

Modalities of Social Authority: Suggesting an Interface for Religious and Social History

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The dominant approaches in Canadian social history have focused, for the most part, upon categories of region, class formation, and women's experience (more recently informed by theories of gender). Because of the priorities placed upon these "primary identities", religious experience, both in its social and personal aspects, has tended to form a "neutral" backdrop to the more active dimensions of secular political and social thought. We thus propose two interdependent analytical frameworks through which to explore religious forms and practices as integral elements of social formation: the ongoing function of religious institutions as an apparatus of social regulation; and the concomitant search for cultural authority (and political power) by which both groups and institutions sought to articulate a particular vision of the social order.

Dans l'histoire sociale canadienne, les approches dominantes ont mis principalement l'accent sur les catégories de la région, de la formation des classes et de l'expérience des femmes (plus récemment éclairée par les théories des rapports hommes-femmes). En raison de la priorité accordée à ces « identités primaires », l'expérience religieuse, tant dans sa manifestation sociale que personnelle, a eu tendance à former une toile de fond « neutre » aux dimensions plus actives de la pensée politique et sociale séculaire. Nous proposons donc deux cadres d'analyse interdépendants par lesquels explorer les formes et pratiques religieuses à titre d'éléments intégraux de la formation sociale : la fonction permanente d'appareil de régulation sociale des institutions religieuses; et la recherche concomitante d'autorité culturelle (et de pouvoir politique) par laquelle tant les groupes que les institutions ont cherché à articuler une vision particulière de l'ordre social.

ONE OF THE most puzzling conundrums of the way in which historical writing is currently practised in Canada is that, despite a constant invocation

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of the shibboleth that holds that religion was important in the past, there have to date been few attempts to integrate questions of religious practice fully into the categories of analysis that inform social history. This is not to say that there has been a complete absence of work that contributes to a social history of religion, but hitherto there has been a lack of an overarching theoretical framework that would enable historians to chart the interplay between religious cultures and changing forms of social organization which can bridge the interests of both nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians. We should make clear that we do not propose to tack religion onto an already long list of limited identities such as class, gender, ethnicity, race, and region. Arguably, religious faith cannot be reduced to simply an “identity” for it can be better interpreted as a world view or cultural resource from which people drew in turn to conceptualize identities such as class and gender.¹ Put another way, religion is an ideological system, not an identity. Thus, we wish to position religious institutions and religious cultures in such a way as to encompass a wide range of identities, without assigning either to religion or to any other form of identity (such as class and gender) an essentialism that might preclude a nuanced exploration of how these identities intersect and are contingent in different historical contexts. We propose, therefore, to offer two analytical frameworks that are themselves interdependent, namely, the ongoing function of religious institutions as an apparatus of social regulation and the concomitant search for cultural authority (and political power) by which both groups and individuals sought to articulate a particular vision of the social order.²

To date, the dominant approaches in Canadian social history have focused, for the most part, upon categories of region, class formation, and women’s experience (and now more recently informed by theories of gender). Because of the priorities placed upon these “primary” identities, religious experience, both in its social and personal aspects, becomes epiphenomenal. Even among those historians such as Patrick Joyce, an advocate of discourse theory who eschews master-narratives informed by class relations alone, religious ideas function, in the thought of a highly evangelical working-class male, as a “neutral” backdrop to the more active dimensions of secular political and social thought.³ Religious forms and practices have to be conceived as much more than a passive cultural landscape or merely the repository of a banal conventionality. They may more

1 This approach has informed many of the essays in Nancy Christie, ed., *Households of Faith: Family, Gender and Community in Canada, 1760–1969* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002).

2 For an earlier application of the concept of cultural authority for understanding the confluence of status and class identities, which charts divisions within the middle class, see Nancy Christie, “Psychology, Sociology and the Secular Moment: The Ontario Educational Association’s Quest for Authority”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2 (summer 1990), pp. 119–143.

3 Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

fruitfully be seen in activist terms, as integral to social formation itself: the very essence of many political debates and conflicts hinged upon rival religio-ethnic perspectives; ethnic cultures were fostered and empowered within various religious institutional frameworks; the cultural geography of community was often commensurate with church affiliation; along with the law, religious discourse formed a dominant regulatory presence in elaborating the family form; the church was a pivotal agent in the transformation from an *ancien régime* society, characterized by hierarchy, familialism, and static order, to one defined by change, market values, and incipient individualism; lastly, religious thought in both English Canada and Quebec remained, until the 1960s, the template of national identity and nationalist politics. Religion as ideology was a protean force that functioned in different contexts either as the bulwark of traditionalist social values or, at particularly important junctures, as the agent by which new forms of knowledge were organized. In short, religious ideas functioned, until at least the 1960s, as an authoritative cultural resource appropriated both by dominant social groups and by the disenfranchised — such as women, Aboriginal peoples, and workers. By studiously placing religious institutions at the centre of the Canadian social order, whether liberal or not, we provide a means by which to integrate the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and race into an analytical framework, one fully attentive to the ongoing nuances and tensions between hegemony and resistance, as an explanatory model for social change.

Our intent, however, is not to impute fault to the practice of social history, for religious historians have themselves problematized religion in such a way that provides little access to social historians. In the 1960s historians such as Goldwin French, J. S. Moir, Alan Wilson, and John Webster Grant, to name just a few, integrated religious history into the mainstream of historical questions that at that time focused upon the building of political institutions.⁴ Paralleling this, the work of Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk explored the conjunction between a specific local culture of revivalist religion and the

4 Goldwin French, *Parsons and Politics: The Role of the Wesleyan Methodists in Upper Canada and the Maritimes from 1780–1858* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1962); J. S. Moir, *Church and State in Canada West: Three Studies in the Relation of Denominationalism and Nationalism, 1841–1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959); John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era*, 2nd ed. (Burlington: Welch Publishing, 1988); Alan Wilson, *The Clergy Reserves of Upper Canada: A Canadian Mortmain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968). This tradition of linking religion with politics has been built upon more recently by William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Brian P. Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850–1895* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Mark McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish and Identity in Toronto, 1887–1922* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999). It should be reiterated that we do not intend to provide an exhaustive list of bibliographical citations to Canadian religious or social history. We have sought, rather, to highlight only those monographic works that have made major historiographical or methodological contributions.

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absence of a tradition of political and social revolution in colonial Nova Scotia.⁵ Subsequently, the vogue of intellectual history in the 1970s, represented by the works of A. B. McKillop, Ramsay Cook, Marguerite Van Die, and Michael Gauvreau, which privileged the examination of nationalist ideologies, educational philosophies, and scientific debate, utilized religious faith as a primary axis of intellectual debate among elites during the late nineteenth century.⁶ Another novel trajectory was initiated by Donald Akenson, Brian Clarke, and Mark McGowan, who explored the way in which ethnic identities and loyalties to a greater or lesser degree cohered around religious institutions. In the case of Akenson's seminal studies of Irish migration, in which he has demonstrated that, in terms of socio-economic behaviour, there was little to distinguish between Protestant and Roman Catholic Irish, religious history received powerful validation as religion became the site for the construction and articulation of cultural and political differentiation, a theme later pursued by Clarke and McGowan.⁷ At the same time, other historians, most notably William Westfall, were similarly concerned to elaborate the way in which clerical discourse among both Anglican and Dissenting denominations was less an esoteric theological presence than a way of demarcating broader social boundaries.⁸ His concern with religion as social discourse later animated the work of Phyllis Airhart, David Marshall, and Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, all of which recognized the social significance of religious institutions to define and change broader social ideologies in the early twentieth century. In particular, Christie and Gauvreau in *A Full-Orbed Christianity* demonstrated the way in which the mainstream Protestant denominations expanded and exerted a new type of cultural authority through their dominance of a wider middle-class reform nexus.⁹ Quite independently

5 Gordon Stewart and G. A. Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

6 A. B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979); Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). This trajectory was followed in the next generation by Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989).

