

RELIGION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CANADIAN SOCIETY:

AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

by

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During the past forty years Canadian historians have viewed the relationship between religion and the development of Canadian society from three perspectives. None of these perspectives have risen out of the Canadian context; they have been imported and adapted with various degrees of success to the Canadian scene. The assistance they have given Canadian historians in perceiving and highlighting various aspects of the role of religion in our national life has been valuable. Like all perspectives, however, they have often concealed as much as they have revealed. Canadian church historians, of course, have been aware of the limitations which these perspectives have placed upon the story of the religious development of Canadian society. Their comments and criticisms, however, have never been systematically studied nor viewed in the wider context of the development of these perspectives elsewhere. This neglect needs to be remedied for such a study throws light not only on an aspect of the intellectual history of Canada but also on a number of points of emphasis in the use of these perspectives which appear to be distinctively Canadian. In what follows, therefore, an attempt has been made first of all to trace the development and continuing influence of these perspectives on the interpretation of religion in Canadian society. Secondly, to assess the adequacy and limitations of these perspectives as interpretive frameworks in the Canadian context. And finally to point out some of the factors in the present situation which need to be taken into consideration in the development of a new perspective.

I

During the first three decades of the 20th century Canadian historians were preoccupied with the evolution of Canadian nationhood.

The themes which claimed their attention were the winning of national status, the achievement of responsible government, and confederation. Their focus was on political and constitutional matters, consequently "they did not effectively analyze the social, economic and intellectual forces within North America which were creating a Canadian community increasingly conscious that it was far from being an overseas projection of Britain." (1) In the 1920's several Canadian historians began to turn their attention to these problems.

At roughly the same time the need to record the religious history of Canada as one sustained movement in the life of the nation also became apparent. The basic problem was to discover a single principle which would give unity to the whole. Edmund H. Oliver in his book The Winning of the Frontier (2) was the first to tackle this problem by using the frontier thesis as the framework for his narrative.

The importance of the frontier for American development had been the subject of serious study and debate by American historians ever since 1893, when Frederick Jackson Turner gave his famous paper on "The Significance of the Frontier" before the meetings of the American Historical Association in Chicago. By 1930, the Turner - Anti-Turner debate was widespread amongst American historians (3) and both the significance and limitations of the theory for the interpretation of Canadian history had been argued before the Canadian Historical Association. In 1928, Walter N. Sage of the University of British Columbia, argued for the validity of the frontier thesis as applied to Canadian history. (4) The following year, however, John L. McDougall launched an attack on it. "Whatever justification there may be for Professor Turner's thesis as an explanation of American history," he concluded, "it could be little short of a calamity if Canadian historians were to attempt to deform the story of our own development to fit the Procrustes bed of the frontier theory." (5) It was into a context of debate, therefore, that Oliver's The Winning of the Frontier came when it was published in 1930.

The Winning of the Frontier was reviewed for the Canadian Historical Review by John T. McNeil. "There is more Canadian church history," wrote McNeil, "in this volume of 271 pages than has ever before been placed between two covers." (6) McNeil, however, was well aware of the criticism being directed at the frontier thesis and therefore he added:

"Some readers, familiar with the 'frontier' theory of the history of the United States, may be prepared to find that the thesis is overworked. The present reviewer can only state his accord with the author's main position. The Canadian churches cannot in the least degree be understood as mere projections of the communions of the old world from which they sprang. Their course has been mainly shaped by a frontier environment." (7)

Yet while Oliver uses the frontier thesis, at no point does he give any clues to the literary heritage of his book. (8) Neither Turner nor any of the American church historians who utilized the frontier thesis, such as Peter Mode and W. W. Sweet, are mentioned. (9) When one examines Oliver's use of the term "frontier," however, it becomes clear that he was not reduplicating Turner's categories nor those of Turner's disciples. The frontier, for Oliver, was not the cradle of Canadian democracy, it was not the focal point of Canadianization nor a safety valve to drain off the explosive tensions of an Eastern labor force. Rather it was the place where the institutions of civilization tamed and domesticated the unruly forces of the wilderness. The frontier was that line along which "the outriders of civilization do battle -- with the primitive and elemental." (10)

For Oliver the frontier signified "need and opportunity." The need was twofold. First of all, there was the need of the church to be involved in mission. "It is the law of Christ's Kingdom," Oliver argues, "that the church that neglects the uttermost part of the earth, whether in its own land or across the sea does so at grave peril to its spiritual life." (11) Secondly, there was the need of new solutions to new problems which arise in a new environment. "The Councils of the Church," he points out, "may be held and decisions registered at great centres, as in Jerusalem, but the most vital problems ever arise in, and the solutions must always be found for, Joppa and Caesarea, Antioch and Galatia, -- among, and for the Gentiles and on the growing frontier." (12) The missionary dimension of Oliver's thought deeply influenced his conception not only of the need but also the opportunity of the frontier. This opportunity lay in the fact that it yielded "new fields for mission activity." "In Canada," continues Oliver, "just because of the primitive conditions and pioneer settlements characteristic of a young and growing country, it has been the expanding geographical frontier that has afforded the most striking challenge to the Church." (13) It is the

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attempt of the churches to meet the challenge of the frontier which for Oliver is "the controlling feature of religious policy and the constant motive of church enterprise in Canadian life." (14)

After a brief period at McMaster University, following doctoral studies at Columbia, Oliver came out to the west as an educational pioneer and missionary. Not long after his arrival at the University of Saskatchewan as a professor of history he became involved in the establishment of the Presbyterian Theological College on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan and became its first principal. In the negotiations leading to the formation of the United Church in 1925, Oliver became a spokesman of the Union Churches in the west which had been formed prior to 1925 in the expectation that the union of the churches in Canada would be immediately forthcoming. Oliver's election as the fourth moderator of the United Church of Canada was, at least in part, a recognition of his role as spokesman for these union churches and his two year term from 1930-1932 was marked by his unflagging efforts to organize relief for those who were being wiped out by the crop failures and dust bowl conditions which characterized Saskatchewan during the Depression years. (Consequently it is not surprising that his conception of the frontier was deeply influenced by his missionary concerns for Western Canada and its people which he knew so well and with whom he had so deeply identified himself.)

