflects a confidence which inevitably results in the moral censure of others. The transformation of Evangelicalism necessitated, as Gauvreau points out, the openness of “the culture of the revival, characterized by the theological priorities of original sin and God’s saving grace freely given in Christ” to “the culture of scientific experiment and discovery” (p. 19). Though indicative of the “flexibility” noted by Gauvreau, this synthesis also suggests a freedom based on the efficacy and utility of human pursuit rather than on the free gift of God in Christ.

Hence the task of reconstructing evangelical theology into a unified yet flexible and practical creed involved a rejection of the paradox characteristic of the Christian ethos. This task became pressing, Gauvreau argues, because the custodians of revivalism had sundered revelation from all forms of Enlightenment reason, be it common sense philosophy or natural theology (pp. 38, 71). As a result, evangelicals stood to forfeit any possibility of creating a national culture and steering it in a Christian direction. To counter this trend, the clergymen instructors of the Methodist and Presbyterian colleges adopted a Baconian scientific method, in an attempt to keep the obscurantist and divisive elements of revivalism in check and to demonstrate their own credibility among the leaders striving to provide cultural and social direction for the nation. In addition, the inductive method, Gauvreau shows, linked theology and history so that biblical truth, now objectively verified, not only shaped theology and culture, but became the criterion for assessing and validating scholarly enquiry according to the dictates of revivalist Christianity (p. 42).

By linking theology, history, prophecy and post-millennialism, the reformulation of the evangelical creed in Canada enhanced the cultural significance of the Methodist and Presbyterian ministeriate along several fronts. If linking theology and history endowed Christian doctrine with moral and empirical certainty, setting it in the context of an “inherited prophetic tradition” strengthened the credibility of the evangelical creed still further (p. 102). The insistence that the rule of providence was to be achieved through human endeavor rather than through miraculous divine intervention complemented the ethos of the time, which celebrated the progressive nature of human achievement (p. 121). And although it was never their intention to do so, evangelicals could not avoid leaving the

24 This discussion of the paradoxical nature of Christianity owes a lot to Jacques Ellul, *The Politics of God and the Politics of Man* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972), especially the chapter entitled “Meditation on Inutility”. For the historical aptness of this discussion, see Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Toronto, 1889), especially ch. 1 and ch. 8.

impression that revelation, turned into objective fact by the inductive method, was not able to teach anything not already within the reach of human knowledge.²⁵ In this context, the desire to affirm oneself or be affirmed as ethically good led human beings to seek their origin in themselves rather than in God.²⁶

As Gauvreau argues, “‘Protestant’ history and its corollary, anti-Catholicism, served far more than a rhetorical function. By providing the reassurance of ultimate success, they offered a guarantee that history was...predictable and amenable to human effort. This dynamic enabled the evangelical creed to resist ... secular and cultural explanations competing for the allegiance of educated Christians” (p. 113). This symbiotic relationship between rational argument and judgement is confirmed by J.R. Miller in his article *Creed and Culture: The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930* (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993) edited by Terence Murphy and Gerald Stortz. In explaining its “lively, if not disruptive role”, Miller suggests that “anti-Catholicism in Canada has been an analytical tool and an instrument for combating what the analysis revealed to be the problem”.²⁷ To argue, as Gauvreau does, that the writing of history by Protestant educators lacked impartiality and objectivity (p. 112), while not inherently inappropriate, is to miss the point. The failure of the Methodist and Presbyterian educators and preacher historians is surely to be found in their objectivity, not in their lack of it.²⁸ In defending the harmony between the inductive scientific method of interpreting scripture and Christian faith, the latter was compromised by judgement. According to the Judeo-Christian paradigm, the language of good and evil trespassed on the limits within which human beings must exercise the creative capacities of their freedom. Intolerance represents a desire to be other than a created being and indicates a preference for a world controlled by human priorities over the real one with its created boundaries.²⁹

The evangelical consensus represented a vision of Christendom which subordinated immigrants of other than British origins and Roman Catholics,

25 George Grant, *Technology and Justice* (Toronto, 1986), p. 99; Reginald W. Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto, 1987), pp. 1-9.

26 As Bonhoffer perceptively points out, “knowing of Jesus a man can no longer know of his own goodness, and knowing of his own goodness he can no longer know of Jesus”. Dietrich Bonhoffer, *Ethics* (London, 1963), p. 20.

