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Times Have Changed
Recent Writings on the History of Christianity in Canada

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REVIEW ESSAYS/NOTES CRITIQUE

Times Have Changed: Recent Writings on the History of Christianity in Canada

IN HIS CLASSIC STUDY *The Writing of Canadian History*, Carl Berger lamented the state of religious historiography in English-speaking Canada. Before the 1960s, he wrote, scholars who discussed religion almost invariably portrayed it as "subsidiary" to other topics – for example, by emphasizing the religious underpinnings of French-English tensions or by focusing on the correlation between Confederation and the creation of national churches. Moreover, their works, which were largely confined to the periphery of Canadian historiography, gave short shrift to such issues as the intellectual substance of religious belief. Writing in the mid-1980s, Berger argued that the pattern of Canadian historians subordinating religion to other topics had continued in the two decades after the 1960s, as evidenced by works that focused on Christianity's contribution to 20th-century "social activism," although he acknowledged that books written in this era – A.B. McKillop's *Disciplined Intelligence* (1979) and Ramsay Cook's *The Regenerators* (1985), for instance – had begun to illuminate religious history's intellectual dimension.[1]

Berger surmised that many Canadian historians' disregard for religion may have stemmed from a desire to distance themselves from the repressive religious environments in which they had grown up. Additionally, he suggested that younger scholars' lack of interest in religious history also derived from their enthusiasm, in many cases, for social history. This subfield's emphasis on "material circumstances," Berger intimated, may have rendered religious history unappealing, given its traditional preoccupation with abstractions. Whatever the reasons for Canadian historians' lack of interest in religion, however, Berger concluded that it had been neglected for much of the 20th century.[2]

Times have changed. The study of religion – and, in particular, Christianity – has flourished over the last 30 years. Central to this development has been a vigorous debate over the "secularization thesis," which posits that, as modernity waxes, religiosity wanes. Proponents of the secularization thesis have argued that Christianity's influence in Canada declined precipitously beginning in the late 19th century due to such factors as the ascent of Darwinian science, liberal clergymen's abandonment of orthodox theological doctrines, and changing notions of satisfaction on the part of the populace, which increasingly prioritized material fulfillment in this life over spiritual salvation in the next. Critics of the secularization thesis, conversely, have argued that Christianity successfully adapted to the challenges of the modern

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1 Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900*, 2nd ed. (1976; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 292; A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979); Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

2 Berger, *Writing of Canadian History*, 292-3.

age – including urbanization, industrialization, and scientific innovation – and played a crucial role in shaping 20th-century Canada.[3] For all their differences, studies on both sides of this debate, which crested in the late 1980s and 1990s, demonstrated that works of religious history were no longer restricted to Canadian historiography's margins and that their authors did not see religion as subordinate to other topics.

The momentum created by the secularization debate has been sustained in recent years by diverse works on an array of topics relating to the history of Christianity in Canada, including colonial Christianity's trans-Atlantic orientation, Christianity's complicated relationship with the state, and Christianity's impact on several generations of a middle-class family from Quebec's Eastern Townships.[4] Such works attest to the major historiographical shift that has occurred over the past three decades. In contrast to the circumstances lamented by Berger, Canadian religious history has become a vibrant scholarly subfield.[5]

For further evidence one need look only to the four books reviewed in this essay. The first two – Peter Ludlow's *The Canny Scot: Archbishop James Morrison of Antigonish* and Alan Wilson's *Highland Shepherd: James MacGregor, Father of the Scottish Enlightenment in Nova Scotia* – are biographies of Maritime clergymen that seek to burnish their subjects' reputations. The second two – Phyllis D. Airhart's *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada* and Eldon Hay's *The Covenanters in Canada: Reformed Presbyterianism from 1820 to 2012* – are denominational histories that explore challenges faced by Protestant churches. Collectively they reveal the vibrancy of contemporary scholarship on the history of Christianity in Canada.[6]

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3 On the secularization debate in Canada see Michael Gauvreau and Ollivier Hubert, "Introduction: Beyond Church History: Recent Developments in the History of Religion in Canada," in *The Churches and Social Order in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Canada*, ed. Gauvreau and Hubert (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 3-45; McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence*, xxi-vii; and David B. Marshall, "Canadian Historians, Secularization and the Problem of the Nineteenth Century," Canadian Catholic Historical Association *Historical Studies* 60 (1993-1994): 57-81.