There was a conflict of interest in Oliver's mind, however, as he used the frontier theory. (The real value of this theory, as Turner developed it, was to explain and emphasize the newness and uniqueness of North American ideas and institutions.) In the process of adapting to a new environment on the frontier there was a continual beginning again in which new problems and new ways of doing things transformed old social patterns, techniques and ideas. From an analysis of these frontier dynamics, Turner argued, it was possible to explain the newness and uniqueness of American social development.

Oliver grasped the significance of this theory but he was torn between emphasizing elements of continuity and analyzing those aspects of the new environment which produced discontinuity with the past. By defining the frontier as the battle-line between the forces of civilization and the wilderness, he indicates his interest in the elements of continuity with the past. Indeed it was only after he had

emphasized the factor of continuity that he was prepared to talk about how the frontier altered the decisions made in the large metropolitan centers of civilization.

He pointed out that the advance of the frontier decreased dependence on Europe and led to the formation of national churches responsible for their own support and destiny. He also emphasized that the issues which arose on the frontier altered British colonial policy with regard to religion, national policy and questions such as education and the separation of church and state, however the uniqueness of these events were not the main focus of his study and they were never allowed to alter substantially his emphasis on the continuous forward march of civilization.

In the early part of the twentieth century, the Canadian West was a symbol of opportunity. During the thirties, however, it turned into a nightmare. Under Harold A. Innis' direction, therefore, Canadian historians began to direct their attention to the influence of the great metropolitan centers of the East on the development of Canada. Consequently, even amongst church historians Oliver's The Winning of the Frontier faded into obscurity and neglect.

While Oliver's work has generally been ignored by professional church historians in Canada, it has not, however, been without its continuing influence. Claris Edwin Silcox in his study of the union of the churches in Canada stressed the importance of the union churches in the West and the pressure of home mission work on the Western frontier as a major factor in the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925. (15) Dr. George Dorey, a colleague of Oliver's in Saskatchewan, also reflects the impact of the "geographical determinism" of the frontier thesis in his Robertson Lectures for 1952-53. (16) By far the most intriguing recent use of the frontier thesis, however, has been the attempt of Gerald R. Cragg to explain the lack of an indigenous Canadian theology in terms of it. He writes:

"In a pioneering community there are few encouragements to academic speculation. 'Winning the frontier' has been the major responsibility of all the churches, and other matters have been remorselessly thrust aside. --- Lack of adequate resources, combined with the pragmatic approach natural in churches that were fighting to win the frontier regions has kept all our colleges small and most of them weak.--- There has been little 'learned leisure,' and under such conditions an indigenous theology does not readily develop." (17)

When the roll of distinguished Canadian theologians who have spent all or significant portions of their careers in the United States is called (18), one wonders whether the frontier thesis is an adequate explanation for the lack of an indigenous Canadian theology. Perhaps the attraction of the great metropolitan centers of learning in North America would provide a more adequate explanation of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, Cragg's observations provide an interesting example of the continuing influence of the frontier thesis in the interpretation of the Canadian experience.

II

In 1929, the year before Oliver's book appeared, Richard Niebuhr published The Social Sources of Denominationalism (19), a book which was to have a formative effect on the interpretation of religion both in Canada and the United States. Niebuhr adapted the church-sect typology developed by Max Weber and elaborated by his colleague Ernst Troeltsch, to the interpretation of American Protestantism. Perceiving the static character of this typology, Niebuhr reformulated it by spelling out the attitudes of the two types towards secular culture and then transformed it into a dynamic concept by proposing that the typology be used to study the processes by which sects become reconciled to the world. The result of this reformulation was "the well-known hypothesis that sects develop ultimately into churches - that is, that their attitude toward secular culture in time undergoes a change from harsh rejection to a degree of toleration or even acceptance." (20)

In Canada, this typology was picked up by Samuel Delbert Clark and used as a basis for his study of church and sect in Canada. (21) In an earlier work on The Social Development of Canada (22), Clark had shown himself to be an exponent of the "frontier hypothesis." When he adopted the church-sect typology in 1948 to explicate "the sociological significance of certain general movements of religion in Canadian social development," (23) he did not abandon his earlier commitment to the frontier theory but combined the insights of the earlier orientation with those of the church-sect typology. The result was a first-class study of Canadian religious development which J. B. Brebner hailed as

"a pioneering work of great importance, a monumental mile-stone in Canadian historical writing beyond which particularist studies will seem inexcusable except insofar as they fill gaps in our knowledge and are adequately related to the edifices which Mr. Clark has erected..." (24)

Out of Clark's earlier study (25) it became clear that the social development of Canada had been characterized by a succession of frontier religious movements. These movements continually challenged and threatened the efforts of the major denominations to secure undisputed control over the ministrations of religious services. The conflict between established religious authority and those who refused to recognize such authority was identified by Clark as the conflict between church and sect. Clark related this conflict to the frontier thesis by noting that the sect has been a product of frontier conditions of social life and the church is the product of a mature society.