27 J.R. Miller, “Anti-Catholicism in Canada: From the British Conquest to the Great War”, in Murphy and Stortz, *Creed and Culture*, pp. 25, 40. See also by the same author “Bigotry in the North Atlantic Triangle: Irish, British and American Influences on Canadian Anti-Catholicism, 1850-1900”, *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, XVI, 3, (October, 1987), pp. 289-302, and “Anti-Catholic Thought in Victorian Canada”, *Canadian Historical Review*, LXVI, 4, (Dec. 1985), pp. 474-94.

28 In this regard, Robert Bellah points out that “religion is embodied truth, not known truth, and it has in fact been transmitted far more through narrative, image, and enactment than through definitions and logical demonstrations”. Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York, Evanston & London, 1970), p. 221.

29 See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York, 1952), pp. 156, 162; Dietrich Bonhoffer, “Christ, Reality and the Good”, in *Ethics*, pp. 161-84; and Kenneth Hamilton, *To Turn from Idols* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973), pp. 12-16.

English as well as French speaking.³⁰ Valuable though *Creed and Culture* is for the general comments it provides on the state of English speaking Roman Catholic historiography, it confirms Gauvreau's findings (pp. XX, XXIII, XXV-VI). In a wide-ranging and cogently argued essay, which covers all areas of French-English friction within Roman Catholicism during the years from 1840-1930, Robert Choquette amplifies the anti-Roman theme in *The Evangelical Century*. He locates the conflicts in two competing visions of Canada. One, supported by Protestants and English-speaking Roman Catholics alike, "favoured a homogeneous British English-speaking nation with allowance for a bilingual French Quebec 'reservation'". The other, sustained by Acadians and French-speaking Catholics of Ontario and the West, was "nurtured by a vision of a bilingual Canada," which demanded a defence of equal rights wherever such were at risk.³¹

French speaking Roman Catholics in predominantly English regions were more vulnerable than their English-speaking co-religionists and Protestants, Choquette maintains, to the secularizing tendencies of "progressivism, British imperialism, English language superiority, and related racist doctrines" (pp. 11, 20). The reason for this, he states, is found in the secularizing impact of nationalism, representing not only a danger to faith, as was the case for the Protestant and Anglo-Catholic churches, but to all indices of ethnic survival, including language and culture. (p. 20). Especially for Acadians and French Canadian Catholics outside Quebec, the church was the only institution capable of preserving their ethnic identity in the face of the potent secularizing claims which British-Canadian nationalism made on all ethnic minorities.

In *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), Phyllis Airhart defines the contribution of proto-fundamentalist groups and progressive reformers to the dissolution of the evangelical consensus. For Airhart, the rise of the Plymouth Brethren and the holiness revival were reform movements in their own right (pp. 37, 40). The holiness movement, for instance, encompassed isolated individuals seeking to free revivalism not from revival activity and social reform, but from a performance-oriented pursuit of goals no longer originating in the unmerited favour of God. One of the movement's leading advocates, Hannah Whitall Smith (1832-1911), wanted to preserve evangelical Protestants from an alienation-driven illusion of humans creating themselves and the world in conformity with their own rational thinking.³² Her writings were characterized by a religious tolerance not unlike that of John Wesley. If some of the earlier holiness revivalists, like Phoebe Palmer, gave vent to anti-Catholicism in their writings, this merely demonstrates the extent to which nationalism had captured the

30 N.K. Clifford, "His Dominion: A Vision in Crisis", *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, II, 4 (Spring 1973), pp. 315-26.

31 Robert Choquette, "English-French Relations in the Canadian Catholic Community", in Murphy and Stortz, eds., *Creed and Culture*, p. 19.

32 Grant, *Technology and Empire*, p. 142.

imagination of all Protestants, even some of the most evangelical.³³

The China Inland Mission (CIM), which included a significant number of Canadian citizens among its missionaries, should be included in this holiness tradition. In his *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888-1959* (Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press, 1986), an informative, even exciting book because of its biographical detail, Alvyn Austin points out that missionaries of the CIM were the first among evangelicals to adopt Chinese dress and most other aspects of Chinese culture, "much to the derision of the rest of the foreign community, other missionaries included". They demonstrated their willingness to take considerable risk in evangelizing the Chinese by going beyond the protective umbrella of European imperial powers in China (pp. 12, 13-14, 115-17). And, when all the other Western churches with missions in China sought and received reparations for losses incurred during the Boxer Rebellion, the CIM, which incurred the heaviest losses in lives and property, sought no such compensation (p. 106).