7 See Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), and *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1815–1922, an International Perspective* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism*; McGowan, *The Waning of the Green*.

8 Westfall, *Two Worlds*.

9 Phyllis D. Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism, and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergymen and the Crisis of Belief, 1850–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, "A Full-Orbed Christianity": *The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900–1940* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

of this English-Canadian historiographic tendency, Serge Gagnon, in a key trilogy of works written in the 1980s and early 1990s, began to explore Quebec Catholic social practices relating to death, sexuality, and marriage as a system of ongoing cultural interplay between clerical teaching and popular values, a direction pursued most recently by Ollivier Hubert's exploration of pre-ultramontane Catholic ritual as a locus of an ongoing negotiation of social space and power between clergy and believers.¹⁰

The dominant characteristic unifying the historiography of religion since the 1980s has been explicitly to reinterpret what earlier generations viewed as "religious thought" as a system of social practice and reflective of evolving social relationships both within and outside the church institutions. However, for social historians, working-class formation and the history of feminism had become the cutting edge of historiographic debate, and this new trajectory was incorporated into the study of religious cultures. The flagship monographs were those provided by Marta Danylewycz on the social role of female religious communities in Quebec and by Ruth Brouwer and Rosemary Gagan on women's missionary activity. The themes that these scholars have outlined regarding religion as a dominant site for female experience have recently informed the work of Lynne Marks. The novelty of Marks's approach lies in the attempt to connect identities of gender to those of class and community through analysis of religious practice and activity.¹¹

Where scholars of religion had previously taken the denominational (or inter-denominational) as their central analytical framework, the path-breaking aspect of Marks's work lies in her in-depth analysis of social and religious patterns within three small Ontario towns, and thus powerfully reminds historians of the way in which local community studies can illuminate broader questions relating to the interconnection among class, social identity, and gender. Utilizing church membership statistics, Marks has elaborated a distinct framework for the study of religion that overtly posits the mainstream churches as sites of class conflict and class consciousness. The increasing material wealth of many Ontario Protestants, Marks contends,

10 Serge Gagnon, *Mourir hier et aujourd'hui* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1987); *Plaisir d'amour et crainte de Dieu. Sexualité et confession au Bas-Canada* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1990); *Mariage et famille au temps de Papineau* (Sainte Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1993). See also Ollivier Hubert, *Sur la terre comme au ciel : la gestion des rites par l'Église catholique du Québec (fin XVII^e siècle-mi-XIX^e siècle* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000).

11 Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1987); Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Leisure and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Transcending the 'Unacknowledged Quarantine': Putting Religion into English-Canadian Women's History", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3 (Fall 1992), pp. 47–61. The outcome of Brouwer's historiographic protest was Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Fardig Whiteley, *Changing Roles of Women within the Christian Church in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

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“led to the emergence of new, more class-based definitions of who was a good Christian, definitions that subtly but powerfully discouraged poorer workers from being involved in churches”. This process in turn provoked a reaction among alienated workers, who self-consciously sought out alternative “working-class movements”, most notably the Salvation Army and the Knights of Labor. These, according to Marks, “articulated powerful counter-discourses around the meaning of ‘true’ Christianity, critiquing the materialistic hypocrisy of middle-class Christians”.¹² Besides identifying religious practice as a site of class tension, perhaps the most important contribution of Marks’s work is once again to reinforce the notion that, particularly in the late-Victorian period, religious institutions were dominated by female participation, albeit that in Marks’s portrayal the connection of women with the churches was often conflictual.

While *Revivals and Roller Rinks* has provided a more complex model for explaining the social composition of religious culture by linking class and gender variables, there are nevertheless several problematic aspects to Marks’s overall conclusion that the mainstream churches were sites of class contestation. First, her chronology implicitly rests upon a “golden age” of congregational life when, prior to the 1880s, social elites had shared power over management and discipline with their “social inferiors”. By the 1880s, according to Marks, Ontario cities and small towns had witnessed the emergence of an “increasingly class-stratified society”, symbolized by the fact that middle-class churchgoers had largely abandoned the practice of congregational discipline because they were reluctant to have their behaviour scrutinized by more plebeian elements.¹³ However, Marks has failed to consider what a long trajectory of historical studies of a variety of denominational congregational practices has revealed: that, in matters of management and discipline, the “social inferiors” had never been in a position to discipline their betters. As the fine study by Peter Hillis of Presbyterian congregational life aptly demonstrates, boards of management and discipline, even in churches with large working-class majorities, had always tended to be the preserve of middle-class men, not only because of the demands of substantial commitments of unpaid time and monetary contribution to church activities, but because candidates for these offices had to demonstrate evidence of business success, something that even skilled workers would have been unable to provide.¹⁴

¹² Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, p. 10.

¹³ Lynne Marks, “No Double Standard? Leisure, Sex and Sin in Upper Canadian Church Discipline Records, 1800–1860”, in Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell, eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 63.

¹⁴ Peter Hillis, “Presbyterianism and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Glasgow: A Study of Nine Churches”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 32, no. 1 (January 1981), p. 53. Other studies have suggested that, in both Catholic and Protestant churches, elderships, boards of discipline, and vestries were the preserve of “middling sorts” whose economic and social status in the community placed

A second problem is raised by Marks's geographical focus on a range of small towns. If one wishes to place class formation at the centre of the narrative of religious history, surely it would be more profitable to study centres with a large and mature working class. Future studies of working-class links with religion must pursue a chronology that allows for a more longitudinal study of working-class behaviour. As Craig Heron's recent work on the phases of industrialization makes clear, due attention must be paid to the specificity of industrial relations, rather than to overarching frameworks drawn from British or European contexts.¹⁵ Is religious participation among working people likely to be different if it takes place alongside ensembles of relations that themselves differ, that are, for instance, more or less paternalistic, more or less divided by the overt markers of class, more or less likely to have generated unmistakable class conflicts at the workplace or in the political arena? Workplaces and churches, then, are situated in difference, chronological and contextual, and this is not unrelated to how class consciousness does or does not develop and how religious life is lived or not, a central point raised recently by Bryan Palmer.¹⁶ Does the practice of churchgoing reinforce class consciousness, or does it inhibit class unity and self-consciousness? How does organized labour actually interface with organized religion, a question central to the work of Melissa Turkstra?¹⁷

Indeed, one central difficulty in asserting a close connection between churchgoing and class consciousness lies in the very pattern of late nineteenth-century Ontario religious life. Not only was there a proliferation of sectarian religious groups, many of which exerted a particular appeal to working-class and lower middle-class people by engaging in a general critique of wealth, but even mainstream Protestant churches, in their efforts to bring religion to the people, created churches in working-class neighbourhoods whose congregations were drawn heavily from that class. (See the essays in this volume by Edward Smith and Kenneth Draper.) Would members of these movements and congregations, during the course of attending church services and functions, actually have encountered, let alone come into conflict with, industrial capitalists or middle-class professional elements? Or would their contacts with the "middle classes" have been limited to those immediately above them in the social spectrum, the small shopkeepers?

them above the common rank. See, for example, Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1640* (Houndmills: Palgrave Press, 2000), pp. 23, 225; for vestry composition in Catholic Quebec, see Christian Dessureault and Christine Hudon, "Conflits sociaux et élites locales au Bas-Canada : le clergé, les notables, la paysannerie et le contrôle de la fabrique", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 80, no. 3 (September 1999), p. 439.

15 See Craig Heron, "Factory Workers", in Paul Craven, ed., *Labouring Lives: Working People in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

16 Bryan D. Palmer, "Historiographic Hassles: Class and Gender, Evidence and Interpretation", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 33, no. 65 (May 2000), pp. 105–144.

17 Melissa Turkstra, "Canadian Labour and Evangelical Churches, 1900–1930" (paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association Conference, 2002).

