

CSCH President's Address 2015

**Creating a Useable Past:  
Retelling Christian History for the Twenty-first Century**

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Every five hundred years the church has a rummage sale. All of the junk gets thrown out. The last time this happened was five hundred years ago during the reformation, but this happened five hundred years before that, and five hundred years before that (in the year 500 CE). This explains the changes transforming the church in the west today. I know this because I've heard this said on several occasions at various seminars, workshops, or other special events that have focused on what the church needs to do today. The presenters have been good, credible experts in their field and in what they were presenting. But this rather odd picture (to say the least) of church history was presented as a given, a repeatable pattern, and as true. It is found in a book by Phyllis Tickle, entitled *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (2008).<sup>1</sup> Based upon this, Tickle argues for a path forward for the church today. Whatever the value of the suggestions for today may be, the description of church history is nonsensical.

History is used. Historians may use the past, but so too do those in other disciplines. Theologians, sociologists, philosophers, economists, political scientists, and others all use evidence from the past to bolster their particular arguments. Church historians need to be aware of how history is being interpreted and framed. We need to recognize that the past is

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being used and how it is being used. I raise this not to be territorial or to chastise, criticize, or rebuke other disciplines, but to point out what strikes me as some serious misrepresentations of the past and to raise the question of our responsibility to address this. To put it directly: sometimes others put together a picture of the past because we have not done that as clearly as we might. Historians have done amazing work in concentrated areas of research, but, in our teaching and our writing, it is not clear that we have communicated our findings in a way that people can readily access so that people don't have to rely on the idea of a rummage sale every five hundred years, or if they do encounter such ideas, they can dismiss them.

This was not the talk I had imagined giving as the presidential address for this society. I had looked at addresses given over the years and originally planned to talk about the teaching of church history, and how it, particularly teaching about the reformation, has changed in the last generation. Changing necessities resulted in those ideas instead appearing in a special edition of the *Toronto Journal of Theology* celebrating the 170th anniversary of Knox College and the 100th anniversary of our current building as "The Changed and Changing Face of Church History."<sup>2</sup> In working on that paper a passing comment was made in the introduction that I realized needed to be explored further. The result of those explorations is what this presentation will share. For the *Papers* of our society, I have edited the address, but have chosen to keep some of the personal approach of the presentation intact. I want to begin by detailing two of the narratives we frequently encounter – the narrative of Christendom, the narrative of secularization – and exploring some of the problems with these narratives. In the second major section some different themes that might counter these are explored.

Many contemporary descriptions divide the history of the church neatly into three: the church before Christendom; Christendom; and today, post-Christendom. These categories have replaced the more traditional (and equally problematic) categories of early, medieval, early modern (or reformation), and modern. The idea seems to be (though this might be something of a caricature) that there was a pure time in church life before Constantine converted to Christianity, but with his conversion everything moved into a more or less unified church/state entity, which we are now, thankfully, leaving. The Constantinian period is seen as irredeemably corrupted; the only resources churches today should look to would be those from the pre-Constantinian church. This image is used in terms of church-state relations, but also extended to include virtually anything:<sup>3</sup>

theology, faith, piety, mission. Seemingly, everything remained virtually static from about 325 to about 1950 or whenever the particular author wanted to suggest that Christendom ended. That is not to say that Christendom is not a good term or that there is not some value in thinking about what happens to faith when it becomes the official religion of the state. As someone who uses the term, I want to suggest that the concept of Christendom has value, and I would agree with Marguerite Van Die in her presidential address five years ago, that this has become a crucial way of discussing what has happened to the church in Canada in more recent years. Terms such as leaving Christendom and de-Christianization can be extremely helpful – when used appropriately.<sup>4</sup> The problem has become that too often the term Christendom is used as if there were one monolithic reality that began with Constantine and continued, unchanged, until recently or whenever the particular author or speaker suddenly has it end. It is this way of imagining history that I would argue is the problem with this concept.