4 Todd Webb, *Transatlantic Methodists: British Wesleyanism and the Formation of an Evangelical Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ontario and Quebec* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); Mark McGowan, "Rendering Unto Caesar: Catholics, the State, and the Idea of a Christian Canada," Canadian Society of Church History *Historical Papers* (2011): 65-85; Marguerite Van Die, *Religion, Family and Community in Victorian Canada: The Colbys of Carrollcroft* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

5 Contrary to Berger's hypothesis that social historians were uninterested in religious history, practitioners of a "bottom-up" methodology have, in fact, contributed to the subfield's growth in recent decades. See, for example, Mark McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); and Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, "Modalities of Social Authority: Suggesting an Interface for Religious and Social History," *Histoire sociale / Social History* 36, no. 71 (2003): 1-30.

6 Peter Ludlow, *The Canny Scot: Archbishop James Morrison of Antigonish* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Alan Wilson, *Highland Shepherd: James MacGregor, Father of the Scottish Enlightenment in Nova Scotia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Phyllis D. Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the*

Ludlow's *The Canny Scot* chronicles the life and times of Archbishop James Morrison, an influential figure of Highland Scottish ancestry who headed the Catholic diocese of Antigonish, Nova Scotia from 1912 until 1950. Ludlow is substantially concerned with debunking a "Saints and Sinners" historiography regarding Morrison and several of his associates that has crystallized over the past six decades. Within this historiography, Ludlow explains, progressive figures like James J. Tompkins, a priest who served under Morrison, are lauded as heroes who sought to alleviate the suffering of hardscrabble Nova Scotians in the early 20th century by supporting initiatives like the St. Francis Xavier (St. FX) Extension Department, the educational engine behind the Antigonish Movement. Figures like Morrison, by contrast, have been portrayed as villainous reactionaries who impeded the realization of such enlightened initiatives. To be sure, there is some truth to the "Saints and Sinners" interpretation – Tompkins was indeed an enthusiastic exponent of the Extension phenomenon, while Morrison was inarguably conservative – but Ludlow argues that it has obscured the latter's attempts to improve the lives of Nova Scotians facing adverse circumstances.

For Ludlow, Morrison's response to the struggles of Cape Breton colliery workers demonstrates that he was by no means unsympathetic to the plight of his flock. Ludlow explains that unrest among these labourers intensified in the early 1920s due to such issues as low wages, unsafe working conditions, and the abysmal living conditions endured by immigrant workers who resided in shacks situated on the property of their employer, the British Empire Steel Corporation (BESCO). Ludlow acknowledges that Morrison was ill-equipped to deal with such circumstances. Born in 1861 in the small community of Savage Harbour, Prince Edward Island, he was enamoured with the pastoral ideal and had a limited grasp of the complexities of industrial capitalism. Nevertheless, as Ludlow explains, these facts did not render him insensitive to the workers' struggles.

Rather, deriving inspiration from *Rerum Novarum* – an influential papal encyclical that, in Ludlow's words, "criticised socialism and staunchly defended the right of private property, but recognized the utter poverty and general hardship of industrial society" – Morrison advocated for the creation of a Catholic union (131). Such an entity, he reasoned, would insulate Catholic workers from the unambiguously anti-capitalist views espoused by radicals like J.B. McLachlan, of whom Morrison was deeply suspicious, while allowing them to agitate for better working conditions. That Morrison's proposal came to naught – critics charged that it would exacerbate Catholic-Protestant tensions and drive a wedge between Catholics who supported the idea and Catholics who opposed it – should not conceal the fact that his efforts reflected his concern for the workers' welfare.