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These owners of small businesses might have lived in close proximity, but can only with considerable imaginative licence be considered as rapacious exploiters whose presence might cause working-class people to feel alienated. Indeed, the reality of late nineteenth-century urban religion belies any easy assertion that class divisions within the workplace were in fact precisely mirrored in the religious life of the congregation. In industrial cities such as Hamilton, church life actually evinced, at the level of the congregation, a growing tendency towards greater social homogeneity and less fracturing along economic lines, a development promoted by organized religion itself. Moreover, many workers, as the analysis of Anna Clark has recently demonstrated, considered the church congregation as a type of “alternative sociability” or refuge from the often polarized class relations of the workplace. The frequency with which churchgoing workingmen found themselves the butt of ridicule from workmates revealed the extent to which the church was considered an institution whose allegiances frequently challenged and hampered, rather than promoted, class consciousness.¹⁸

A second interpretive difficulty arises from Marks’s inference of religious behaviour from statistical evidence. Marks builds her argument based upon church membership statistics, which is at variance with the approach of British historians of urban religion such as Hugh McLeod, Callum Brown, and K. D. M. Snell, all of whom study church attendance.¹⁹ Membership records should be approached with caution, insofar as they represent a very specific form of church involvement, one that not only privileges regular weekly attendance (a prerequisite for acceptance as a member) but also demanded a decisive financial commitment, both of which may have precluded middle- and working-class believers from undertaking full membership. Membership statistics, therefore, may not capture those who did not wish to pay on a regular basis, those who attended on a less regular basis, or those who used the church merely for the rites of passage such as baptism, marriage, and burial. In short, membership reflected but one form of religious participation, and, as Callum Brown has so arrestingly argued, the very notion of regular church attendance as a measurement of religiosity was itself an invented tradition constructed by clerical elites who, in an age of intense religious pluralism, endorsed the ideal of full membership as the hallmark of a “true Christian” as a means of ensuring financial support and as a symbol of the vitality of their particular denomination.²⁰ Indeed, as the contribution of Ollivier Hubert to this collection argues, notions of “popular religion” employed by modern

18 Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 100–117.

19 Hugh McLeod, *Piety and Poverty: Working Class Religion in Berlin, London and New York, 1870–1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996); Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800–2000* (New York: Routledge, 2001); K. D. M. Snell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

20 Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, pp. 12, 162.

social scientists are themselves problematic because they rely implicitly upon the constructed categories of “otherness” as defined by the measurements, standards, and criteria of mid-nineteenth-century clerical elites.

Despite these substantial caveats, if we follow Marks’s logic that membership statistics can reveal class proclivities, her reading of them to show that they provide irrefutable evidence of working-class alienation is somewhat suspect, insofar as all the churches that she studies in Thorold, Campbellford, and Ingersoll were numerically dominated by working-class members if one combines the figures relating to both skilled and unskilled workers. (This situation is admirably underscored by Ted Smith’s exploration of working-class Anglicanism in Hamilton.) Indeed, Marks herself admits the possibility of an alternative explanation for the “low” levels of working-class church membership in Thorold, the fact of high rates of geographic mobility, a variable whose relationship to cultural notions of “alienation” is at best problematic.²¹ In fact, *Revivals and Roller Rinks* corroborates the high working-class attendance rates discerned both by Callum Brown and S. J. D. Green for industrial Britain. As Brown has observed, “Every major study based on social-composition analysis of church-goers or members shows for every part of Britain from the late eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries, for every denomination, that the working classes were in the majority.”²² Or, as Green has commented in his monumental study *Religion in the Age of Decline: Organisation and Experience in Industrial Yorkshire, 1820–1920*, “religious commitment — total, partial, negligible — was not a function of social class. During the nineteenth century, the divinely dedicated, whether by organisation, through participation, or in belief, were drawn from all classes. So too were the intermittent; and, for that matter, the indifferent. Nor was their characteristic expression of that religious commitment, insofar as they acknowledged it, a simple, undifferentiated reflection of their collective social consciousness.”²³ If socially mixed communities produced socially mixed congregations or, more specifically, if these cross-class institutions were built around working-class majorities, it raises a logical conundrum: why is a cross-class religious movement with a working-class majority such as the Salvation Army (a somewhat conjectural conclusion given the absence of

21 Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, briefly notes the issue of geographical mobility, but it forms no part of the subsequent analysis (pp. 26–27). However, in a recent study of Western Europe, Hugh McLeod has observed that between 1880 and 1914 higher levels of baptism in working-class neighbourhoods were directly related to greater levels of residential and occupational stability. See Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848–1914* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), pp. 264–265.

22 Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p. 155. For Marks’s statistical demonstration of working-class majorities in all the churches that she examines, see *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, Appendix C, Tables 1 and 2.

23 S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline: Organisation and Experience in Industrial Yorkshire, 1820–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 200.

accurate membership lists)²⁴ characterized by Marks as a manifestation of collective working-class identity, while mainstream churches, which had a similar social composition, are portrayed as sites of middle-class hegemony?

Indeed, the very notion that in the late nineteenth century religion constituted a primary site of class conflict and underpinned the unfolding of class consciousness is itself premised upon a series of problematic assumptions. These originate in the assertion by historians that there existed a tight ideological fit between evangelical religion, domesticity, and a cult of respectability, and that these in turn provided a coherent and unified cultural identity for the middle classes — what some would term “the hegemonic force of late-nineteenth-century Ontario Protestantism”.²⁵ Thus, it has been assumed, these dominant “middle-class” religious values fostered structures of “alienation” for working-class men and women. However, during the 1990s, research by historians in both Britain and Canada began to demonstrate that the social and ideological cohesiveness of the late-Victorian middle class had been greatly exaggerated. First, if “respectability” is encompassed by those values of thrift, probity, domesticity, self-help, temperance, and self-improvement, then clearly this was a culture whose origins were not unique to the middle class, and in fact contained cross-class contributions from both gentry and working-class people. Nor was it solely sired by evangelicalism, as its values were embraced and promoted by a variety of non-evangelical denominations.²⁶ Indeed, if religion, as Marks’s work illustrates, divided the working classes into skilled and unskilled fragments, it also produced comparable divisions within the middle classes, as the studies of T. W. Acheson for Saint John and Hannah Lane for St. Stephen in New Brunswick reveal. Lane’s work, in particular, shows that, while members of

24 Two recent studies of the Salvation Army in Britain and the United States have emphasized the cross-class nature of the movement, while acknowledging that working-class people formed a large proportion of their constituency. See Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil’s Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Lillian Taiz, *Hallelujah Lads and Lasses: Remaking the Salvation Army in America, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). There has been a historiographic over-emphasis on the uniqueness of the Salvation Army when it should be recognized that its urban mission work was very similar to that undertaken by mainstream Protestantism. It can be said, however, that the Salvation Army’s success probably was responsible for mainstream Protestant denominations in Canada adopting a more populist form of evangelicalism in the early twentieth century. See Christie and Gauvreau, “A Full-Orbed Christianity”, chap. 2.

25 Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, p. 4.

26 For a critique of the automatic equation between evangelicalism and domesticity in the Canadian context, see Christie, “Introduction: Family, Community, and the Rise of Liberal Society,” in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, pp. 4–6; Jack Little, “The Fireside Kingdom: A Mid-Nineteenth-Century Anglican Perspective on Marriage and Parenthood”, in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, pp. 77–102. The classic statement of the equation remains Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). For a critique within the context of British history, see Dror Wahrman, “National Society, Communal Culture: An Argument about the Recent Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain”, *Social History*, vol. 17, no. 1 (January 1992), pp. 67–71.