Indeed, one of the challenges related to the concept of Christendom comes when one tries to define when precisely it ended. When did Christendom end? It is fair to assume it has ended, but when it ended is debatable and depends on how one defines Christendom. Does the term mean Christianity being the exclusive religion of the state to which everyone is expected to adhere? That is not a bad definition of Christendom, and indeed something similar seems often to be in the background for those who use the concept. In this case one can readily determine a beginning date for Christendom. It began when Emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the religion of the Roman state in 380. Note that it was Theodosius, not Constantine, who was responsible for this. Constantine converted to Christianity, ceased persecuting Christians, and favoured religious institutions, including playing a crucial role in calling the Council of Nicea. All of this was of great significance, but he began a process that found its fruition several generations later. If the origins of Christendom are somewhat clear in this definition as official religion of the state, the end point is much less so. Did Christendom end with the reluctant acceptance of religious divisions within the European continent wherein different parts of Europe might hold different versions of Christian faith as determined by their rulers – *cujus regio, eius religio*? Or, did it end when states began to realize (however willingly or grudgingly) that they needed to accept religious diversity within their respective realms? States might even discriminate against religious minorities, but

they were no longer willing to use violence to eradicate them. Or is it simply when the Christian religion (in whatever form) was no longer privileged by the state? Most people work with some form of this latter definition in mind. If so, the end of Christendom will vary from country to country. In Canada, a reasonable date to consider as the beginning of the end might be 1967, a year when the government of Canada attempted, as demonstrated in the work of Gary Miedema, to move to a multi-faith vision of religion as part of the centennial celebrations. At the same time, it is important to remember that the actual celebration of the centennial year began with a televised, distinctively Christian prayer service (though with Jewish representatives in attendance).<sup>5</sup> Two brief comments. First, note how recent this change has been. Second, note that this is only one of the potential places where one might say “Christendom ended” even using this definition. The secularization of the clergy reserves in Upper Canada in the mid-nineteenth century might also be seen as the crucial moment – except we are then left with a very messy picture, with all of the religious rhetoric so central to the prosecution of the First World War happening post-Christendom. If one uses other possible definitions, for example one where the majority of individuals adhere to the Christian faith, the problems only multiply.

Church and state clearly entered into an intimate relationship in the years after Constantine’s conversion, and particularly after Christianity became the state religion of Rome in 380; however, what is crucial to remember is how that relationship differed from one political entity to another, how that relationship changed over time, and how the church was not always the loser (nor always a winner) in any tussle between church and state. The church was transformed by this interaction, but so too was the state. This was an encounter that transformed each partner and evolved. There is no one Christendom. There are only Christendoms (a term that will never catch on). Illustrating this is not impossible. One can inform students that the relationship between Patriarch and Emperor in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire was different from the relationship in Western Europe. The Emperor saw himself, and was generally conceived to be, above the Patriarch, with responsibilities for the life of the church. The kinds of struggles between Pope and Emperor so evident in Western Europe are not as evident in Eastern Christianity. It was the political uncertainty in the fragments of what had been the Western Roman Empire that raised so many issues of church and state. At the same time, we see a changing relationship, one where the authority of the papacy grows and

where papal claims are contested. We see this in the famous incident when the Emperor Henry IV was kept waiting in the snow at Canossa in 1077 before doing penance before Pope Gregory VII. This incident represents a dramatic event in the much longer evolution of roles between Pope and Emperor, but it is not a story about Popes telling Emperors what to do within "Christendom." Quite the contrary. Several years later Henry drove Gregory into exile where he died. There was a struggle over who had what authority. There were concordats or agreements between the Pope and particular monarchs. The relationship between church and state was complex and varied from place to place, from period to period. To lump it all together distorts. And yet that distortion seems to be so central to this picture of Christendom which has emerged. Rather than seeing change and struggle, evolution and resolution, give and take, too often it seems that Constantine's conversion establishes a unity of church and state that remains the same until it collapses and we move out of Christendom.