The attempt to secure evangelical truth by means of the inductive method weakened the impact of encounter with the divine other.³⁴ In the case of evangelical theology rendered objective by means of the inductive method, conversion becomes effortless because any historically derived Christian principle, whose validity rests on a present or future demonstration, requires only intellectual assent. For the holiness revivalist, however, truth was biographical. That is to say, it represented a way of knowing akin to that which exists between family members, marriage partners, or friends. Its currency was the proclamation of the word of God, which must be heard in the way human beings hear, who are drawn by the possibility of discovering in the other some vital truth without which their life would be impoverished or even endangered in some way not previously recognized or readily apparent. Hence the initiation and continuance of divine-human relationships required, by their very nature, the abdication of reason, by which the claim to independent human initiative is advanced. The "chiefest characteristics" of a Christian, according to Hannah Whitall Smith, author of a classic in Protestant spirituality widely read in late 19th century Canada, were "thoughtlessness" and a willingness to disregard "the pitiful clamoring of...emotions, that continually accuse" the convert "of being a hypocrite".³⁵

33 Marie Henry, *Hannah Whitall Smith* (Minneapolis, 1978), ch. 12, p. 159; Charles Edward White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids, 1986), ch. 5; Michael Hurley S.J., *John Wesley's Letter to a Roman Catholic* (London, 1968).

34 For the distinctiveness of the two positions, see Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, pp. 220-1. Relying on the inductive method for appropriating Christian truth does not necessarily preclude encounter. Faith and the desire to preserve the integrity of scripture as objective truth were presuppositions, which, Gauvreau points out, directed the use of the Baconian method.

35 Smith, *The Christian's Secret* pp. 36, 70; White, *The Beauty of Holiness*, p. 22-3, ch. 5. Smith insisted that the will, not experience or feeling, requires yielding to the word of God. Once done, experience eventually and inevitably comes into line with what is willed (pp. 72-3). Airhart, *Serving the Present Age*, p. 23; Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville, 1983), pp. 92-4; Melvin E. Dieter, "Wesleyan Holiness Aspects of Pentecostal Origins:

Trust capable of bearing the weight of such thoughtless waiting on the Word could only find expression in acts of obedience not interrupted by reflection, in deeds of entire devotion, the doing of which fill the human imagination. Knowledge could not intervene and impede a person who has thus yielded since, for such an individual, the act mandated by obedience to the word of God is no longer one possibility among many. For this reason, the holiness evangelist thus persuaded would not see the need to rely on inductive reason to secure theology against criticism launched by non-biblical forms of inquiry.³⁶ Neither did the involvement of Methodists and some Presbyterians in British North American politics between the 1820s and 1846 go beyond defending religious rights of all Christian denominations, including those of the Roman Catholic Church, against the claims of church establishment asserted by the Church of England.³⁷ The assumption which energized the holiness revivals in North America and Manchuria from the late 1840s to 1911 was the need for a new Pentecost similar to that recorded in the New Testament. Only such a renewal of the church could restore its purity and power and rescue it from the legalism, worldliness, materialism and apostasy into which it had fallen.³⁸

For various reasons, the holiness-pentecostal denominations, during the first two decades of this century, though gradually influenced by the theology of fundamentalism, led a separate existence within it.³⁹ As a result, the piety of fundamentalism, which, Airhart maintains, had an important impact on the future of the Methodist Church, was defined by the Plymouth Brethren. Fundamentalism violated Methodist piety by stressing assent to the propositional truth of scripture at the expense of its experiential confirmation. Also, the idea of a "finished salvation" received at the time of the new birth stressed a world corrupted and hence beyond human competence to mend it. Fundamentalism thus broke the relationship between conversion and an expected change in "personal and public behaviour" and thereby forced Methodists to make a choice between individual and social

As Mediated through the Nineteenth-Century Holiness Revival", in Vinson Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, New Jersey, 1975), pp. 62-3.