For Ludlow, Morrison's support for adult education – and, specifically, university extension – also runs counter to the notion that he was an impediment to progressive measures. As Ludlow explains, the idea of "taking [higher] education from elite campuses to the people" originated in England in the 1870s, and migrated to North

America around the turn of the 20th century (165). Access to education, the logic ran, would help impoverished inhabitants of remote communities deal with problems deriving from unchecked capitalism.

Ludlow explains that the impetus for university extension in eastern Nova Scotia emanated from various individuals – including Tompkins and Moses Coady – and institutions – including the Scottish Catholic Society (SCS) and the St. FX Alumni Association – and found expression in the activities of St. FX's Extension Department, which was instrumental to the successes of the Antigonish Movement. Yet Ludlow also explains that Morrison provided the initiative with significant diplomatic backing. Evidence can be seen in the letters of introduction that Morrison wrote, which created links between the Extension Department's representatives and members of the struggling communities that they visited. It can also be seen in his willingness to suspend his authoritarian tendencies (the existence of which Ludlow does not deny) and allow the representatives to exert control over the study clubs, cooperatives, and lending libraries created under the initiative's auspices (166-75).

Ultimately, Morrison's support for university extension encapsulates Ludlow's argument. While Morrison's conservative instincts did not evaporate – on the contrary, he was anxious about the possibility of the initiative becoming entangled with the left-wing Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) – they did not prevent him from contributing materially to its success. Thus, as Ludlow demonstrates, it is difficult to substantiate the assumption that Morrison was a reactionary obstacle to projects that aimed to mitigate hardships experienced by impoverished Nova Scotians.

Where Ludlow's *The Canny Scot* seeks to burnish the reputation of Morrison, Alan Wilson's *Highland Shepherd* attempts to enhance the image of James MacGregor – a path-breaking Presbyterian missionary from Strathearn, Perthshire, who served in the Maritimes between 1786 and 1830. Whereas Ludlow challenges the "Saints and Sinners" historiography that has obscured Morrison's support for such constructive undertakings as the university extension initiative, Wilson tackles the "McCulloch Myth," which downplayed MacGregor's contributions to the Atlantic region around the turn of the 19th century while exalting those of his younger colleague – the celebrated Presbyterian minister and educator Thomas McCulloch.

According to Barry Cahill, author of *Highland Shepherd*'s "Historiographical Introduction," a tendency among historians of colonial Atlantic Canada to fixate on McCulloch – a figure who, in Cahill's words, "[enjoyed] greater opportunities, fewer responsibilities, [a] wider field of activity, and less onerous demands on his time and energy" than MacGregor – has prevented them from appreciating the latter's multifaceted significance (xiv). Indeed, with the exception of the filiopietistic biography of MacGregor written by his grandson, the "Presbyterian propagandist" George Patterson, they have paid scant attention to the subject of Wilson's thoughtful, affectionate book.[7] Moreover, insofar as scholars have

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7 Patterson, *Memoir of the Rev. James MacGregor, D.D., Missionary of the General Associate Synod of Scotland to Pictou, Nova Scotia . . .* (Pictou, NS: 1859). On Patterson, see Allan C. Dunlop, "George Patterson: Presbyterian Propagandist," in *The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada*, ed. Charles Scobie and G.A. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 79-92.

acknowledged MacGregor, they have usually caricatured him as a "rough-hewn minister" and "Highland mystic" while portraying McCulloch as a remarkably sophisticated intellectual and veritable renaissance man. Cahill – and, presumably, Wilson – lament this tendency and the attendant "devaluation" of MacGregor's historical significance. In Cahill's view, MacGregor epitomizes "the whole-cloth Presbyterian contribution to colonial Atlantic Canada in education, culture, and economic and intellectual life" (xiii-xvi). Given the praise bestowed on MacGregor throughout *Highland Shepherd*, it seems evident that Wilson holds him in a similarly high regard.