One of the areas where Christendom has been used as an organizing principle is discussions of the mission history of the church. This model, in its starkest form, suggests: in the early church everyone was a missionary; in Christendom, mission either ceased or became the responsibility of experts who carried on mission outside of Christendom; in our post-Christendom era, we have a new reality where, one assumes, we all need again to become missionaries. This is very much again an A-C-A structure, where C (Christendom) is not merely a change, but a wrong turn and a move away from what should have been. This characterization of Christendom as monolithic in its missionary approach or lacking in mission is far too simplistic. The charge of Christendom having abandoned mission is simply false. St. Cyril and St. Methodius, St. Boniface, and St. Francis of Assisi (who was intent on being a missionary to Islam) all give us examples that we could multiply *ad nauseum* of the missionary impulse of Christendom. One might quickly respond: "yes, but this was all mission by experts on the frontier." Some clearly were. But that was only one of the forms which mission took in this period. The nature of conversion in many cases was such that once the original missionary had succeeded in converting the tribal chieftains to Christianity, the more complicated task of explaining the new faith to not only the chieftains but to their followers began. This internal mission was ongoing throughout the history of what we might characterize as Christendom. The preaching of mendicant friars, Benedictine and Franciscan, was an attempt to teach people inside Christendom about the faith to which they belonged, but about which they

might have (or at least others might assume they had) limited knowledge. A concern for mission was a significant feature of Christendom, and continued to the latter phases of Christendom, not only in the great Catholic missions to Asia and the Orthodox missions across Russia, but in the explosion of Protestant interest in mission that reached its heights in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Here too we see a concern for internal mission – mission within Christendom to convert nominal Christians into committed Christians.<sup>6</sup> When we tell the history of missions, it is not clear how Christendom is an effective organizing principle. How does it help us to understand change? I would suggest it does not. If we want to organize the history of the mission of the church there are other more effective ways.

The gradual erosion of Christendom and its end leads to the consideration of a related, but nevertheless distinct, theme that has dominated our cultural understanding, and that is the narrative around secularization. Christendom is conceived of as a world imbued with religion and faith. The world after this is conceived as a world without faith, a world without God. It is secular. How we moved from the one to the other is often described as a process of secularization. A common model begins this process around the time of the intellectual Enlightenment; thereafter, as the world became more scientific, more urban, and more industrial, religion naturally and inevitably declined. Scholars rarely put it this starkly, yet most of these theories of secularization argue for a gradual process, one that happens over time, beginning (as noted) with the scientific changes of the Enlightenment, or sometimes with the fracture of Christian unity that occurred in the sixteenth century (the reformations). Both the complex academic theory related to secularization, as well as a more common cultural understanding, suggest, in different ways, that the erosion of the place of religion in modern society has been gradual and inevitable. Historical evidence is selected and used to prove that this narrative works. Historians object and provide examples of continuing faith or growing religious institutions. Evidence to the contrary is either dismissed or allowed as an exception that, nevertheless, proves the rule. The narrative of secularization continues to dominate.<sup>7</sup>

One of the challenges in dealing with various secularization theories is finding a clear definition of what the terms secular and secularization actually mean. What precisely are we talking about? What is the process we are describing? What one quickly discovers is that there are multiple definitions and multiple understandings; indeed, so much is going on that