36 Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century*, p. 42.

37 Methodism was inspired by Wesley's doctrine of free grace. See John Wesley, "Free Grace", in Vergilius Ferm, ed., *Classics of Protestantism* (New York, 1959), pp. 165-89 and Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, pp. 82-5. Until 1844 in central Canada and until the 1844-1846 period in New Brunswick, Methodist involvement in politics was not intolerant, but was limited to defending the civil rights of all Christian denominations. See J.S. Moir, "The Political Ideas of the Christian Guardian, 1829-1849", M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1949, and T.W. Acheson, *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Community* (Toronto, 1985), p. 135. Surrender to God is a strong theme in the holiness gospel. It is evident in Phoebe Palmer's all on the alter theology which was also a metaphor in H.W. Smith's writing, with the additional image of the individual being the inert clay and God being the potter. Furthermore, the latter constantly inveighed against the habit of striving, which represents the evangelical caution against the belief in the importance of human endeavour. See Smith, *The Christian's Secret*, pp. 13-14, 40.

38 Melvin E. Dieter, "Wesleyan-Holiness Aspects of Pentecostal Origins", pp. 63, 65-6; Donald W. Dayton, "From 'Christian Perfection' to the 'Baptism of the Holy Ghost'", in Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, p. 43; Jonathan Goforth, *By My Spirit* (Grand Rapids, 1942), pp. 11, 13.

39 John D. Woodbridge, Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, *The Gospel in America: Themes in the Story of America's Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 76

salvation, which had always been united in their traditional piety (p. 47, 132-6). In using the pointlessness of human endeavour as a justification for ignoring the work not of evangelizing but of social reform and cultural transformation, fundamentalists partially rejected the paradoxical injunction of believing what has already been accomplished in the divine economy. It is not surprising, therefore, that traditionalists found the fundamentalists' piety unattractive enough to quiet their wariness of their progressivist fellow Methodists and opt for church union with them (pp. 8-9, 37, 41-60, 132-6).

Both Airhart and Gauvreau insist that the Protestant churches, far from declining, actually survived the fundamental social and cultural changes prevalent at the turn of the century.⁴⁰ Be that as it may, the transformation of evangelical Protestantism had serious implications for the religious tradition out of which it evolved. In acknowledging the lack of efficacy of what they do, evangelicals live their life in the freedom which comes from having received it as a divine gift. It is a freedom which cannot be destroyed by difficult circumstances rooted in a human wisdom incapable of addressing the novelty of the present. Expressed differently, the evangelical, who finds salvation in the crucifixion, accepts reality for what it is; such a person practises a detachment from the world, which permits an involvement with it not possible for someone who relies on judgement to find religious fulfillment in temporal affairs. Evangelical freedom, as Jacques Ellul points out, is "incommensurate". It cannot be the fruit of or a part of the way human nature is constituted. Neither can its worth be measured by the institutional venue in which human beings move to achieve or measure success.⁴¹

To be motivated by the achievement of visible success and objectives, in contrast, is to have life determined by the strictest lawfulness. When acknowledged in the theological universe, this determinism resulted in the necessity of finding freedom in the abstract subjectivism of human consciousness. None of the more traditional Christian possibilities survived. For Airhart it was the failure of traditional revivalism to increase the membership of the Methodist church and the transformation from competitive to corporate capitalism during the first decade of this century which caused Methodists to impose an ideology foreign in content, though not in idiom, on the language of traditional revivalism. Associating revivalist piety with "progressivist presuppositions", conversion, Airhart maintains, became identified with sacrificial service rather than salvation from sin (pp. 62-4, 107-9).