Protestant congregations evinced a propensity to ignore denominational boundaries in their choices of marriage partner and in church attendance, a rival set of clerical discourses urgently sought to erect and police denominational barriers.²⁷ Secondly, Canada's middle classes, like those of Britain, varied widely by locality and were fragmented into a gamut of subtle professional and status gradations.²⁸ As the work of Nancy Christie for English Canada and Christian Dessureault and Christine Hudon for Quebec has illustrated, this fact was a frequent source of intra-class tension, particularly between lay professionals and the clergy.²⁹ Taken as a whole, this work bids historians to look in two directions. First, if it is conceded that religion was a factor in formation of the working class, it is equally imperative to explore the ways in which religious cultures played a role in the articulation of middle-class identities.³⁰ Of equal importance, it is necessary to get behind monolithic definitions of hegemony to pay due attention to economic, social, cultural, and religious differences within the so-called middle classes who,

27 On these practices, see Hannah Lane, "Tribalism, Proselytism and Pluralism: Protestants, Family and Denominational Identity in Mid-Nineteenth-Century St. Stephen, New Brunswick", in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, pp. 103–137. T. W. Acheson, in his magisterial examination of Saint John business elites, has noted the vehemence of theological dispute over social issues among the city's evangelical clergy and concludes that a "substantial part of the city's traditional bourgeoisie rejected most manifestations of the temperance movement". See Acheson, *Saint John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 139, 115–137.

28 For the substantial British literature on social and cultural differences among the British middle classes, see in particular Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, *The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe, 1780–1914: Enterprise, Family and Independence* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Robert Q. Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). For a critique of the notion of respectability as a cultural absolute, see Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). In the Canadian context, the exploration of intra-class occupational and professional differences among the middle classes has been launched by R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar, *Professional Gentlemen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); David Burley, *A Particular Condition in Life: Self-Employment and Social Mobility in Mid-Victorian Brantford* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). Most recently, for an analysis centred upon local identities and intra-class professional and commercial differences, see Andrew Holman, *A Sense of Their Duty: Middle-Class Formation in Victorian Ontario Towns* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), who has urged historians to move beyond characterizing the middle classes as "overbearing respectables" (p. ix).

29 On this important theme, see Nancy Christie, "Psychology, Sociology and the Secular Moment: The Ontario Educational Association's Quest for Authority", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2 (Summer 1990); Dessureault and Hudon, "Conflits sociaux et élites locales au Bas-Canada", pp. 413–439.

30 For a particularly suggestive local study that adopts this dual-track approach and does not automatically equate "religion" with a monolithic "middle class", see Mark S. Schantz, *Piety in Providence: Class Dimensions of Religious Experience in Antebellum Rhode Island* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 2–3. It is worth observing in this context that Andrew Holman's *A Sense of Their Duty*, a recent local study of the Galt and Goderich middle classes, pays scant attention to religion, beyond the obvious analysis of the temperance movement.

as Dror Wahrman recently observed, may never have achieved the level of self-consciousness imputed to them by historians.³¹

Further, can we infer alienation from working-class participation? Certainly both middle- and working-class members were critical of the way in which church polities operated, but, when significant elements of the middle-class membership critiqued either the local clergymen or the larger church bureaucracy, as they frequently did (one only has to evince a slight acquaintance with both sacred and secular newspapers of the period to recognize this phenomenon of anti-clericalism), why is this accounted as but more evidence of hegemony rather than a symptom of middle-class alienation? If people left the mainstream denominations, most often because they were deemed to be too “worldly”, as the aforementioned quotation from Marks emphasizes, is this propensity for schism related to socio-economic factors, or can the attraction to the Salvation Army or other smaller sects which proliferated in this period be more profitably read in terms of a longer cultural continuum dating back to the creation of Methodism as a search for a purer, more evangelical religious experience or, in the Victorian era, as a search for a smaller, localized religious community which had not become enmeshed in worldly considerations of financial encumbrances and church-building? Perhaps those who identified with the Salvation Army or its contemporary, the Holiness movement, merely sought a less materialistic religion, one that could recreate face-to-face “island communities” in a society becoming consumer-driven, bureaucratic, and “modern”,³² which appealed to a wide social constituency outside urban, upper-middle-class groups. More problematic still is the attempt to equate movements such as the Salvation Army with the shaping of an oppositional working-class “consciousness”. If the leadership of these movements serves as a reliable barometer, many of the officers were drawn from the Victorian lower middle classes, and their critique of denominational religious formalism reflected not an incipient proletarian sensibility, but rather a highly individualistic sense of personal autonomy and desire for upward mobility.³³

While it must be acknowledged that churchgoing had both its sacred and secular motivations, the most important variable accounting for why people

31 For divisions in Britain between “national” and “local” middle classes, divisions that persisted far beyond the eighteenth century, see Wahrman, “National Society, Communal Culture”, pp. 43–72.

32 A recent study of the Holiness Movement, whose tenets inspired enthusiastic religious expressions such as the Salvation Army and Pentecostalism, has emphasized these cultural, rather than socio-economic, tensions with mainstream Protestant denominations. See Louise A. Mussio, “The Origins and Nature of the Holiness Movement Church: A Study in Religious Populism”, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, new series, vol. 7, pp. 81–104. The concept of the “island community” as a way of explaining the ideological and cultural shifts from a highly localized society to one characterized by national institution-building was proffered several decades ago by Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order: American Society, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

33 This aspect has been observed most recently by Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 212–214.

attended church was Christian belief, an element almost totally absent from Marks's community study. Since the work of E. P. Thompson, it has become fashionable to see religion only as an epiphenomenon of more fundamental socio-economic considerations, but it would be altogether wrong-headed to elevate socio-economic variables to the exclusion of the reality of faith. While the search for salvation, the need for personal redemption, and a belief in the mystical and supernatural bases of human existence may appear to contemporary social scientists as a world view horribly simplistic and verging upon the magical, it nevertheless was a reality to ordinary people in the past. This reality must be treated seriously if historians are to understand fully why people went to church and continued to do so, even though there were both symbolic and real status and social gradations present in church congregations, most notably through pew sittings and leadership. In short, religious institutions, while replicating some of the social patterns of other voluntary associations, cannot simply be reduced to secular associational life or considered under the rubric of leisure.

In recent years, through analyses of the 1851 church census, in-depth studies of discursive literature, and innovative studies of popular belief through oral history, British social historians have probed the problem of the multiplicity of religious practices and the meanings of the different forms taken by religious belief. To this end, they have posited a variety of explanations for levels of church attendance, which circumvent, at one and the same time, industrialization as the primary negative variable and the tendency to interpret non-attendance as religious indifference, a perspective offered most often by contemporary clerics and which has become the baseline for most modern interpretive frameworks. Through his compendious analysis of the 1851 religious census, K. D. M. Snell conclusively demonstrates a high correlation between the availability of churches and levels and frequency of church attendance. This common-sense observation has been amplified by Callum Brown, who also identifies proximity to religious facilities as an important but hitherto ignored variable. Taken together, these two factors explain the much higher levels of working-class church participation recently uncovered for Hamilton, a large urban and industrial centre. Far from functioning as a source of alienation, the urban context, with its characteristic proliferation and plurality of religious denominations — a veritable cornucopia for the religious consumer — created a situation in which each neighbourhood had a full complement of religious denominations: churches, chapels, and missions. In this situation, working-class people could easily find a church that would suit their own particular religious needs, be they evangelical, ritualistic, or, as in the case of the Christian Workers' Church explored by Ken Draper, a labourist message overlaid with pre-millennial fundamentalism. More importantly, they and their families could easily walk to church. By contrast, in the smaller towns which Marks studies, propinquity may have played a negative role, especially if farm families like that of Aimee Semple McPherson had to drive some distance because there was only one denomi-

national church per town. Significantly, both McPherson and her mother later joined the Salvation Army, even though her father remained a Methodist.³⁴

Indeed, this latter phenomenon brings us to another question. Both Callum Brown and Susan Williams have focused upon family strategies as an important variable in church affiliation: because of the need to cook the mid-day Sunday meal, working-class parents were notably under-represented at the morning service, but Sunday Schools were universally attended by working-class children. The expansion of the Sunday School as part of the pattern of evangelical exclusiveness that characterized late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Protestant denominations is a factor in need of statistical as well as discursive study, which might be placed alongside measurements of those attending formal church services. What the work of Brown and Williams in Britain³⁵ and Hannah Lane and Enrico Cumbo in Canada illustrates is that ordinary people had contact with religion in a multiplicity of ways, and often the membership or attendance of only one family member was deemed sufficient to signify the public testament of Christian faith on behalf of the entire family.³⁶

In short, statistics reveal only the tip of the iceberg. More interestingly, Green has postulated that church attendance may have represented no more than the internalization of the associational ideal that was, like the badge of membership, constructed by the Victorian clergy as an emblem of civic participation. This conclusion fits well with those of Susan Williams, whose investigations of oral history testimony in early twentieth-century London categorically show that large numbers of working-class people felt absolutely no compunction to attend church even though they identified themselves as faithful members of a Christian community. Williams's work demonstrates that not only should historians look well beyond the institutional church in determining general processes of secularization, but that they must consider the vitality of household religion — the round of daily prayers, the symbolism of the family Bible, rituals of Sabbath-keeping, amplified by personal contacts with clergymen through family visiting and comfort of the sick. Adding to this the explosion of sacred literature throughout the nineteenth century, one is led to the conclusion that the links, both cultural and institutional, to religion were multifarious and ubiquitous.