For Wilson, the Scottish Enlightenment – that outpouring of intellectual activity in Scotland in the second half of the 18th century that had a profound and enduring impact on such diverse fields as philosophy and poetry, medicine and mathematics – was integral to MacGregor's life and to his myriad contributions to the Atlantic region. As Wilson explains, MacGregor absorbed the ethos of the Scottish Enlightenment, in large part at the University of Glasgow, where he studied during the 1770s. Accessible to students, like himself, from modest backgrounds, and replete with evangelical Dissenters, of which he was emphatically one, the importance of this institution to MacGregor's development, it seems, is hard to overstate; it was at the University of Glasgow, Wilson writes, that MacGregor was exposed to the inspiring ideas of such Scottish Enlightenment luminaries as John Millar and Thomas Reid. These figures instilled in their students a belief in the improvability of the human species and the importance of rational thought, among other compelling convictions. Such beliefs, according to Wilson, informed many of MacGregor's activities in Nova Scotia, not the least of which was his vigorous support for education.

Wilson rejects the notion, espoused by proponents of the "McCulloch Myth," that McCulloch "was almost single-handedly" responsible for sparking Nova Scotia's educational development. While he does not deny that McCulloch made meaningful contributions to this process, Wilson is at pains to point out that MacGregor had advocated for the importance of education in the colony for upwards of a decade before McCulloch's arrival, via Scotland, in 1803. MacGregor was an especially enthusiastic booster of scientific education; that a devout Presbyterian felt this way attests, in Wilson's view, to his Scottish Enlightenment-inspired belief that science and religion were eminently complementary. Indeed, as Wilson explains, MacGregor had championed the creation of a regional school system for children, and called for the establishment of a divinity hall that would alleviate colonial Presbyterians' reliance on Scottish clergy through the training of North American-born ministers. Thus, while McCulloch may deserve credit for spurring Nova Scotia's educational growth – after all, he helped to found Pictou Academy, which was incorporated in 1816 – Wilson contends that the colony's scholastic development "resulted from a team effort" as opposed to being an outgrowth of McCulloch's solitary efforts (122-33).

Where Ludlow's critique of the "Saints and Sinners" historiography is admirably measured, Wilson's critique of the "McCulloch Myth" – which has been propagated, in his words, by "uncritical historians" (130) – occasionally seems too harsh. For example, while Wilson is correct in stating that McCulloch has often been singled out for praise by scholars investigating Nova Scotia's educational history, it is

inaccurate to suggest that other actors – including MacGregor – have been omitted from the story altogether. On the contrary, in their *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* essay on McCulloch, Susan Buggey and Gwendolyn Davies explicitly acknowledge that MacGregor preceded McCulloch in championing the creation of a divinity hall.[8] Nonetheless, such quibbles should not overshadow Wilson's forceful arguments regarding the pivotal part played by MacGregor, a product of the Scottish Enlightenment, in shaping the culture of colonial Atlantic Canada.

In contrast to the biographical approach taken in Ludlow's *The Canny Scot* and Wilson's *Highland Shepherd*, Phyllis D. Airhart and Eldon Hay offer denominational histories of, respectively, the United Church of Canada and the Covenanters. The United Church is a curious institution. Canada's largest Protestant denomination, it has enjoyed considerable popularity and exerted substantial influence since its creation in 1925 as a result of a merger between the Congregationalists, the Methodists, and roughly two-thirds of the Presbyterians. And yet, as Airhart demonstrates in her thoroughly researched, smartly written book, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation*, the United Church has encountered adversity at virtually every stage of its history.

Criticism of the United Church began before the institution came into existence. Airhart explains that supporters of the union movement – including members of the elite like the Presbyterian George Monro Grant and the Methodist S.D. Chown as well as the ordinary Protestants who belonged to organizations like the Evangelical Alliance – drew on diverse motivations, including the belief that church union would counterbalance the growing influence, in Canada, of Catholic ultramontanism and the notion that church union would serve as a mechanism for assimilating the non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants flooding into Canada (especially in the Prairies) during the Laurier era. Conversely, critics of church union focused on two main issues. The first was theology. Conservative evangelicals, Airhart explains, charged that the Basis of Union – which set the stage for the United Church's creation by accommodating the diverse theological traditions of the various denominations that were preparing to unite – rendered the institution "creedless" and thus devoid of theological substance.