According to Gauvreau, by 1905-1911 the victory of a radical form of historicism in the transatlantic world led to expressions of pessimism among the Presbyterian and Methodist educators about the relationship between the evangelical creed and culture. The objective certainty of the evangelical creed was reduced to "subjective experience" and "consciousness", the relativist revolution having linked all objective truth of the past "to specific historical and cultural settings" (pp. 221-4). With the advent of this relativist historicism, it became

40 Airhart, *Serving the Present Age*, p. 141; Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century*, pp. 183-5.

41 Ellul, *The Politics of God and the Politics of Man*, p. 199.

necessary, Gauvreau argues, to separate natural and cultural sciences in order to provide theology "with a methodology or set of concerns independent of the logic of 'scientific' history". Canadian theology professors found this methodology in the neo-Kantianism of the 1920s. Based on the "consciousness of values...sanctioned by a universal and transcendent moral ideal", theology continued to engage culture and history, but could not escape the subjectivity and ahistorical tendencies of the age (pp. 278, 280, 281-3). In an important sense, the subjective nature of liberal Protestantism represented the obverse of the objective side of Anglican theology during the period of church establishment and, subsequently, of the evangelical creed.⁴² Relying on rational means to shape society along Christian lines, all three visions posited a radical freedom by exalting future possibility over present reality.⁴³

David B. Marshall's conclusions in *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992) are at odds with some and in agreement with other conclusions arrived at by Gauvreau and Airhart. The attempt to redefine revivalist Christianity in terms of civil responsibility was at the heart of the crisis of doubt which, Marshall believes, Protestant clergymen faced in mid-19th century Canada.⁴⁴ Doubt was not primarily the product of the new discoveries of science or history (pp. 4, 19, 69-70). Rather it "was prompted by changing moral and social values" evident in the middle-class evangelical culture which judged traditional orthodox doctrines as unacceptable. This shift resulted in the emergence of a new definition of the public good which made possible a far less ambiguous identification of the redemptive purposes of God with the survival and enhancement of the Canadian nation.⁴⁵ This new public morality rejected pessimistic, orthodox doctrines such as predestination, human depravity, eternal punishment and even the atonement. The shift from a strict to a more liberal creed, Marshall suggests, "liberated clergymen from many of the repressive characteristics of orthodoxy", thereby permitting them to reconcile their gospel with the more current values of the market place (p. 66). This transformation of evangelicalism was a movement in the direction of an exclusive inclusivism.⁴⁶

42 Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York, 1978), p. 22.

43 The attempt of the defenders of religious establishment, Westfall points out, "to organize and explain reality" required "considerable imagination to proclaim". "The inherent harmony of nature and society" ignored the reality of an Upper Canadian colony still in wilderness stage of development and subject to an "unordered and seemingly egalitarian" political culture. Westfall, *Two Worlds*, pp. 36-7. In a similar vein, given the continued vitality of Roman Catholicism in French and English Canada, the Protestant custodians of "religious revival, scientific and social progress, and the rising powers of Anglo-Saxon nations" deferred their hope for the "final union of sacred and secular in the perfect evangelical commonwealth" to the future. Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century*, p. 122; see also pp. 117-8, 121.

44 See Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, ch. 1, and Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York, 1977), p. 7.

45 Marshall acknowledges the importance of nationalism only on pp. 180 and 238.

46 D.J.Macdonnell's difficulty with everlasting punishment had at least the virtue, in his opinion, of making "it possible to embrace within one church a large body of believing men"; see Marshall,

By the 1890s, the traditional focus on transcendence in orthodox evangelicalism, Marshall argues, had given way to an emphasis on immanence. This religious declension was reflected in a preoccupation with ethics and the pursuit of social justice. Though his theme of religious declension sets Marshall apart from Airhart and Gauvreau,⁴⁷ he, like them, documents the emergence of a subjective gospel. By the 1890s, Protestantism, in his opinion, no longer had an “objective authoritative principle of belief” (p. 71).

The shift towards a more subjective approach was symptomatic of a radical alienation which found satisfaction only in building the future without reference to past or present. This other-worldliness, characteristic of the new historicism, had a contemplative and an activist side.⁴⁸ In *Saving China*, Alvin J. Austin documents the existence of both. The unique method of Bible study originated by H.B. Sharman represents the former; the Christian Marxism of J.G. Endicott and others, the latter.⁴⁹ Sharman, a New Testament scholar trained at Chicago, became a founding member of the Student Christian Movement in 1920. This organization popularized his method among Canadian University students in the 1920s.⁵⁰ In its heavy reliance upon print culture, Sharman’s work subtly but manifestly shared in the assumption of progress. For Sharman, truth was not revealed in the proclamation of the gospel. Indeed, Sharman claimed that repetition — “the frequently heard” — reinforced by the independent reading of the sayings of Jesus, to amplify what was heard, had turned the gospels into a “body of words that have lost the power to arrest and command the activity of the mind and the response of the spirit”. His solution to the problem was to confront this “deadening familiarity” with “questions on the material, fashioned by other minds,” those of experts, with the intent of penetrating “the surface” of the words of Jesus.⁵¹