The combination of the church-sect typology with the frontier thesis was Clark's contribution to the development of this theory. The main significance of this theoretical advance was that unlike Oliver, Clark was not left stranded with his center of focus riveted on the frontier. The fact that the church was characteristic of the urban situation meant he was able to make an easy transition back to the analysis of urban religious phenomenon. Moreover, because religious phenomenon amongst economically marginal groups in the urban context tended to take a sectarian form he was able within the framework of this typology to make a major contribution to the analysis of the religious dynamics of Canadian urban society in the 19th century.

So impressive was Clark's study that for some time it appeared as if it would be the last word on the subject of Canadian religious development. Yet it was not long before both sociologists and church historians began to raise questions about the adequacy of the church-sect typology as a description of religious phenomenon in North America. By the 1950's sociologists were becoming aware that much of the material they were investigating did not fit the simple polarities of the church-sect typology. Scholars such as Milton Yinger (26) and Peter Berger (27), therefore began to refine the church-sect typology by adding other categories such as cult and denomination in order to describe more effectively the religious phenomenon which their research had revealed. W. E. Mann's study entitled Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta (28) was a

reflection of this broadening of the church-sect typology to include other types of religious phenomenon such as the cult. Indeed, by the 1960's the church-sect typology had completely disintegrated as the sociologists introduced a six-fold list of categories rather than the original two. In the new list, the cult, the sect, the established or institutionalized sect, the denomination, the church and the ecclesia were all set forth as containing different shades of meaning.

While the sociologists attempted to refine the church-sect typology for their own purposes, church historians such as Sidney Mead and Franklin H. Littell criticized this typology from their own perspective and settled on the single term "denomination" as the one which best described the church in North America. Littell summed up his criticism of the Troeltschian typology as follows:

"As suggestive as this typology is sociologically, theologically it is pernicious. Any definition of the 'church' which makes the church before Constantine a 'sect' and relegates most of the modern missionary movement and the churches outside European 'Christendom' to the status of 'sects' obviously leaves much to be desired." (29)

Consequently under the combined attacks of both the sociologists and the church historians, the church-sect typology has generally fallen into disuse and few, if any, are concerned with it as a currently viable interpretive framework, for the study of religion in the United States. (30)

In Canada, however, the situation has been different. H. H. Walsh, in criticizing Clark, pointed out that "his tendency to judge revivalism from a purely sociological point of view misses much of the true significance of religious 'enthusiasm'." (31) This was an important point and had Canadian church historians picked it up, it might have led them beyond the confines of the church-sect typology. In the United States, revivalism has been dealt with in historical and theological terms by a variety of scholars from W. W. Sweet to W. McLaughlin. In 1948, the same year as Clark's work appeared, Maurice A. Armstrong published The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia, 1776-1809. (32) This work, which was done in consultation with W. W. Sweet, however, did not set the pattern. Indeed, Walsh himself, when his book The Christian Church in Canada (33) was published in 1956, continued to speak of the sects and sectarianism. Even as late as 1963, John Moir was writing on "The Sectarian Tradition in Canada." (34) This has meant that the interpretation of this area of religious experience has remained within the

context of the church-sect categories. The question is why? What has prevented Canadian scholars from going beyond the church-sect typology?

John Moir has suggested an answer in his paraphrase of S. D. Clark. He says, "Canada has preserved Churchism to preserve itself. Whenever military, economic, political or cultural absorption by the United States threatened, as in 1776, 1812, 1837, 1911 or even 1957, Canada has turned to its counter-revolutionary tradition for inspiration. And ecclesiasticism is a traditional part of that tradition." (35) A further reason is that Canadian church historians have refused to use the category of "denomination." This has meant that they have not been able to follow Mead's direction in going beyond the church-sect typology. "In this respect," says H. H. Walsh, "Canadian Christianity stands in sharp contrast to American Christianity, which takes denominationalism as normal.... The long series of church unions that are so prominent in Canadian church history, culminating in the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925, is the historical expression of an ideal that looks beyond denominationalism as the final destiny of the church in Canada." (36)

In Britain, Bryan R. Wilson, who holds the senior appointment in sociology at Oxford, has revitalized the study of sectarianism over the past few years in a series of sociological studies. (37) After subjecting both Troeltsch and Niebuhr to serious and sustained criticism, Wilson moves beyond the church-sect typology. Insofar as he has continued to focus on sectarianism, however, it might appear at first glance that Canadian scholars, in this regard, have remained closer to the British rather than the American tradition. Wilson's views on ecumenicalism, however, are unlikely to appeal to Canadian church historians, and to date there is little evidence that they are prepared to move with him beyond Troeltsch and Niebuhr in the study of sectarianism. Therefore, in spite of the initial illumination which this perspective helped to throw upon the religious dynamics of Canadian society, it appears at present to be creating more problems than it has been able to solve.

III

In an article entitled "Two Ways of Life: The Primary Antithesis of Canadian History" (38) published in 1943, Arthur R. M. Lower developed

another distinctive perspective on the interpretation of the role of religion in Canadian society. Starting with Weber's and Tawney's observations concerning Protestantism's affinity with capitalism and Catholicism's resistance to the capitalistic spirit, Lower set out to examine "the juxtaposition of two civilizations, two philosophies, two contradictory views of the fundamental nature of man" which have characterized the "primary antithesis of Canadian history."