it is often hard to keep the conversation straight. One useful definition can be found in the work of Steve Bruce, who remains one of the most vocal proponents of secularization theory. Bruce identifies three factors as crucial: first, “the declining importance of religion for the operation of non-religious roles and institutions such as those of the state and the economy;” second, “a decline in the social standing of religious roles and institutions” so that, both through public opinion and political process, religious institutions have a more limited role; and, third, “a decline in the extent to that people engage in religious practices, display beliefs of a religious kind, and conduct other aspects of their lives in a manner informed by such beliefs.”<sup>8</sup> Central to this narrative is the idea of decline. But what distinguishes decline from change? Given the comprehensiveness of this definition, the multiple aspects being covered (politics, personal belief, institutions), is it possible to imagine decline in one area and growth in others; or where change in one area happened without anything similar to what one could define as “secularization” taking place? Seventeenth century England after the Civil Wars would be a perfect example of a society where personal involvement and commitment declined but societal support for one unified religion increased. In nineteenth century Canada religion was displaced from some spheres where it had previously dominated (university education) at the same time when most indicators of personal religious belief would show either stability or actual growth.

But none of this seems to matter. This narrative of long-term secularization continues to dominate the conversation concerning what has happened to religion in society over the last two to five hundred years. Its power is such that it has become common in Canada today to hear commentators express surprise that the church is still around, or to hear them (erroneously) speak of the traditional separation of church and state in Canada.

Time, perhaps too much time, has been spent laying out narratives of the past (Christendom, secularization) that dominate how both those in the church, as well as the broader academic world and society beyond that, speak of the past. These narratives shape how the past is understood. In teaching, the church historian’s job includes challenging these narratives, raising questions, giving counter-examples, and generally adding greater complexity to the picture. But this is not enough. If no alternative picture is offered, one fears that these narratives will reassert themselves. It is important to offer a different narrative. What should the narrative be? This

is something I have begun to consider more and more. I want to share some suggestions, while at the same time recognizing that my thoughts are very much shaped by the particular location in which I teach (a Protestant/Reformed theological college), my own background in that tradition, and the students with whom I interact, primarily candidates for ministry. Many of these students have little sense of why they should study the past, yet, more frequently than they realize, they draw upon an imagined past.

There are some broad themes that are important to raise. One is the on-going dialogue between culture and faith. Too often students (and many others) imagine that it is only now in the twenty-first century that faith is being shaped or challenged by culture. This is a much longer, much more complicated, process. Christian faith nowhere exists in some pristine, pure form but has always interacted with culture. Christianity was transformed as it became more successful within the Roman Empire. The early apologists adapted the faith as they needed to in order for it to make sense in the Graeco-Roman world. Further changes occurred with the collapse of the Roman Empire in Western Europe, as missionaries attempted to evangelize Germanic and other tribal peoples. This interaction between culture and faith is a process that occurs throughout Christian history and one that needs to be recognized. Another broad theme relates to institutions, and in particular the crucial role that monasteries and various forms of the set-apart religious life have played throughout the history of the church. What we imagine today as the central institutions of the church have not always existed, let alone mattered. The role that martyrdoms have played in the history of the church is another broad theme worth considering. When we look exclusively at the experience within the Roman Empire, we might accept the famous phrase of Tertullian – “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” – as true for all times and periods. There is, indeed, some evidence that the courage of Christians in the face of early persecution led to growth. At the same time, there is other evidence that suggests that targeted persecution, such as the Diocletian persecution in the early fourth century, weakened the church.<sup>9</sup> We know of other times in the history of the global church where persecution has (tragically) succeeded.<sup>10</sup> I am intrigued by the idea that it may actually have been the compassion that Christians showed to those inside and outside their gathering, rather than martyrdoms, which made a positive impact on many in Roman society. There are many general themes, but I want to turn and focus on some aspects of the more recent



past that seem particularly crucial for us today.