Sharman’s Bible studies were popular in the West China mission field of the United Church of Canada. His approach, which required seeing Jesus as a man not God, made it easier to adapt the gospel to the anti-supernaturalistic views of the young Chinese students. Among the missionaries, Earl Willmot, one of the chief popularizers of Sharman’s method, contributed in the late 1920s and 1930s to the

Secularizing the Faith, p. 43.

- 47 Among historians who support Marshall’s thesis of religious declension are Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1921* (Toronto, 1971) and A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal, 1979). Unlike Marshall, these two historians see positive consequences coming out the period of evangelical decline in the form of the rise of the social sciences and movements of social and political reform. Ramsay Cook, in *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto, 1985), pp. 4-6, 231, echoes Marshall’s point that the Protestant ministeriate inadvertently promoted secularization in order to find a preachable gospel (p. 8). For an important review article, which seeks to get beyond the subject of the secularization debate see M. Gauvreau, “Beyond the Half-way House: Evangelicalism and the Shaping of English Canadian Culture”, *Acadiensis*, XX, 2, (Spring 1991), pp. 158-77.
- 48 Grant, *Technology and Justice*, pp. 94-5; see also Kenneth Hamilton, *Earthly Good: The Churches and the Betterment of Human Existence* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990), pp. 111-13.
- 49 For an example of the latter, see Marshall’s account of the tactics used by the United Church members of the League for Social Reconstruction to get their reform measures adopted by the church courts during the depression. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, pp. 237-40.
- 50 Airhart, *Serving the Present Age*, pp. 228, 314.
- 51 H.B. Sharman, *Studies in the Records of the Life of Jesus* (New York, 1938), pp. viii, xv, xvii.

anthropological critique of missions as culture destroyers (pp. 227-8). And a group of left-leaning United Church missionaries led by the Rev. James G. Endicott, reacting against the corrupt practices of the Chiang Kai-shek regime, came to support the communist revolution by the late 1930s. The most important common denominator among them was the Sharman-originated S.C.M. method of Bible study to which they were introduced as university students and which they put to use as a means of evangelizing China. Their adoption of dialectical materialism suggests a rejection of Shaman's passive, speculative Christianity for an activist approach to China's problems. Gnostics in a hurry, they saw events in terms of a struggle between the powers of light and darkness, and, in their untempered language, frightened some of their less radical fellow missionaries (p. 320). They also ignored, and, in Endicott's case, actually justified, the human costs, in lives lost to the revolution.⁵² The left-leaning missionaries of the United Church in China had elevated to a new level the Gnostic tendency to exchange the difficult world of historical existence for a future more abstract world molded to human specifications.

This trend toward believing in an unlimited potential to shape self and the world according to a particular vision continued unabated. New approaches in theology during the early 1960s, notes J.W. Grant in his *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Burlington, Welch Publishing Company, Inc., 1988), "made possible a view of the world open to human initiative and innovation" (p. 199). By the 1970s such subjective views of human freedom tended to discount the singular ways human beings acquire a sense of themselves and how they fit into the world. Protestantism, as a result, gave rise to syncretism.⁵³ It is not surprising, therefore, that in view of this development evangelicals like Jarold K. Zeman, in *Open Doors, Canadian Baptists 1950-1990: Popular Addresses and Articles* (Wolfville, Lancelot Press, 1992), should once again stress the essentials of the evangelical faith. Evangelical Christianity can certainly work to dispel the illusion that subjective, universal explanations are capable of rescuing and fixing the meaning of individuated human lives (pp. 114, 115-22).

David Marshall's understanding of the secularization debate is shaped in large part by the intimate relationship between nationalism and consumerism. Consumerism found expression in the increasingly subjective theoretical underpinnings of Christendom by means of which evangelical leaders constantly re-defined their reality. In fact, Protestants exchanged the other directed behaviour of revivalist Christianity for a preoccupation with self-absorption and self-realization. It was the mutually re-enforcing industrial and consumer revolutions during the late

52 Austin, *Saving China*, p. 294; James G. Endicott, *The Best of Jim Endicott* (Toronto, 1982), pp. 51-2.

53 For examples of syncretism within Christianity see Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmations* (Garden City, New York, 1979); Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Idolatry in Comparative Perspective", in John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (New York, 1988), pp. 53-88; and Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (New York, 1995), ch. 15.