They were not the only constituency to criticize the church union movement on theological grounds – quite the opposite. Charles Frederick Paul, the Unitarian editor of *Saturday Night*, wrote withering essays in the early 20th century in which he remarked on, inter alia, the yawning gulf that separated the Calvinist theology of the Presbyterians from the Arminian theology of the Methodists.[9] So vast was the distance between these traditions, Paul concluded, that it was ultimately "unbridgeable" (53).

Airhart states that the second issue emphasized by critics of the church union movement was the "public role" that a United Church was expected to play.

8 Susan Buggey and Gwendolyn Davies, "Thomas McCulloch," *DCB Online VII*, http://biographi.ca.

9 Named for early modern European Reformers, John Calvin and Jacobus Arminius, Calvinism and Arminianism represent contrasting strands of Protestant theology. Where Calvinism is often associated with the austere doctrines of Original Sin and Predestination, Arminianism is often associated with the comparatively optimistic belief that human beings, through "prevenient grace," are endowed with the capacity to accept God's offer of sanctification. On the contrast between these outlooks, see John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 29-30.

Opponents of church union feared that a powerful United Church geared toward "social Christianity" would harness state power in hopes of realizing an activist agenda. Such measures, they feared, could undermine the ability of ordinary families to serve as agents of Christianization. J. Gresham Machen, for example, a conservative American evangelical who founded the Westminster Theological Seminary and became an outspoken opponent of the church union movement, suggested that the advent of an interventionist United Church aligned with the state could result in the "Christian home" being marginalized "by undue encroachments of the . . . state" (53-5). Airhart notes that, in significant respects, the debate over church union in Canada mirrored the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy that played out in the United States during roughly the same time. Conservative evangelicals on both sides of the border, she explains, made similar arguments against church union in Canada and theological liberalism in the United States, which helps to account for Machen's interest in religious developments occurring north of the 49th parallel (50-1).

As with the theological criticisms of church union, denunciations of the initiative that stressed the United Church's anticipated "public role" were not unique to conservative evangelicals. Rather, the editor of the *Canadian Churchman*, a publication representing the mainline Anglican Church, expressed dismay at the spectre of an activist church working in conjunction with the state to precipitate social change. Religion, the publication declared, "must be a thing of the heart and of the will, an impelling impulse of life. It will never do to exchange the Church of God for a great social service institution" (55-6). Although, as Airhart points out, the *Canadian Churchman*'s remarks were not necessarily indicative of the wider Anglican Church's attitudes toward the union phenomenon, they suggest that concerns regarding an activist United Church working hand-in-hand with the state to trigger social change existed across diverse groups.

Paradoxically, the United Church also faced adversity during the era in which it was arguably strongest: the two decades between the end of the Second World War and the mid-1960s. Interestingly, as Airhart points out, where criticism of the United Church in the lead-up to its creation had come from opponents of the union movement, in the postwar era much of the criticism directed at the United Church emerged from within its own ranks.

One could be forgiven for concluding that, in the postwar era, Canada was a deeply religious nation. In the aftermath of the Second World War, when Gallup first polled Canadians about whether they had attended a religious service within the last week, 67 per cent of them responded in the affirmative. Roman Catholic rates of religious observance were especially high. Nowhere was this more evident than in Quebec, where a whopping 90 per cent of the province's Roman Catholics reported that they had been to church in the last week. If statistics are any indication, Canadians' religiosity remained largely intact into the early 1960s, when less than two per cent of the population reported that they were religiously unaffiliated.[10]

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10 Mark A. Noll, "What Happened to Christian Canada?" *Church History* 75, no. 2 (June 2006): 248-50.