Indeed, the very pluralism of the religious experience — through sacred novels, Sunday Schools, the YMCA, ethno-religious societies such as the

34 Edith Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993).

35 Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p. 134; S. C. Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c. 1880–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

36 Lane, "Tribalism, Proselytism, and Pluralism"; Enrico Cumbo, "Salvation in Indifference: Gendered Expressions of Italian-Canadian Immigrant Catholicity, 1900–1940", in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, pp. 205–233.

Orange Order, fraternal orders, shop-floor religious services, and, of course, vast networks of religious charity organizations aimed at various age-groups — constitutes the most striking feature of the modernizing religious landscape of late-Victorian Canadian society. However, the sheer quantity and pervasiveness of this religious marketplace and its consequent segmentation of religious experience preclude the reduction of any definition of religiosity to church membership, a theme explored in the contribution of Nancy Christie to this collection. Here, the discursive nature of religious culture might provide innovative pathways for creating a framework for a socio-religious approach attentive both to nuances of religious belief and to changes in social practice, but one that can also incorporate the inflections of class and gender. That the terrain of religious discourse can be deftly plumbed by creative historians to be integrated with broader questions of cultural formation and social conflict is well demonstrated by the fruitful work of Ollivier Hubert and Christine Hudon in Quebec, who have been exposed to French trajectories of discourse analysis and cultural anthropology. Indeed, both by focusing upon the social meanings that animated high theological concepts of ritual and by adhering consistently to a belief that religious performances and disputations themselves express distinctions of wealth, rank, and social position, the work of Hubert and Hudon offers a creative integration of discourse and social practice that obviates the postmodern sundering of language and experience, and therefore offers a conceptual pathway around the hermeneutic impasse currently afflicting social history in English Canada.³⁷ The central question to be posed, then, is how did the churches achieve social influence and how did this process change during the transition from pre-industrial social organization to industrial society, or, stated another way, from a pre-modern to a modern set of social relations, and beyond? Can religious institutions be positioned as innovators and indeed complicit in the creation of a liberal order, or were they merely passive repositories of a traditional culture being marginalized by “modern” notions of political economy?

We position the practice of religious history by moving beyond simply viewing social identities as informed by linguistic forms, to consider religious ideas as a concerted ideology — a set of structured ideas that specific groups and institutions attempt to make authoritative in various historical contexts as the dominant formulator of social values. Our conceptualization differs from that of the advocates of hegemonic control in that we envision religious institutions as themselves pluralistic and churches as but one form of knowledge and one institutional type among others, which may have an ideology that overlaps, but is not always consonant with, the social perspective of institutions such as the state and the law. Like the cultural historian Roger Chartier, we believe that we need historical frameworks which will

37 Christine Hudon, *Prêtres et fidèles dans le Diocèse de Saint-Hyacinthe, 1820–1875* (Quebec: Septentrion, 1996); Hubert, *Sur la terre comme au ciel*. For a model of how religious discourses inform and penetrate other social discourses, see the essays in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*.

consider the fluidity of social boundaries and the plurality of social discourses, but which also recognize that those discourses are promulgated in ways founded upon inequalities of power that change over time.³⁸

Discourse theory itself is at the core of this epistemological debate that in recent years has inflamed the climate of discussion among social historians. While it is sensible on the one hand to concur with Bryan Palmer's scepticism concerning the more radical postmodernist manifestations of discourse analysis,³⁹ one cannot dismiss out of hand the important contribution that the "linguistic turn" has brought to the study of the cultural meanings that underpin and inform social processes.⁴⁰ Indeed, both Mariana Valverde's *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada* and Bruce Curtis's insightful treatment of nineteenth-century educational reform⁴¹ have been largely ignored by religious historians; yet the model of moral regulation — or what we would more broadly term social regulation — offers a very supple interpretive framework which, while taking seriously the intellectual content and broader cultural import of middle-class sensibilities in the late Victorian era, avoids the fallacy of advocates of social control or theorists of hegemony by providing a mechanism of analysis not simply mired in class specificity. As Valverde in particular makes clear, social regulation implies a cross-class experience, for exhortation was directed just as much at middle-class behaviour as at redefining working-class mores.⁴² However, despite the introduction of the term "regulation" as opposed to "social control", the process and discourses of social regulation, as described by both Valverde and

38 Roger Chartier, "Writing the Practices", *French Historical Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Spring 1998), p. 262. For a demonstration of how this approach applies to Canadian history, see Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), in which the author explores the development of liberal welfare policies (which are both familialist but also *laissez-faire*) but argues that, while business groups, organized labour, and women's groups and working-class women themselves contributed to the creation of this type of state through overlapping ideologies, their views of the state, and particularly its relationship to patriarchy, served very different agendas. In addition, there were considerable inequalities of power between these different groups.

39 Palmer, "Historiographic Hassles", p. 111.

40 On the linguistic turn and historians, see John Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience", *American Historical Review*, vol. 92 (October 1987), pp. 879–907; Nancy Christie, "From Intellectual to Cultural History: The Comparative Catalyst", in Daniel Woolf, ed., *Journal of History and Politics*, vol. 6 (1988–1989), *Intellectual History: New Perspectives*, pp. 79–100. See, for a somewhat alarmist critique from the perspective of working-class history, Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent Into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

41 See Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885–1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991); Bruce Curtis, "Preconditions of the Canadian State: Educational Reform and the Construction of a Public in Upper Canada, 1837–1846", in Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert, eds., *The "Benevolent" State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987), pp. 47–67.

42 On the theoretical contributions of her work, see Mariana Valverde, "Some Remarks on the Rise and Fall of Discourse Analysis", *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 33, no. 65 (May 2000), pp. 62–64.

Curtis, remain formulated by bourgeois elites to be largely imposed upon a more or less willing populace. Competing or contested notions of regulation are largely absent from their historical treatments. Indeed, Valverde's framework of social regulation rests upon an interlocking series of middle-class elites which in turn enjoyed privileged access to the state, while Curtis describes the elaboration of educational machinery in the 1840s to reconstruct the "political subjectivity" of a Canadian populace viewed by its colonial rulers as potentially rebellious and fractured by ethnic and sectarian rivalries. Thus the conclusion advanced by both these scholars is that social regulation constitutes a monolithically conservative process, one that "generally seeks to construct and organize both social relations and individual consciousness in such a way as to legitimize certain institutions and discourses — the patriarchal nuclear family, racist immigration policies — from the point of view of morality".⁴³ Many historians have extrapolated from these studies, which explore two specific historical contexts — the immediate post-Rebellion period (in the case of Curtis) and a period of heightened middle-class control of church institutions (in Valverde's instance) — and have read Valverde's conclusions in universalist terms, so that all social regulation has been seen as ineluctably a phenomenon elaborated by middle-class elites, resisted by social outsiders defined as "marginal".