1840s and 1850s, which, Marshall argues, caused a two-fold response in Presbyterian and Methodist Protestantism. In preaching the gospel, clergymen either addressed the social problems of an increasingly industrialized Canada, or packaged Christianity as a commodity to satisfy the demands created by greater affluence and more leisure time. Not only did this pandering to consumerism cause the churches to sponsor many leisure activities, but the desire to make Christianity more attractive led to the promotion of mass revivals, "unconventional forms of sermonizing" involving the novel and even the stage and the adoption of "popular gospel tunes, moral rearmament and therapeutic mind cures" (pp. 5, 23-4, 48, 97-8, 127-45, 213-26).

For a book first published in 1972 and now brought up to date with an additional chapter, J.W. Grant's *The Church in the Canadian Era*, 2nd edition (Burlington, Welch Publishing Co. Inc., 1988) is not at all out of place in this discussion of consumerism. The emergence of the welfare state during the 1940s was inspired and shaped by the traditional objectives of Canadian nationalism. A strongly centralized national government, drawing on the expertise of a vastly expanded post-war bureaucracy, promoted such state welfarism. Its goal was to maintain social order and political stability by creating a society considered more humane than that of Canada's neighbour. The welfare state thus sheltered the conspicuous consumption which, in Grant's view, explains the sharp rise in demand for institutional Christianity in the growing suburbs of the 1940s and 1950s (p. 165; see also pp. 161, 168). The most telling evidence Grant cites to demonstrate the impact of affluent materialism on denominational growth is the transformation of the church into a "therapeutic agency" (p. 174). Grant presages the findings of later historians⁵⁴ that "affluence" found expression in a lack of "personal stability", which propelled the churches into pastoral counselling and promoted an emphasis on "mental health" (chapter 7, p. 174).

Making use of sociological method, Winfield Fetz's fine study, *The Waterloo Mennonites: A Community in Paradox* (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), throws additional light on the continuing importance of consumerism. The effectiveness of the Mennonites in dealing with national institutions, particularly those of the welfare state, when they threatened their religious freedom in the 1960s and 1970s depended to some extent on the significant inroads consumer culture had made in their ranks. The Mennonite Central Committee, led by liberal elements of the community, successfully persuaded both provincial and national governments to forgo the rational uniformity and universality of education and health programmes, thereby helping to preserve the traditional way of life preferred by the more conservative members of their community. The progressive Mennonites have opted for consumption and an urban way of life. The more conservative remained

54 See T.J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930", in Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York, 1983), pp. 3-38; Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, pp. 518-529; and G.A. Rawlyk, "A.L. McCrimmon, H.P. Whidden, T.T. Shields, Christian Higher Education and McMaster University" in G.A. Rawlyk, ed., *Canadian Baptist Higher Education* (Kingston and Montreal, 1988), pp. 31-62.

satisfied with production and a rural life style (pp. 36-7, 43, 48, 131-43, Chapter 13, pp. 293-6, 317-22). They rejected the institutions of the welfare state which threatened their traditional "brotherhood system of bearing one another's burden" (pp. 148, 232-40).