These figures attest to a surge in religious enthusiasm after 1945 from which the United Church was by no means excluded. Indeed, as Airhart explains, the denomination's postwar popularity obliterated concerns that had arisen in the 1930s about its long-term viability. The United Church's postwar success seems all the more striking since it preceded the denomination's dramatic decline (at least in statistical terms) beginning in the later 1960s. This pattern, which affected virtually all mainstream churches, was fuelled by various factors – including the "sexual revolution," which triggered an exodus from the Roman Catholic Church, and the advent of a "new nationalism" premised on social pluralism that rendered Christianity one cultural orientation among many – and signalled the end of "Christian Canada."[11]

Yet, as Airhart points out, a survey conducted by *MacLean's* in 1961 suggested that Christianity had had little impact on Canadians' attitudes toward such significant issues as sexual behaviour, alcohol consumption, and business practices before the late 1960s. These findings indicated that Canadians, for all their apparent religiosity, were less devout than the era's religious statistics might lead one to believe. This possibility elicited anxiety within the United Church, whose leaders argued with evermore intensity that the denomination had grown complacent. As J.R. Mutchmor, the outspoken secretary of the United Church's Board of Evangelism & Social Service, stated: "I believe the United Church stands in a slippery place because it is becoming a clubby, chubby Church" (155).

Mutchmor's remarks sprang from the concern that, in the postwar era, the United Church's reform-oriented fervour had given way to what Airhart describes as an "insular and inward-looking" attitude. With many of the denomination's members leading comfortable middle-class lives, United Church adherents increasingly seemed more interested in socializing with one another within the church's walls than in fighting for societal change beyond them. While such sentiments were not unique to the United Church – Pierre Berton surveyed similar terrain in his provocative book, *The Comfortable Pew* (1965), which had been commissioned by the Anglican Church – they bespeak the fact that, at a time of statistically verifiable strength, the United Church came in for pointed criticism. This reality is illustrative of a major theme developed in Airhart's book: the United Church has experienced adversity at virtually every stage of its existence, as evidenced by the criticism it

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11 Noll, "What Happened to Christian Canada?," 245-73; Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *Christian Churches and their Peoples, 1840-1965: A Social History of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 197-8. Of course, the importance of religious statistics can easily be overstated. An emphasis on waning rates of church attendance and denominational affiliation can obscure the fact that, in recent years, some Christian groups have fared worse, statistically, than others. The ebbing of mainline Protestant denominations, for example, contrasts sharply with the robust growth enjoyed by certain evangelical groups. It can also overshadow the unquantifiable ways in which religious impulses manifest, as evidenced by the phenomenon of "believing without belonging" wherein people who eschew conventional religiosity derive spiritual sustenance from Christian convictions. On this topic see Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, eds., *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization in North America and Europe, 1945-2000* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 24, and Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

received from members of other denominations in the era of church union, and from its own members after the Second World War.

Where Airhart's *A Church with the Soul of a Nation* discusses challenges faced by the United Church, Eldon Hay's *The Covenanters in Canada* sheds light on the adverse circumstances experienced by a much smaller Protestant denomination: the Covenanters, or Reformed Presbyterians. Despite the group's modest size – it had fewer than 500 members in Canada in 2007 (284) – Hay explains that he decided to write about the Covenanters, who currently form part of a socially conservative North American evangelical subculture, for three reasons: "First, that the history and the stories [of the Covenanters] not be lost; second, to portray them as real persons – worthy of our attention and respect, even if we do not agree with them; third, as a case study of a small, not largely significant movement" (xxiii-xxiv).

Much like the United Church, the Covenanters' encounters with adversity began before the denomination officially came into existence. As Hay explains, the Covenanters' roots lie in early modern Scotland, where devout Presbyterians threw their support behind documents – the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 – that denounced Episcopalianism (the bishop-run system of church polity employed by Anglicans, among other denominations), and called for the implementation of Calvinistic, or Reformed, Protestantism throughout the "three kingdoms" of England, Ireland, and Scotland. What followed, from the Scottish Covenanters' perspective, was a "golden age" of uncorrupted Presbyterianism that extended to Ireland, where Reformed Protestantism had been introduced through the arrival, in the early 17th century, of Scottish settlers. This era came to an end, however, in 1660, with the Restoration that witnessed the return of the Stuart kings and the onset of a concerted campaign to impose Episcopacy – which the Stuarts saw as a sine qua non for stable monarchical governance – on Scotland's largely Presbyterian populace. Presbyterians in Scotland and Ireland consequently endured acute persecution, with the hardship culminating with the notorious "killing times" of the 1680s when Presbyterians who refused to renounce their religious convictions were subjected to severe punishments, including death.