The reformations of the sixteenth century were significant, but they were not the last significant event prior to our own time. One cannot understand Christianity in the world today without knowing about Martin Luther or the Council of Trent, and a multitude of other personalities and key events. The sixteenth century matters. But so too does the seventeenth century, when the consequences of new theological ideas and the religious divide in Western Europe were still being contested. In my own tradition (reformed) there is a strong tendency to assume that nothing after the sixteenth and parts of the seventeenth centuries is really worthy of our study. If you want to know what is important for the history of the church, you study the reformation. You will understand everything. If you really must do more, study the early church. All other historical periods are considered less important or a decline away from these moments of insight. The importance of events in-between the reformations and ourselves require a great deal more attention. As much as it pains me to say this, John Wesley may be a more significant figure in Christian history than John Calvin. John Wesley can be seen as the reluctant founder of a new religious tradition, Methodism, which was one of the great success stories in English religion, as well as the religious history of North America. But more than this, he was part of an approach to religious faith that moved it from head to heart, from the intellectual to the deeply personal, which permanently and fundamentally changed the very nature of those religious traditions we lump together as Protestant. This change was, of course, the result of the work of more than Wesley. The Moravians and the pietists and other evangelicals, notably George Whitefield, need to be included. Similar transitions can also be discerned within Roman Catholicism in this period. What is being described here is a profound shift in Christian faith and piety. An example of this shift can be seen in the explosion of hymn writing, expressing faith in one's own words and not relying exclusively on the texts one finds in the psalms or other songs in the Bible. Charles Wesley's hymn texts continue to shape faith today in a way that John Knox would deplore; yet those who would see themselves as walking in the footsteps of Knox are happily oblivious to this. The evangelical revivals that began in the eighteenth century have had a marked effect, and not only on the religious traditions that can directly link back to founders like Wesley, but also traditions such as branches of the reformed tradition which, on the surface, would be completely opposed to Wesley.

These ideas continued to evolve and much of that evolution occurred in another distinct time of transformation, in the very crucial nineteenth century, and notably in the Victorian period. Were these simply natural outgrowths of the ideas germinated at the time of the evangelical revivals? Possibly yes. At the same time, the major institutions we now think of as central to the church (Sunday schools, mission societies, youth groups) do not link back to the institutions founded by Wesley (class meetings, strictly enforced discipline). There are also new features that were added – again linked to evangelical concerns – but either more intense or of a different nature. Temperance. Abolitionism. Political involvement to make the Sabbath a day where no work should take place. Were these new innovations? Or were they developments that emerged out of earlier motivations? There were also darker themes that seem to have been absorbed in that ever-continuing relationship between faith and culture. For example, missions which had at one point been open to the participation by indigenous people in leadership in Canada, now moved to exclusively European leadership.<sup>11</sup> To become Christian one needed not only to take on European culture, but also abandon one's native language for either English or French. It is worth pausing here. This is a dramatic shift. While the Chinese rites controversy and other arguments in the history of mission may have asked questions about what was appropriate to bring into Christianity from another culture, this complete rejection of another culture and the demands that it be replaced seems new, and an aberration from so much which had gone before it. There is something qualitatively different here from the early missions to indigenous peoples, for example the Hurons, or other missions where the gospel was translated into aboriginal languages. There seems to be something new and dark emerging in Victorian Christianity. In researching Presbyterians in the Great War, I have been struck by the pervasive attitudes of racial superiority in this period, not only in terms of white people superior to those of African or Asian heritage, but the superiority of some white people over other white people, of Northern Europeans over Southern Europeans, of Britons over everyone else. Did social Darwinism, the survival of the fittest, begin to pervade Christianity at this point? There are many questions for us to consider, but what seems clear is that there were important changes in Christianity that took place in this period. The form of Protestant Christianity that many people now mourn was not the church of John Calvin, or even the church of John Wesley, but a rather different institution – one we see clearly in Stephen Leacock, not only in *Sunshine*

*Sketches of a Little Town* but even more tellingly in *Arcadian Adventures of the Idle Rich*. This is the Christian Canada that, as Mark Noll noted, was lost.<sup>12</sup>