In 1938, Lower had touched on this theme in a review of D. G. Creighton's The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850. (39) The theme of this book, as Lower pointed out "arises out of the sharp antithesis between the two societies of the region of the St. Lawrence and the lakes: the exploitive commercial Protestant society of Montreal and the other towns, and the more or less static rural society of the Catholic habitants and Upper Canadian pioneers. With the general nature of Creighton's thesis, Lower believed there could be little disagreement. However, he felt Creighton had over-weighted the struggle between commerce and agriculture and under-weighted the factor which Durham had described as "two nations warring in the bosom of a single state." According to Lower, Creighton had not emphasized those philosophies which lie behind the concept of race, and had failed to highlight the unending battle over what Andre Siegfried called "the fundamental nature of man."

The weaknesses which Lower discovered in Creighton's book indicate the themes he was to develop in his essay had been on his mind for some time. His reference to Andre Siegfried's book The Race Question in Canada indicates another source for Lower's perspective besides the Weber-Tawney thesis. Siegfried's work was one of the first to dwell on the "bitter warfare" between the two races in Canada and to emphasize "how religious questions are at the root of all Canadian differences and divisions." (40)

After briefly describing the nature and development of French Canadian society, Lower asks the question which fascinated Weber: why are there no business men in this society? "The explanation," he claims, "is simple." French Canadian society is founded on a philosophy which gives a subordinate place to the man of business and his pursuits. It would therefore be naive to expect any development of native capitalism -- except the special form of capitalism represented by ecclesiastical corporative organization.

To find the business man in Canadian history, argues Lower, we must turn to the other way of life in Canadian society, that of the English Protestant. "No other group has so systematically set up acquisition as an object in itself and made it the centre of a cult as have the men of business of the English speaking world." (41) Like Weber and Tawney, Lower finds the key to this phenomenon in Calvinism. "Wherever Calvinism has prevailed," he argues, "societies committed to the acquisitive way of life have arisen. This coincidence seems logical, for while the spirit of acquisition is as old as man, Calvinism subtly reinforces it." (42) It accentuated the motives of accomplishment and success as signs of election.

Lower, however, realized there were other aspects to the English Protestant tradition in Canada. Methodism with its social gospel tradition was a "counterweight to acquisition." This tradition split Methodism, causing many of its members to move into the acquisitive camp, while the social gospellers provided much of the drive behind Canadian socialism. These, according to Lower, are the "two most significant traditions at work in our English speaking community today: they represent the sharpest antitheses and the future will witness a battle over which shall organize it." (43) Therefore, Lower concludes, our two Canadian ways of life exemplify an antithesis between a natural, primitive, rural, Catholic outlook on life and an acquisitive, materialist, commercial, urban outlook which is shaped by Calvinistic individualism.

Seven years later in 1950, Lower contributed a chapter on "Religion and Religious Institutions" to a volume of essays on Canada (44) edited by George W. Brown. In this chapter, Lower introduced a variety of new material on religion in Canada. He acknowledged for example, that "other characteristics of Protestantism derive from the North American frontier experience rather than from the Reformation." (45) He also pointed out that "Protestant denominations in Canada which have their parent churches abroad have come to differ appreciably from them." (46) While acknowledging the impact of the frontier environment, however, he was careful to point out "this does not mean that Canadian churches are mere extensions of American churches." (47)

Lower also took note of Protestant sectarianism and indicated he was well aware of the church-sect typology as elaborated by Richard Niebuhr and S. D. Clark. He makes it clear, however, why sectarianism

is not his central concern.

"The Dominion Census of 1941 lists some seventeen different and recognized denominations, then lumps together dozens more under the heading 'other.' Most of those listed are small, however, and the dispersion of Protestantism is not really so great as the innumerable conventicles of its minor sects would indicate. Thus, in 1941, of the 55.20 per cent of the Canadian population which was Protestant, 90.34 per cent was comprised within five denominations: Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and the United Church of Canada. The two largest Protestant churches - the Anglican and the United - together accounted for 63 per cent of the Protestant total. The innumerable minor sects made up, all told, only 9.6 per cent of the Protestant population." (48)

Thus while Lower takes into consideration the frontier thesis and the church-sect theory, it is nevertheless apparent he is still working within the basic interpretive framework which he had elaborated in his essay of 1943.

The only further refinement Lower introduced into his analysis of the role of religion in Canadian society, appeared four years later in his monograph entitled This Most Famous Stream. (49) Here he made a basic distinction between the Protestantism of modern times and that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his earlier article, Lower had mentioned this other side of Protestantism, but his major focus had been upon the commercial and materialist spirit fostered by Calvinism. By 1954, he was prepared to say, "No other historical phenomenon was to influence so profoundly the world in which we live as this new Protestantism, hardly even the Industrial Revolution itself." (50)

This distinction between the old and new Protestantism represented a shift of emphasis in his assessment of the impact of Protestantism on the English speaking world. "The major concern of the new Protestantism," he continued, "was not so much with the salvation of the individual soul as with the society in which the individual lived." (51) Lower saw the source of this new Protestantism in John Wesley. From Wesley's evangelistic revival of Protestantism, Lower argues, flow the great liberating movements for prison reform, the abolition of slavery, popular education, hospitals and improvement of public health. When the original genius of Methodism was transferred to the secular sphere about the period of the first world war, Methodists in Canada found it natural to enter politics and to become active in the left wing political movements. (52)

Lower painted his colorful pictures of Canada and Canadian religion with a broad brush. There are consequently many details with which one would like to quarrel. No one can deny, however, that he contributed a vivid and colourful perspective which has had more influence upon the interpretation of religion in Canada than any other single perspective.