Our own concept of social regulation, centred upon the historical experience and social practices of religious institutions, is considerably more supple than that offered by either Valverde or Curtis. It should be emphasized that after 1800 both Catholic and Protestant churches were voluntarist associations, which enforced regulation less through coercion than through a variety of more or less consensual cultural practices. Thus the direction of social authority was not unidirectional, nor was it simply cased as a two-dimensional relationship of resistance between dominant and marginal social groups. What existed was a bi-polar dynamic between governors and governed, in which regulatory practices were frequently, but not always, imposed from above either by the clergy or by wealthy laity upon a passive populace. However, these institutional elites were simultaneously regulated by a wider "culture of governance", a process that questions easy assumptions about unidirectional or monolithic conceptions of hegemony.⁴⁴ Within all religious institutions, there existed complex and overlapping power structures within the church and the wider community, founded upon a combination of both

43 Valverde, in particular, argues that, although social regulation is often carried out by professional and philanthropic groups outside the state, there were essentially no differences in aims between middle-class elites and the state. See *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, pp. 165–166.

44 For a recent treatment applying these themes to the experience of early nineteenth-century Scottish Presbyterian communities in Upper Canada, see Nancy Christie, " 'A witness against vice': Religious Dissent, Political Radicalism and the Moral Regulation of Aristocratic Culture in Upper Canada" (paper delivered to the Centre d'histoire des régulations sociales, Université du Québec à Montréal, May 2003).

cultural consensus and conflict. On one hand, church members largely internalized the moral outlook set forth by the clergy, which meant that regulation itself was very effective, but it also meant that the very system of regulation was fashioned through the agency of those usually considered passive receptors of regulatory power from above, and was frequently directed at monitoring the behaviour of both the clergy and social elites. Social regulation, as viewed through the historical experience of churches and religious institutions, was a cultural site of diverging and frequently contested meanings and practices that cannot, without doing considerable violence to the historical context, be interpreted as a monolithic exercise of elite authority.

Can this more flexible framework of social regulation offer a new chronology of Canadian social history? Recently, Ian McKay has provided one of the most compelling frameworks for analysing Canadian history from the perspective of exploring relationships of institutional power and the way in which these inform patterns of culture and ideological discourse. The potential of this “liberal order” framework lies in its ability to investigate both pre- and post-industrial societies; it gives credence to cultural values as agents of social change, and it is an attempt to elide the somewhat artificial boundaries between politics and society. These innovative qualities of McKay’s new historiographical trajectory are marred by an over-reliance upon the activities of economic and political elites, a method reminiscent of the work of Donald Creighton and Arthur Lower. Although McKay’s project is the delineation of a liberal order in Canadian history, much of what he explores is in fact the emergence of systems of government forms of regulation, which he views as supra-cultural in their ability to encompass all cultural and social relations. The deficiency of McKay’s liberal order framework lies in three fallacies: the first difficulty revolves around using a hermeneutic which is at once too specific — often McKay uses “liberal” in a distinctly Lockean sense to mean the self-possessed individual, a philosophical position that did not necessarily inform actual historical practice — and too vague, as defining the entire structure of social relations. Regulation, a concept that Valverde deploys as a heuristic device, has been transformed by McKay into a “totalizing philosophy”. This leads to a second difficulty: in its totalizing aspect, McKay deploys liberalism in a tautological manner, for he uses a liberal framework to explain the development of a liberal society. Thirdly, although McKay believes that his framework can explain broader social patterns, it actually centres upon the adumbration of a political event-history in which social practices continue to be seen as epiphenomenal to political ideologies and the activities of political elites.

McKay’s framework rests, in the final analysis, upon two problematic assertions: first, that the state was *sui generis* a product of the liberal order; and that the liberal order itself, by which McKay means a contractarian liberal individualism, was entirely coextensive with the state. McKay’s historical dynamic of a monolithic, all-encompassing liberalism is not borne out by the evidence of conflict attendant upon nineteenth-century social formation, which between 1840 and 1880 pitted “tory” and “liberal” ideological currents

against one another over divides such as free trade versus protection, anti-partyism versus the legitimacy of party divisions in society, religious voluntarism versus state support for churches, and centralization versus local control of institutions. In terms of the Canadian religious landscape, such cultural fissures, reminiscent of the Court/Country split in eighteenth-century Britain, not only characterized the relationship between Anglicans and Methodists, but were evident within most major Protestant denominations, adding further social and cultural complexity to religious pluralism and the climate of ideological fracturing.⁴⁵ Here was a process that cannot simply be subsumed under a rubric of liberal individualism, nor read merely as the “project” of an ideologically unified politico-economic elite. Indeed, McKay’s emphasis on the ideologically integrative character of liberalism, read as the motor of Canadian history, is rather uncritical of the rhetoric of a Liberal-Toryism that coalesced around the figures of Egerton Ryerson and John A. Macdonald in the 1840s and 1850s. Fearing the existence of “sectarian” religious competition which might lead to social polarization and rebellion, these political figures promised political quiescence and an end to divisive ideological conflict by using state machinery to adjust, once and for all, the competing claims of religious denominations for public support, and in the process fostering social equilibrium through an elaborate system of institutional clientage that would infuse a common code of religious values throughout Canadian society.⁴⁶

If McKay’s project is to map the evolution of “grids of power” around

45 For the classic statements of the cultural division between Anglicans and Methodists in Canada, see Westfall, *Two Worlds*; Nancy Christie, “‘In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion’: Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order, 1760–1815”, in G. A. Rawlyk, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760–1990* (Burlington: Welch Publishing, 1990), pp. 9–47. J. G. A. Pocock’s characterization of “Court” and “Country” has been applied to Canadian political history by Gordon Stewart, *The Origins of Canadian Politics: A Comparative Approach* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986). For a stimulating reading of the Court/Country divide in cultural terms in Britain, see Wahrman, “National Society, Communal Culture”. For an application to the internal dynamics of Canadian Methodism prior to 1850, see Todd Webb, “‘With the Tenderness of a Feather Dipt in Oil’: Encounters Between British and American Methodists in Lower and Upper Canada, 1815–1828” (paper delivered at the Canadian Historical Association, University of Toronto, May 2002).

46 The religious bases of the new Liberal-Toryism have been explored by Michael Gauvreau, “John A. Macdonald and the ‘Union of the Moderate Men’ ” (paper delivered at Glendon College, January 1998), which argues that Macdonald applied the Liberal-Tory model of church-state relations to protectionist ideas of the relationship between the state and the economy that were encapsulated in the National Policy. The complex links between religion, ethnicity, and political culture remain to be examined, as these are far too often treated in separate compartments by historians, but for an illuminating preliminary study. One recent treatment, Jeffrey McNairn’s *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791–1854* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), entirely dispenses with religion as one of the central underpinnings of contemporary notions of the British constitution. For a critique of this older, more monolithic perspective and a preliminary exploration of the links between rival concepts of church order, ethnic boundary-making, and political authority in British North America, see Michael Gauvreau, “Revisiting the Confessional State: Religion as Ethnic Boundary-Making in British North America, 1791–1860”, in Michael Gauvreau and Ollivier Hubert, eds., *Religion and Social Practice* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, forthcoming).