Our discussion to this point has focused primarily on changes that occurred within what is broadly construed as Protestantism. The Roman Catholic tradition also went through significant changes that too often are left out of the story. The idea of a Roman Catholic tradition that codified what it believed at the Council of Trent and then has not changed from these positions down to the present day apart from a few alterations, such as the inclusion of developments at the First and Second Vatican councils, is not a helpful narration. The great mission adventures of the Jesuits, followed by the challenge to decisions about the indigenization of the gospel in Confucian cultures (the Chinese rites controversy), and the violent persecution of Japanese converts in Japan in the early seventeenth century,<sup>13</sup> are all important stories that are too often neglected. Another example would be the experience of the Roman Catholic Church during the French Revolution. The French Revolution was the first attempt to create a secular regime. Given the intimate links between the French crown and the church in France, it is not surprising that an attack on the former led to an attack on the latter. The violence, the destruction of the physical property of the church, the number of priests and religious executed or driven into exile, is truly staggering. It is difficult to find an equivalent experience within most Protestant traditions.<sup>14</sup> When one considers this experience, the fear of modern ideas and change that one sees reinforced in the First Vatican Council in the nineteenth century makes far more sense. It is important to remember as well that the ideas of the French Revolution were exported throughout Europe as the French army conquered the continent. The trope of the village priest and secular school master constantly bickering is a result of the legacy of the French Revolution and would not have been a feature of Christendom but for the first (failed) attempt at the creation of an exclusively secular state, an experiment that continued throughout the twentieth century after the success of the Russian Revolution. These changes affected the Catholic tradition, as well as the Orthodox. It also reminds North Americans that the Christian tradition not only continued on the European continent after the discovery of the Americas, but that developments on that continent continued to be crucial for the history of Christianity.

The significance of the recent past, of the twentieth century, for Christian history is another important theme. Christianity was transformed

in the last century. Some of those transformations were external in their origin, the result of such catastrophes as the two World Wars. Others have been more internal. The explosion of Pentecostalism and other forms of charismatic faith has been one of the great changes of the last century. While one can see the roots of Pentecostalism in the holiness movements developing through the nineteenth century and into the early part of the twentieth, few would have predicted that this would be the movement which would explode across North America and across the world. It is a truly remarkable story. Another major transition is the shift of Christianity to the developing world. When Protestants met at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910 with the stated goal of the Christianization of the world in a generation, the results by 1990 (about three generations later) were not at all what they would have imagined. The success of Christian missions in Africa and Asia seem, in many cases, to have been achieved when foreign missionaries have not been present. This has led to different forms of Christianity throughout the world than those necessarily favoured by denominations in Europe. While Christianity has grown dramatically in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, it has declined – imploded – in Europe and in other Western countries. This is a major story; indeed, it is this story that often leads to the kind of approaches and uses of history with which we began, where we speak of rummage sales, or inevitable secularization, or the moving out of a monolithic Christendom dating from the fourth century. Too many of these discussions keep the Western church as the focus, where the action really is, as opposed to taking global changes seriously. This is not to suggest – as too often seems to be the case – that all would be well if Canadian churches acted as if they were Ghanaian churches or Korean churches. What we need to recognize is the shift that has happened and speak clearly about it; describing what has occurred, as well as analyzing its implications.

For the past to be useable, the story needs to be accurate and reflect the best research. This does not mean that there will be a consensus. We all know that there are multiple interpretations and ways of looking at key events. But the story needs to be told in a way that comprehensively captures the nature of Christian experience. Neither simplistic understandings of Christendom nor secularization will help. This does not mean that we must abandon these categories; rather, we need to re-define them, bring nuance and complexity, and help those we teach (through our classrooms and our writing) better understand the dramatic changes that have taken place. One helpful concept taken from the work of Callum Brown is the

idea of a move from a Christian discourse to a secular discourse, from a world where God and faith inform the broader cultural conversation to one where the conversation takes place with very different starting places in mind.<sup>15</sup> This is a profound transformation, one that distances us not only from the world of medieval Europe, but also from the experience of Canadians in the Great War when national days of prayer were part of the war effort, as well as more recent times.