In 1956, H. H. Walsh published a volume entitled The Christian Church in Canada (53). He adopted Lower's thesis as his main theme. He did not think too much of the frontier thesis or the environmentalists' interpretation of Canadian history. "Far more important than environment and strong personalities," he argued, "is the existence of two major cultural groups within one national framework. The clash of cultures is the great Canadian theme, for it brought about confederation and was a great determining factor in shaping our fundamental instrument of government, the British North America Act of 1867." (54)

Walsh, however, was not completely content with this one theme as a center around which to organize his treatment of The Christian Church in Canada. Besides the clash of cultures he wished to include the clash of church and sect and the related clash of established church versus voluntary church conceptions. The dynamics of the latter church struggle, however, were largely within the Protestant church, whereas the clash of cultures involved the relationship between Roman Catholic church and the Protestant church. These problems were never clarified. Consequently Walsh's book suffers from a lack of methodological clarity and as a result he did not achieve an integrated picture of the role of religion in the development of Canadian society. Lower, in his review of The Christian Church in Canada, saw it as little more than "a convenient though not authoritative sketch for persons who should know something of the subject (such as students of theology) but have not much time to devote to it." The only positive thing Lower could say of the work was that it was "possibly an indication of the interest slowly being awakened in an important field of Canadian scholarship - religion in history." (55)

In The Vertical Mosaic, (56) John Porter makes no reference to Lower's views on religion in Canadian society, but goes back to Max Weber and Andre Siegfried (which were Lower's sources of inspiration) and develops a view of the significance of religion in Canadian social development which is very similar, if not identical with Lower's. As the

subtitle of Porter's book suggests, his main concern is with an analysis of social class and the structure of power in Canadian society. Closely related to this main theme is "the influence of ethnic affiliation and religion on class structure."

Using the variables of ethnicity and religion, Porter found Catholics and particularly French Roman Catholics lower in the class structure in proportion to their numbers than Protestants and particularly Anglo-Saxon Protestants. And because social structure is directly related to the structure of power in any society, he found many more Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the upper reaches of the institutions of power such as the economic elite, the labor elite, the political elite and the federal bureaucracy of Canadian society. It is easy to conclude on the basis of the Weber-Tawney thesis therefore, that Catholicism and the values which it represents in education and elsewhere in society are incompatible with a fully developed industrial order. It is strange, however, that a book published in 1965 makes no mention of the massive critical literature which has developed around the Weber-Tawney thesis. (57) In fact, the whole thesis is now so open to question one would have thought it would be necessary to defend the use of it. Porter, however, makes no effort to defend it.

Consequently, it is not surprising to discover William F. Ryan challenging Porter's thesis that "Quebec's Catholic hierarchy assumed a reactionary attitude to the industrialization of the province." In a book entitled The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec, 1896 - 1914 (58), Ryan sets out to challenge not only Porter but also the commonplace idea of Canadian historiography that "Catholicism has impeded economic development in the French-Canadian province of Quebec," which has been perpetuated by Lower, S. D. Clark and Conrad Langlois, to name only a few.

Ryan's book focuses on "the influence exercised by the Catholic Church on the economic spurt that took place in the province of Quebec in the period 1896-1914." His conclusions are that "the Catholic Church in Quebec, which has commonly been portrayed in Anglo-Saxon circles as being perhaps the major negative force impeding economic development in that province, has in reality been more concerned about and more deeply involved in the promotion of such development than most churches in Anglo-Saxon countries. Clearly the major levers of rapid economic

development and especially of rapid industrialization are not to be sought in the attitudes and initiatives of the Catholic Church, however great her influence, but rather in more prosaic economic factors such as entrepreneurship, abundant capital and technical know-how." (59)

As Cameron Nish has suggested, (60) much more research is required before it will be possible to completely demolish such a deeply rooted canon of interpretation in Canadian Anglo-Saxon historiography. Yet Ryan's work is sufficiently substantial to constitute a very serious dint in this interpretation of the role of religion in the development of Canadian society. Perhaps it will take some time for it to wither and die but in the meantime it appears clear that some new perspective is required from which to view this problem.

IV

In an essay entitled "Asking Questions of the Canadian Past," published in 1955 (61) John Grant noted "the subtle temptation to write into Canadian church history assumptions derived from the study of other countries." The danger in this approach, he suggested, lies in the fact "we may easily be led to overlook differences that are as striking as the similarities and sometimes even more significant." As he points out, "the analogy of the American frontier has been particularly misleading." Moreover, "S. D. Clark's excellent work, Church and Sect in Canada, is deprived of some of its value by the author's apparent determination to read out of Canadian evidence conclusions suggested by studies elsewhere." And "even Dr. Lower, who usually succeeds in writing the Canadian story from within, has succumbed at times to the tempting American analogy." (62)

To avoid the temptation of using suggestive analogies from other countries and to assist Canadian church historians in asking questions "of magnitude, relevance, and relation" to "our sense of identity as Canadians," Grant suggested four problems whose solution would provide worthy themes for an analysis of the uniqueness of Canadian ecclesiastical experience: "the influence of religious issues on the whole Canadian political tradition;" "the problem of church and state in Canada;" "the development of a Canadian attitude to denominations;" and finally,

"distinctive Canadian features in church life."