which “a given hegemonic social was constructed and centred”,⁴⁷ it is particularly anomalous that he has ignored religious institutions. Certainly, prior to the 1940s, with the expansion of the welfare state, the church and the family (which the church strategically coopted for its own ends) formed the dominant structures of social discipline that had a far greater impact on people’s lives than criminal courts, penitentiaries, or asylums. While penitentiaries and asylums can indeed be seen to be overtly coercive (although the Foucauldian vision of the “great confinement” had been severely modified), the voluntarist nature of people’s adherence to religious institutions and to the tenets of religious faith was what allowed religious institutions to occupy such a large space in our social terrain. The consensual nature of religious participation, and the fact that it addressed not merely deviant elements in society but appealed across a range of social groups and prescribed social values that pertained to everyday experience, places religious institutions and religious culture more generally as one of the most persistent and pervasive mechanisms for regulating social values. Here, we do not wish to place too much interpretive weight upon the power of religious institutions. It must be recognized that not only was religious pluralism a central fact of Canadian settlement that set it apart from the British and French experiences, but that religious elites had to compete for power and cultural authority against other regulatory systems such as the law, other professional discourses such as medicine, and government structures. For example, in Upper Canada, the Presbyterian Church disciplines were seen by religious leaders as a theocratic system of law which they believed was superior to and must compete with civil legal codes. In the long run, Canadian society was not elaborated upon such theocratic lines, but, in other arenas of political and social contestation, the churches were successful in embedding their perspectives into other institutions (for example, the temperance movement and a host of voluntary societies), as well as into educational institutions. In the 1850s, while Egerton Ryerson was expounding the virtues of the separation of church and state during his campaign for voluntarism, he was at the same time making the public school system an arm of his own religio-ethnic model of the social order.⁴⁸ In another era, Ontario evangelicals under the auspices of the Mowat government appropriated child welfare legislation to further their conversionist ideology.⁴⁹ In the 1950s, however, the mainline

47 Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 81, no. 4 (December 2000), p. 622.

48 Curtis, “Preconditions of the Canadian State”. The value of Curtis’s perspective lies in his ability to posit education as a type of social regulation that is not simply class specific, but is cross-class and, more importantly, ethnically driven and sensitive to the reality of intense religious competition in the post-Rebellion period.

49 Christie, *Engendering the State*, chap. 1. This argument is a variant of that first offered by Chad Gaffield in *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict in Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987). As Gaffield demonstrates, those like the Franco-Ontarians, who had very little political power, used the institution of the Catholic Church as a means to lobby for linguistic

Protestant denominations, namely the United Church and Anglicanism, made war with the new welfare state, even though in earlier decades they had been at the forefront of creating the very mechanisms of social regulation then implemented by the state.⁵⁰ However, while religious institutions may not have been either all-powerful or hegemonic in articulating and policing their own views of the social order at any juncture in the Canadian past, it is nevertheless crucial to position religious culture and the institutions through which it functioned at the centre of a theoretical perspective that engages history through the lens of social regulation.

Even though McKay has recently offered the “liberal order” as a new framework for understanding Canadian history, the work of Jean-Marie Fecteau was the first to apply consistently the concept of social regulation as the impetus for the creation of liberal values in Quebec. However, like McKay, Fecteau diminishes the role of the churches in contrast to the state, which he elevates as the primary site where class relations are the most sharply defined.⁵¹ The inadequacies of conceiving the state as the supreme form of regulation, as Fecteau postulates, are illuminated most tellingly in his analysis of the organization of charity which occupies a large role in his interpretive framework. As Fecteau himself states, there was no Poor Law system enacted in Lower Canada, and non-state organized systems of charitable relief therefore bulked very large in this society. This problem raises a central issue of how the notion of the state is defined: should we label organizations created by churches but managed by lay church members as “state” organizations simply because they were not directly under the direction of priests or ministers? René Hardy has explained the interplay between the charitable impetus and Roman Catholicism in very different terms. Rather than seeing the church, as does Fecteau, as a survival of a feudal *mentalité*, Hardy is attentive to the fact that church institutions also reflect broader social and cultural changes as much as they create them. Thus, in the very period that concerns Fecteau’s work, Hardy discerns a Roman Catholic Church undergoing a tremendous transformation. In the face of urban poverty, massive British immigration, and the consequent threat of religious pluralism, the church adopted a strategy of cultural regulation that went beyond the former emphasis upon ritualism, which was no longer perceived to be as efficacious, especially in the face of popular demands for a more active social presence by the institution. Hardy describes a church that, between 1830 and 1870, expanded into the realms of charity, education, popular celebrations, and temperance movements, in which the discourse of Christian discipline penetrated the interstices of Quebec culture. On one hand, the

50 Nancy Christie, “‘Look out for Leviathan’: The Search for a Conservative Modernist Consensus”, in Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, eds., *Canada’s Postwar Interregnum ca. 1943–1955: Reconstruction or Restoration?* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

51 Jean-Marie Fecteau, *Un nouvel ordre des choses : la pauvreté, le crime, l’État au Québec, de la fin du XVIII^e siècle à 1840* (Outremont: VLB Éditeur, 1989), pp. 10–11.

Roman Catholic Church shed some of its *ancien régime* attributes; for example, it eradicated public confession in favour of an increasingly private encounter between priest and penitent and, through private prayer, it privileged the individual's immediate relationship with God. On the other, however, the central purpose of charity was not the moral reform of the individual; rather it resembled older forms of social regulation which focused upon the family as an entity and which sought to reaffirm the hierarchical nature of the social order by structuring patterns of deference and obligation.⁵² Once one places religious institutions into the framework of social regulation, the chronology for the emergence of a "liberal" capitalist order is far more protracted than that posited in the works of McKay and Fecteau, and it shifts the bias of our interpretation away from centralized entities such as the state or the law towards social disciplines that emanated from discourses within religion and the family, an emphasis which better accords with the persistent localism of Canadian society prior to 1940.⁵³ As the British historian W. L. Burn observed four decades ago, it is through these mechanisms of social regulation that society could be at once strongly authoritarian but also *laissez-faire* in terms of having a very limited state.⁵⁴

By positing an interplay between two theoretical perspectives, namely the ongoing impetus for social regulation and the search for cultural authority, one can also avoid the stricture of merely seeing society as fissured by the dominators and the dominated. In McKay's schema, the liberal order is defined by insiders and outsiders, in which marginal groups such as workers, Aboriginal people, and women are seen to be passive vessels. When they do resist, they are still relegated to the netherworld outside the liberal order.⁵⁵ While we accept that churches were forms of social power, albeit contested, when wedded to a concept of cultural authority, we conceive of religious culture as a resource that was appropriated by various groups, both dominant and dominated. The process of appropriation may indeed have been unequal, but in practice this inequality may have been attenuated because it often functioned within another sphere of social regulation. For example, as Susan Neylan demonstrates, Methodist revivals and the Salvation Army may have "inculcated" Christianity into an Aboriginal "subaltern" group, but, once

52 René Hardy, "Le renouveau religieux dans une paroisse urbaine : Notre-Dame-de-Québec, 1830–1870", in René Hardy, *Contrôle social et mutation de la culture religieuse au Québec, 1830-1930* (Montreal: Boréal, 1999).

53 For a different time-line of the emergence of liberal individualism, see essays in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, especially "Introduction: Family, Community, and the Rise of Liberal Society". For perspectives on the family as an important site of social discipline, see Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, eds., *Discordant Kin? Mapping Marginality in the Canadian Family* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming), especially Nancy Christie, "Introduction: Interrogating the Nuclear Family".

54 See W.L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise* (New York: Norton, 1965), especially his chapter on social disciplines. Burn has been recently revisited in Martin Hewitt, ed., *An Age of Equipoise? Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2000), pp. 10–11.

55 McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework", p. 626.

evangelical tenets were appropriated by Aboriginal groups, the ritual of the camp-meeting no longer served as a space of racial domination, but was reinvented as a locus for articulating and reinforcing social hierarchy within the Aboriginal community. What might have begun as an exercise in colonial domination was transformed into an act of cultural separation. Indeed, the very process by which the churches sought to Christianize Aboriginal peoples reveals a further level of cultural fissure within the institutional churches themselves. The intrusive moral disciplining of Native people at the level of the local congregations in the early twentieth century was, in fact, a mode of regulatory practice that had largely been abandoned by the national churches in Euro-Canadian communities after the 1880s in favour of a less intrusive, more private appeal to personal conversion through a creed of social responsibility. The existence of two competing regulatory modes in one institution indicated a division between an apparatus directed to missions, both at home and overseas, and an emergent social service bureaucracy that vied for power within the Protestant churches in the early twentieth century. By paying close attention to these different emphases, by reading social regulation together with the quest for cultural authority, in other words, by joining the institutional with the cultural, we can incorporate questions of class, ethnicity, race, and gender without the encumbrance of assigning an essential value to any of these entities.