Most Presbyterians naturally welcomed the Revolution Settlement of 1690 that followed the Glorious Revolution, since it ended the persecution of the previous era and recognized Presbyterianism as Scotland's national religion; the Revolution Settlement also recognized the Anglican Church, an Episcopalian entity, as England's state church. However, as Hay explains, an uncompromising Presbyterian minority – the Covenanters – recoiled at this development. They did so because, from the Covenanters' vantage point, the Revolution Settlement failed to abide by the covenants of the 1630s and 1640s in two fundamental ways. First, by recognizing English Episcopalianism, it failed to implement Reformed Protestantism throughout the British Isles; second, it failed to recognize Christ's supremacy over church and state, a bedrock Presbyterian belief. So vehement was the Covenanters' opposition to the Revolution Settlement that it prompted them to reject such politically charged, and secular, phenomena as voting, serving on juries, and swearing oaths of allegiance. Engaging in such activities, they felt, was tantamount to accepting the authority of an ungodly civil authority that had forsaken Covenanting principles. Thus, while the two groups have much in common – specifically, they are similar in terms of doctrine, worship, and church polity – the

Covenanters' unwillingness to accept the Revolution Settlement resulted in a rupture between them and mainstream Presbyterians. In the early 19th century the Covenanters' particular approach to Christianity migrated to British North America, where figures from Ireland (Alexander Clarke), Scotland (James McLachlan), and the United States (James Milligan) influenced its development (3-5).

Adversity accompanied Covenanting Christianity on its trans-Atlantic journey. Evidence can be gleaned from the experiences of James Geggie, a Scottish missionary sent by the denomination to Lower Canada in the era of the Canadian Rebellions. Shortly after Geggie's arrival, a metropolitan colleague informed him that, in view of the tense situation into which he had been plunged, he would do well to avoid emphasizing the Covenanters' objections to Britain's authority. "Were you to say all you believe regarding the British government," the colleague remarked, "you might bring yourself into very great trouble." Geggie agreed that the Covenanters' beliefs could well prove controversial amid such tumultuous circumstances. In his correspondence with metropolitan Covenanters, Geggie stated that settlers were often required to swear an "*Oath of Allegiance* to the Queen & her successors," adding that, while he had not been asked to do so as yet, if he were, and he refused, he would likely be asked "to leave the country" (136-9, italics in original).

Geggie believed that these circumstances amounted to an impediment to the Covenanters' growth in Lower Canada, since settlers who were unwilling to pledge their loyalty to colonial authorities "would be regarded as Rebels, & their lands would be confiscated" (139). The spectre of punishment, Geggie surmised, rendered Covenanting Christianity unappealing despite the fact that many of the settlers, in his view, were receptive to Presbyterian traditions. That the Covenanters' presence in the Lower Canadian community to which Geggie had been sent (Mégantic County) fizzled in the Rebellion's aftermath, while other Presbyterian groups in the area went on to enjoy substantial success, suggests that he was right. Overall, Geggie's experiences in Lower Canada capture the adversity faced by Covenanters on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean as a result of their unwavering commitment to the denomination's principles.

The books reviewed in this essay reveal the robust state of contemporary scholarship on the history of Christianity in Canada. Ludlow's *The Canny Scot* and Wilson's *Highland Shepherd* emphasize the constructive contributions made by Maritime clergymen – James Morrison and James MacGregor, respectively – who, in their biographers' view, have received short shrift from historians of the Atlantic region. Airhart's *A Church with the Soul of a Nation* and Hay's *The Covenanters in Canada*, by contrast, explore the unfavourable circumstances endured, respectively, by the United Church and the Covenanters. Taken together, these wide-ranging books cover a multiplicity of topics and several centuries of history. They attest to the dramatic changes that have occurred in Canadian religious historiography since Carl Berger lamented the subfield's state three decades ago. Times have indeed changed.

DENIS MCKIM