This essay has proven in retrospect to mark the beginning of a new era in the study of religion in its Canadian context. Beginning with the publication in 1959 of John S. Moir's Church and State in Canada West (63), almost every year a major work related to the four problems suggested by Grant in this essay has been published. (64) Each in its own way has attempted to analyze the uniqueness of religion in Canadian society. No new overall perspective on relations of religion and Canadian society has arisen out of this research and publication to offer an alternative to the three perspectives discussed earlier. This work, however, has revealed that Grant's call for a church history which would be relevant to the Canadian sense of identity did strike a responsive chord in a large number of individuals who were interested in these problems.

Since the mid-fifties Canadians have been involved in a search for a national identity. Having recently emerged from colonial status, Canadians became increasingly aware of the extent to which their economy was intertwined with that of the United States and with the advent of television in the mid-fifties Canadians were also becoming increasingly aware of the acute dangers of cultural domination by the United States. As a result of this awareness church historians sensed the need to do their part in the search for the uniqueness of the Canadian experience.

The search for identity, however, was not only a search for a Canadian identity. It was also a search for the identity of the Canadian church historian. For behind Grant's rejection of the "suggestive American analogies" other factors can be discerned. The sociologists and secular historians had proven their dominance in the field at a time when Canadian church historians were just beginning to become self-consciously aware of themselves as a group. Five years after Grant's paper appeared the Canadian Society of Church History in 1960 as a parallel to the American Society of Church History which was formed in 1888. It was natural therefore that a young discipline in the process of defining its identity would begin by defining its boundaries and by guarding its frontiers.

The threat to its identity came not simply from "suggestive American analogies" but also from sociology. While Grant was concerned with the former, it was H. H. Walsh who was concerned with the latter.

He was convinced that Canadian church historians ought to look to theology (particularly in its neo-orthodox form) rather than sociology for its inspiration.

There was, of course, a danger here of reactivating what Northrup Fry (65) has called the "garrison mentality", which sees the standards and values of a particular isolated community as a fortress to be defended against alien influences. To reject the conceptual framework which had been used in the interpretation of the relation between religion and the development of Canadian society was to reject a tradition of historical synthesis which was in fact an integral part of the Canadian identity - namely an identity which has been created by living in dynamic tension between British and American cultures and which has felt free, as Kaspar Naegele has pointed out, to accept and reject various aspects of the English and American models of culture and society. (66)

As the historian's context changes it is inevitable that his perspective will change, both with regard to the facts which he considers important and to the limitations which he perceives in the tradition of historical synthesis preceding him. It ought not to surprise anyone therefore, that as one reviews the tradition of historical synthesis from the perspective of 1969, it looks quite different than it did in 1955.

As it appears today the basic problem lies not so much in the importing of foreign perspectives or sociological insights, but rather in the narrowness of the conception of religion and religious phenomenon which is implied in all of these perspectives. In almost all cases religion is defined in institutional terms (i.e., in terms of churches or groups which are in the process of becoming churches). By placing the focus here the tendency is to concentrate on the articulate leadership of these institutions and the official publications which these institutions have sponsored. While no one can reasonably doubt the importance of such documents, there is no guarantee that they provide an accurate reflection of the real religious life of the nation. To get at this level of material it is necessary to broaden our definition of religion to include not simply Judeo-Christian institutions but a wide variety of non-institutional and para-religious phenomenon. Those who have accepted the conclusions of recent comparative studies that

Canadian religion has been more institutionally oriented than American religion may feel that the study of Canadian religion ought to continue to be focused on its major institutional expressions. There are, however, a number of areas in the study of Canadian religion which might benefit by being viewed through a broader definition of religion (one which is free from the negative implications which Barth gave to this word), a new methodology which readily uses the insights of sociology, comparative studies and the history of religions, and a new perspective from which to view the function of religion in Canadian society.

In part, the basis for such a new perspective has been provided by John Porter (67), not in his treatment of religion in terms of the Weber-Tawney thesis, but rather in his classification of the mass media, the universities and the churches under the general category of the "Ideological System." Following Karl Mannheim and other advocates of the sociology of knowledge, Porter sees the ideological function of society as that of maintaining the value system which gives cohesion and unity and also a sense of legitimacy to the social order and particularly practices and usages within a given society. To maintain the value system, to ensure its transmission to newcomers and succeeding generations, society relies upon certain institutions such as schools, churches and the mass media to carry out these functions. Although Porter notes "how important religion has been in the structure of social ideology and in legitimating of power structures" in Canadian society he does not give a detailed analysis of how it has functioned. Part of his problem was that there are few historical studies available which would have assisted him in the elaboration of such a theme. Yet surely there is a perspective here which would throw much light on the relationship between religion and Canadian society.

There has obviously been conflict between religious groups in Canada, but there has also been a large measure of consensus. Otherwise the ideological system and its value structure would have collapsed. Beyond the pluralism of competing religious institutions therefore, what have been the deep and abiding symbols of unity to which all Canadians have given assent? In what ways has religion contributed to the development and communication of these symbols? In periods of rapid social change and national crisis which precipitate symbol transformation,

how has religion responded in bridging the gaps between the old and new situations? These are the type of questions which this perspective raised and the answers to these would contribute greatly to our understanding of the function of religion in Canadian society.