Until the 1940s, the mainstream Protestant churches actively sought the Christianization of the Canadian nation. Churches in Canada, J.W. Grant appropriately maintains, "were regarded more as public than private institutions (p. 213). Willam Kaplan's important study, entitled *The State and Salvation: The Jehovah's Witnesses and Their Fight for Civil Rights* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1989), documents the emergence of a public religion more congenial to the religious pluralism typical of Canadian society during the war years. The past desire on the part of the Protestant churches to legitimate Canada as "His Dominion" was replaced by a civil religion clearly differentiated from the denominational profile of Canadian Christianity.⁵⁵ It took the presence of the Jehovah's Witnesses, banned in July of 1940 (p. xi), and the war time situation, however, to instigate this shift. The refusal of the Jehovah's Witnesses to obey two 1939 regulations requiring the singing of the national anthem and the saluting of the flag demonstrated that the religious freedom guaranteed in public schools by section seven of the Ontario Public School Act was circumscribed by the existence of a religious consensus of a civil nature (pp. 124-5). It should be noted that not all school boards decided to enforce these two new regulations. Believing the Canadian state to belong to Satan's world, Witnesses paid taxes but refused to vote, sing the national anthem, salute the flag, or go to war (pp. 3-8). For Jehovah's Witnesses, saluting the flag or singing the national anthem was nothing short of attributing salvation to the state (p. 161). Their consistent refusal to salute the red ensign suggests their rejection of its iconographic significance. The evidence is more compelling with respect to the national anthem, especially "God Save the King". Eric Ellison, whose son Arthur had been expelled from public school on 6 September 1940, informed a Hamilton juvenile court that the prayer-like wording of the national anthem was the reason for their refusal to sing it (p. 131).

The decision of provincial legislatures in Canada and of the Ontario Appeal Court to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Witness complaint was important for two reasons. First, in accepting the principle that a violation of religious freedom depended on the genuineness, not on the validity, of one's religious beliefs, both government and court expanded the definition of religious freedom in Canada. Moreover, this admission confirmed the contention of the Jehovah's Witnesses that the public ceremony of saluting the flag and singing the national anthem in public schools had religious significance. Secondly, the ritual character of these two acts is "indicative of deep-seated", one might even say long-standing, "values and commitments not made explicit in every day life".⁵⁶ While the public dimension of religion in Canada requires further investigation, several conclusions can be drawn. The focus of this invocation of God for the well-being and survival of the monarchy

55 Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", in Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, p. 168.

56 Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", p. 170.

penetrates to the heart of the mythology of a balanced constitution underlying the notion of a distinct Canadian nationality. The balance between freedom and authority had its basis in a distinctive political culture, founded on the principles of peace, order and good government. Thus liberty, or the will of the people, had to be the will of God, just as the authority of God reflected in the institution of monarchy had to be above the people.⁵⁷ Constituted in this manner, the Canadian polity, as a human and, therefore, fragile creation, had a future because it was part of the divine future. If this civil religion for some Canadians existed instead of denominations, for others in the 1940s it existed alongside of them.⁵⁸ Thus as J.W. Grant points out, "The churches exercised very little vigilance for the rights of unpopular minorities" such as the Jehovah's Witnesses (p. 151-2).

Taken together, the above books suggest that the pursuit of Christendom had far reaching implications for church, state and minorities in Canada. In the evangelical universe, it was the revelation of God in Jesus Christ which called individuals back into a real world, not the ability of human beings to represent Christianity to themselves as objective or rational truth. In their search for objective truth, Christians lost the freedom to live in a real world by choosing their own reality in the celebration of their own powers of abstraction. Since freedom in evangelical parlance was available only as a gift of God in Jesus Christ, no one could make this choice independently without choosing wrongly. Hence the freedom chosen apart from divine encounter mandated by scripture always resulted in a denial of the novel, capricious and even ambivalent character of the real world. The result was an aloofness from the real which turned individuals into critics and judges in defence of their own imagined freedom. In this process of capitulating to the culture of nationality, church and state in Canada, at least to the end of the 1940s, joined to deny religious freedom the protection of law. Evangelicalism and the culture of Canadian nationalism represented two competing ways of defining what is real and meaningful to human beings. In the light of these conclusions and of its phenomenal growth in recent years, evangelicalism ought not to be dismissed so readily for its supposed irrationalism, obscurantism and conservatism.⁵⁹

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57 G.M. Grant, *Ocean to Ocean: Sandford Fleming's Expedition Through Canada in 1872* (Toronto, 1873), pp. 367-8.

58 Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", pp. 169, 175-6.

59 In *Fire from Heaven*, author Harvey Cox takes to task members of the academic community, himself included, for having been too precipitous in predicting the decline of religion and the triumph of secularity. "Today it is secularity", he asserts, "not spirituality, that may be headed for extinction". He continues that "we may or may not be entering a new 'age of the Spirit' as some more sanguine observers hope. But we are definitely in a period of renewed religious vitality, another 'great awakening' if you will, with all the promise and peril religious revivals always bring with them, but this time on a world scale" (pp. XV-XVI).