Research in very specialized areas is one crucial task, one at which historians, Canadian church historians among them, have excelled. The amount of quality scholarship that has taken place over the last generation is remarkable. When I look back at the books and articles I was able to consider around 1989 when I was working on religion in Canada as one of my themes for my Canadian history comprehensive with Professor Gil Stelter at the University of Guelph, I remain amazed at how much has been published subsequently related to the history of Christianity in Canada. Great work has been done. An additional, perhaps more challenging, task is still before us, namely to begin to shape a narrative that communicates these findings, and those in the broader field of church history, to our colleagues in other disciplines and to our broader publics. While certainly aware of the challenges this presents and the many barriers in our way, it is something we need to do. We need to communicate, as best we are able, the exciting discoveries in the history of Christianity that have emerged in the last few generations. These challenge the neat narratives of secularization and of Christendom, but in this more complex picture there are resources for the institutional church today, warnings that should be heeded, and simple facts we need to accept. We can do better than let people hear that every five hundred years there is a need for a rummage sale.

### ***Endnotes***

1. Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 19-29. Tickle credits the idea to the Rt. Rev. Mark Dyer (16-17).
2. Stuart Macdonald, "The Changed (and Changing) Face of Church History," *Toronto Journal of Theology* (Supplement 1: "Faith Matters in Changing Times," ed. Bradley McLean, 2015): 29-42.

3. The afternoon after writing this paragraph I encountered this approach in an article in the Presbyterian denominational magazine: David Webber, "Losing the Chains of Christendom," *Presbyterian Record* (May 2015): 47-48.
4. Marguerite Van Die, "'We who speak . . . and write books': Writing and Teaching the History of Christianity In a Secular Canada, 1960-2010," *Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History* (2010): 95-107. In preparing this address, I re-read many previous presidential addresses and am grateful to my colleagues for their wisdom and insight. I also discovered how close my title was to that chosen a little more than a decade ago: Douglas Shantz, "A Useable Past: Church Historians as Engaged Scholars Who Serve the Common Good," *Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History* (2003), 171-92.
5. Gary Miedema, *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebrations, and the Re-making of Canada in the 1960s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), xi-xv.
6. Henry Mayr-Harting, "The West: The Age of Conversion (700-1050)" in *The Oxford History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 101-10.
7. While this article explores the use of history within theories of secularization, history is also a notable feature in rational choice theories, which in many ways are the ideological opposite of secularization. For example see Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).
8. Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 3.
9. W.H.C. Frend, "Persecutions: genesis and legacy" in *The Cambridge History of Christianity Vol. 1: Origins to Constantine*, eds. Margaret M. Mitchell and Frances M. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 503-23.
10. Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia – and How it Died* (New York: HarperOne, 2008). After the address, Gord Heath was kind enough to share an excellent article he has written exploring aspects of this topic. Gordon L. Heath, "When the Blood of the Martyrs Was Not Enough: A Survey of Places Where the Church Was Wiped Out," in *The Church, Then and Now*, eds. Stanley E. Porter and Cynthia Long Westfall (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 97-131.

11. I am indebted to the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, who articulated this idea so well in his address “Truth and Reconciliation: Focusing on the Horizon” given at Knox College on 13 May 2015. Peter Bush, *Western Challenge: The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s Mission on the Prairies and North, 1885-1925* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 2000), 86-118.
12. Mark A. Noll, “What happened to Christian Canada?” *Church History* 75, no. 2 (June 2006): 245-73. While the church can be seen throughout Stephen Leacock, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912), the portrayal of urban Christianity in Leacock’s *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914) is the focus of the last three chapters in that more acerbic novel.
13. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2010), 708.
14. The experience of persecution is, of course, lionized in many Protestant traditions, but it is usually persecution directed from another branch of Christianity, either Roman Catholicism or another form of Protestantism. How the narrative of these experiences differs from what the Roman Catholic Church in France experienced is a topic worthy of further consideration.
15. Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001).