Rather than narrowing the focus of Canadian church history and limiting its conceptual tools, therefore, it seems clear at this point that the discipline ought to be opened up. For this is the only way in which to overcome the limitations of the historical study of religion in the Canadian context and to bring it into dialogue with those disciplines which are currently deepening our understanding of the meaning and function of religion in the world today.

FOOTNOTES

1. J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism and Canadian History," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XXXV (1954).
2. E.H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1930). Biographical materials are available in Clarence MacKinnon's A Life of Principal Oliver (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1936), and the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Ord. series, Vol. XXX (1936) Proceedings, p. XV-XVIII.
3. cf. Gene M. Gressley, "The Turner Thesis: A Problem in Historiography," Agricultural History, XXXII (1958) p. 227-249. The two most recent studies of the Turner - Anti-Turner debate are Richard Hofstadter, The Progressive Historians (New York, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1968). The latter work contains an excellent bibliographical essay on all aspects of the controversy.
4. Walter N. Sage, "Some Aspects of the Frontier in Canadian History," Annual Report of the Canadian Historical Association (1928) (Ottawa, Department of Public Archives, 1929) p. 62-72.
5. John L. McDougall, "The Frontier School and Canadian History," Annual Report of the Canadian Historical Association (1929) p. 125. cf. Morris Zaslow, "The Frontier Hypothesis in Recent Historiography," Canadian Historical Review Vol. XXIX (1948) p. 153 ff.
6. John T. McNeil, review of The Winning of the Frontier, (Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XII, 1930), p. 81.
7. ibid., p. 81.
8. One of the few clues to any direct connection between Oliver and the Turner thesis is through Edwin R.A. Seligman, one of his Ph.D. thesis advisors at Columbia. Lee Benson has pointed out in Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered, (Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1960), that Seligman was the man probably most responsible for bringing Achille Loria to the attention of American scholars and as Benson shows Loria's economic thought had a major impact upon Turner's "frontier thesis." (Benson, ibid., p. 21-34). Oliver's colleague at the University of Saskatchewan, A.S. Morton, was also a proponent of the frontier thesis.
9. cf. Sidney Mead, "Prof. Sweet's Religion and Culture in America: A Review Article," Church History, Vol. 22 (1953), p. 35 ff.
10. E.H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier, (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1930), p. 1.
11. The Winning of the Frontier, p. 1.
12. ibid., p. 1.
13. ibid., p. 2.

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14. ibid., p. 3.
15. Claris Edwin Silcox, Church Union in Canada: Its Causes and Consequences, (New York, Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1933). cf. Seymour Martin Lipset, Agrarian Socialism (U. of California Press, 1950: reissued by Doubleday Anchor Books, 1968). Lipset also argues that church union in Canada "was largely a movement of the Canadian West." p. 41ff.
16. G. Dorey, "Factors which have affected the Development of our Church: Topography, Climate and Rainfall and the Determining Facts of History," Robertson Lectures 1952-53 (United Church Archives).
17. Gerald R. Cragg, "The Present Position and Future Prospects of Canadian Theology," Canadian Journal of Theology, Vol. 1, 1955, p. 6.
18. e.g. Douglas Clyde Macintosh, Shirley Jackson Case, W. C. Graham, Peter G. Mode, John T. McNeil, William Hordern, Gordon Harland, Larry Tombs, MacLean Gilmour, James Smart and recently Gerald R. Cragg himself, to mention only a few.
19. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism, (Henry Holt and Co., 1929) reprinted by Meridian Books, 1957.
20. Benton Johnson, "A Critical Appraisal of the Church-Sect Typology," American Sociological Review, vol. 22, (1957) p. 89.
21. S.D. Clark, Church and Sect in Canada (Toronto, U. of Toronto Press, 1948).
22. S. D. Clark, The Social Development of Canada, (Toronto, U. of Toronto Press, 1942).
23. S.D. Clark, Church and Sect in Canada, op. cit., p. vii.
24. J. B. Brebner, review of S.D. Clark's Church and Sect in Canada, Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 30, p. 76.
25. S.D. Clark, The Social Development of Canada, op.cit., p. 1, fn. 1.
26. Milton Yinger, Religion, Society and the Individual (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 148-155.
27. Peter L. Berger, "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism," Social Research, Vol. 21 (Winter, 1954), p. 474ff.
28. W.E. Mann, Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta, (Toronto, U. of Toronto Press, 1955).
29. Franklin H. Littell, From State Church to Pluralism: A Protestant Interpretation of Religion in American History, (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1962), p. XIX. cf. Sidney E. Mead, The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), p. 104.

Footnotes -cont-

30. cf. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol. VI, nos. 1 & 2, (1967) for a recent reappraisal of the church-sect typology by Paul Gustafson, Erich Goode, N.J. Demarath and A.W. Eister.
31. H.H. Walsh, "Canada and the Church: A Job for the Historians," Queens Quarterly, 1954, 61:78.
32. M.W. Armstrong, The Great Awakening in Nova Scotia, 1776-1809, (Hartford, Conn: The American Society of Church History, 1948).
33. H.H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1956).
34. John Moir, "The Sectarian Tradition in Canada," The Churches and the Canadian Experience, ed. by John W. Grant, (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1963).
35. J. Moir, ibid., p. 132.
36. H.H. Walsh, "A Canadian Christian Tradition," The Churches and the Canadian Experience, ibid., p. 158. cf. John W. Grant, "Asking Questions of the Canadian Past," Canadian Journal of Theology, Vol. 1 (1955), p. 103 for a similar point of view.
37. cf. Bryan R. Wilson, Sects and Society (London: Heinemann, 1961); Religion in Secular Society (London: Penguin Books, 1968); Patterns of Sectarianism, ed. by B.R. Wilson (London, Heinemann, 1967).
38. This article has been recently reprinted in Approaches to Canadian History, ed. by Carl Berger (Toronto, U. of Toronto Press, 1967) pp. 15-28. Page references will be to this edition. For a brief comment on the circumstances surrounding the writing and presentation of this paper cf. Lower's autobiography My First Seventy-Five Years (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1967), p. 272 ff.
39. A.R.M. Lower - review of The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850, by D.G. Creighton, Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 19, (1938), p. 207-210.
40. Andre Siegfried, The Race Question in Canada, (English trans. London, 1907 - reissued, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1966), p. 15.
41. A.R.M. Lower, "Two Ways of Life: The Primary Antithesis of Canadian History," op. cit., p. 22.
42. ibid., p. 22.
43. ibid., p. 24.
44. G.W. Brown, (ed.), Canada (Berkeley & Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1950).
45. ibid., p. 463.
46. ibid., p. 463.

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47. ibid., p. 465. cf. A.R.M. Lower, My First Seventy-Five Years op.cit., Lower says that Turner's essay is "the most formative piece of writing in modern history." "While many a man," he continues, "has studied the relation of man to his environment,... no one else prior to Turner hit the target so neatly in the bull's eye. Turner is open to the serious limitation that his view of the frontier, that is, of the moving edge of civilization into the wilderness, is purely American and hence rather parochial, but it is still the case that his conception has awakened response from every historian worth his salt and has been applied negatively and positively but always with illuminating effect to a thousand situations." p. 152.
48. ibid., p. 464.
49. A.R.M. Lower, This Most Famous Stream, (Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1954)
50. ibid., p. 126.
51. ibid., p. 126.
52. S.M. Sipset in his Agrarian Socialism (op.cit.) also emphasizes this point. After noting that the Methodists are the largest group in the United Church of Canada (p. 218) he states: "The United Church of Canada is comparable to the non-conformist workingmen's churches of Great Britain. It has stressed the social gospel aspect of Christianity. Many of its leaders have been active in secular reform activities... Since it has the least fundamentalist and conservative creed, the United Church tends to attract and influence those who believe in a liberal Christianity that is concerned with establishing 'the good life' on earth." (p. 211-212). Recently Lipset has emphasized the Clark-Underhill thesis concerning Canada's counter-revolutionary tradition and has claimed that "religious organization in Canada, emphasizing elitism and particularism, acted as a counter-force inhibiting excessive individualism (self-orientation) and egalitarianism." cf. "Revolution and Counter-Revolution - The United States and Canada, The Revolutionary Theme in Contemporary America, ed. Thomas R. Ford, (Lexington, Ky., University of Kentucky Press, 1967), p. 45. The first elaboration of the significance of Canada's counter-revolutionary tradition for the church which I have been able to discover, is in an address by Harold A. Innis on "The Church in Canada" given to the United Church's Board of Evangelism and Social Service on March 18, 1947. cf. The Annual Report (1947), p. 47 ff.
53. H.H. Walsh, op. cit.
54. "The Canadian Heritage in Canada," op. cit., p. 272.
55. A.R.M. Lower, review of "The Christian Church in Canada," by H.H. Walsh, Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 39 (1958), p. 251-252.
56. John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto, U. of Toronto Press, 1965).

Footnotes -cont-

57. cf. S.N. Eisenstadt (ed.), The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), for the best modern discussion of this debate. The extensive bibliographies contained in this work point to the massive literature which was available on this subject prior to 1965 when Porter's work was published.
58. William F. Ryan, S.M., The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec, 1896-1914, (Quebec, Les Presses De L'Universite Laval, 1966).
59. ibid., p. 300.
60. Cameron Nish, review of The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec, 1896-1914, by William F. Ryan, American Historical Review, Vol. 72, July, 1967, p. 1521.
61. John W. Grant, "Asking Questions of the Canadian Past," Canadian Journal of Theology, Vol. 1, No. 2 (July, 1955), p. 98 ff.
62. ibid., p. 101.
63. John S. Moir, Church and State in Canada West (Toronto, U. of Toronto Press, 1959).
64. cf. S. Crysdale, The Industrial Struggle and Protestant Ethics in Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1961); G.S. French, Parsons and Politics: The Role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780-1855, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962); J.W. Grant (ed.) The Churches and the Canadian Experience (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963); W.H. Elgee, The Social Teachings of the Canadian Churches, Protestant, The Early Period, before 1850, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1964); D.C. Masters, Protestant Church Colleges in Canada, (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1966); J.W. Grant, The Canadian Experience of Church Union, (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1967).
65. C.F. Klinck, et al., eds., Literary History of Canada (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1965, revised ed. 1967), p. 830 ff.
66. K. Naegele, "Canadian Society: Some Reflections," in Bernard Blishen et al., ed., Canadian Society (New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., first ed., 1961), p. 27 ff. It should be noted that much of this material has been cut out of the third edition published by Macmillan of Canada, 1968.
67. John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic, op. cit.