Stated another way, as tempting as it might be to take at face value the rhetoric of dominance deployed by social elites, in this case the claim of clerics that they possessed esoteric knowledge that gave them special and unimpeachable power, the very discourse of dominance itself needs to be deconstructed, as Christine Hudon has done in her sophisticated new interpretation of anti-clericalism in the Gaspé. Traditionally, historians would interpret anti-clericalism either as the firmament of secularization or as the indicator of working-class alienation. As Hudon so well demonstrates, the audience had fully imbibed the ideal of a godly community preached by the nineteenth-century Catholic clergy, but in turn deployed this knowledge to erect their own system of authority by which they could monitor the behaviour of the clerical leadership, and the cultural act of monitoring was not elucidated along pre-programmed, immutable social categories of class and gender. Foucault's panoptical "gaze" was thus a reciprocal act. While Hudon's portrait of community conflict does not wholly expunge questions of power, her interpretation of the nineteenth-century clerisy suggests the need to visualize cultural authority as much more contested. The social and cultural messages articulated from the pulpits were not simply complied with but refashioned and renegotiated through grass-roots sanction.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Christine Hudon, "Beaucoup de bruits pour rien? Rumeurs, plaintes et scandales autour du clergé dans les paroisses gaspésiennes, 1766–1900", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 55, no. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 217–240; Lynne Marks, "Railing, Tattling, and General Rumour: Gossip, Gender, and Church Regulation in Upper Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 81, no. 3 (September 2000), pp. 380–402.

The control exerted by the laity was even stronger in English Canada where, in contrast to the state-funded parish typical of British Anglicanism, the clergy had to rely almost completely upon voluntary contributions, which had the effect that ministers had to alter their theology and rituals to suit their audience. This process of congregational negotiation was particularly evident in the early twentieth century when the combined desire for national expansion, coupled with increased interdenominational competition, forced both the Presbyterians and Methodists to eschew high theology in favour of a simpler evangelical emotiveness linked with a programme of social action to draw in the working classes, which they deemed to be a broad constituency who might help fund church-building.⁵⁷ To return to Valverde's cross-class notion of regulation, the actual ideas promulgated through the regulatory process were not solely fashioned by one social group, which may have a cross-class application; rather, the very notions of purity and social respectability articulated through temperance reform emerged from both middle-class and working-class imperatives, even though these might have been susceptible to different nuances in meaning. Social regulation as we posit it is fundamental to explaining social dynamics because it gives full weight to both the reality of religious conviction and the potential for agency among the dispossessed and because it takes religion seriously as a central component of working-class identities, both personal and social, without having to conceive it either as imposition or false consciousness. Indeed, in reference to the ways in which religious values and practices were appropriated by working-class groups, it would stimulate among social historians a new critical awareness of the ongoing need to engage in a consistent re-evaluation of Thompsonian notions of religion's function as a "chiliasm of despair".⁵⁸ Despite cavillings historians might have about demographic measures of church attendance (and it may well be that historians have underestimated working-class participation because they have counted the more difficult achievement of church membership, which entailed a personal financial obligation), the portrait presented by social historians both in Canada and in Britain is irrefutable insofar as it demonstrates high levels of identification with religious culture by working-class men and women. As recent work on personal autobiographical narratives indicates, religious thought was a central mediator for perspectives about patriarchy, class position, and notions of masculinity.⁵⁹

57 Christie and Gauvreau, "A Full-Orbed Christianity".

58 Palmer, "Historiographic Hassles", p. 134.

59 See, for English Canada, Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*; Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, "The World of the Common Man is Filled with Religious Fervour": The Labouring People of Winnipeg and the Persistence of Revivalism, 1914–1925", in Rawlyk, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience*, pp. 337–350. For Quebec, see Lucia Ferretti, *Entre voisins : la société paroissiale en milieu urbain, Saint-Pierre-Apôtre de Montréal, 1848–1930* (Montreal: Boréal, 1992). For the British historiography on this question, see Hugh McLeod, ed., *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996); for working-class personal religious identities, see Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*; Michael Watt, *The Dissenters*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

From our perspective, these identities are permeable and contingent upon the particular system of regulation or discipline in which the cultural actors are bound, for the practice and intent of social regulation and the ability of the institution to achieve its goal of conformity are variable in time and place. In New France, for example, under a regime with a single state church, as Ollivier Hubert shows in his prize-winning monograph *Sur la terre comme au ciel*, the system of social regulation put into place by clerics operated through the mechanism of church ritual, upon which was imprinted a specific model of social relations. Hubert concludes that, at this particular juncture, the Catholic Church was largely successful in creating a system of cultural conformity. Although English Canada has not been explored with the same intensity in the colonial period, the reality of religious pluralism precluded a similar kind of cultural dominance. Two converging forces, however, ensured that churches became a symbolic and actual centrepiece of the settlement process: on one hand, there was an Anglican vision of a theocratic polity being promulgated in Britain,⁶⁰ on the other, there existed tremendous grass-roots activity among both ordinary and assisted poor immigrants for the creation of churches in which they could participate in those rituals of baptism and marriage which provided a notion of comfort and order sought by recent immigrants while forming new communities.⁶¹ As the contribution of Jack Little to this collection effectively demonstrates, the demands of immigrant groups for religious services challenges the conventional story, repeated by two generations of religious historians since the seminal work of S. D. Clark, that structured, hierarchical religions like Anglicanism were ineffectual in colonial society in competing with individualistic “sectarian” religions like Methodism.⁶² Indeed, this groundswell among recently arrived British immigrants during the period after 1815 enabled churches possessing highly structured institutional polities and practices to function as both the expression and regulators of ethnic identity, a theme illustrated by Michael Gauvreau’s essay in this volume. Although much further study of this process needs to be undertaken, it is apparent from new research that religious conformity in Protestant-dominated communities was difficult to enforce simply within the church institution itself, since church attendance was not mandatory, and thus church leaders sought

60 Judith Fingard, *The Anglican Design in Loyalist Nova Scotia, 1783–1816* (London: SPCK, 1972); Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791–1854* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991); Christie, “ ‘In these Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion’ ”.

61 Wendy Cameron *et al.*, eds., *English Immigrant Voices: Labourers’ Letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000).

62 See S. D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948). For more recent restatements of the thesis, see Wesfall, *Two Worlds*; G. A. Rawlyk, *The Canada Fire: Radical Evangelicalism in British North America, 1760–1815* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994).

to co-opt the family as the mediator for the church's social ideology.⁶³ This same system of church and family interdependence in turn characterized the Catholic Church both in English and French Canada, particularly after the "devotional revolution" during the decades from 1840 to 1880, when it sought new modalities of social regulation in the face of increased religious pluralism in Quebec. This in turn also dictated that the Church become more affirmedly the instrument for constructing a new version of French-Canadian ethnic nationalism.⁶⁴

The third period of regulatory practice within mainstream church institutions occurred between 1880 and 1940, as the churches became less preoccupied with notions of social "order" and changed their focus towards notions of social reform. Church elites attempted to eviscerate older forms of community control through the local congregation by redefining their cultural authority around their ability to integrate and absorb nominally secular reform networks that were provincial and national in scope. What provided the impetus for these new regulatory forms was the realization that the socialization of children and young people into proper family and gender roles, a task once accomplished through a tight fit between the family and local church congregations, was becoming far more problematic, as during the 1880s access to land was becoming more restricted and young men and women were migrating further from their families in search of both education and employment.⁶⁵ The response of the Protestant churches was twofold: on one hand, they initiated the production of a substantial public discourse relating to home, family, youth, and marital roles designed directly to reach the individual without the mediation of the local community;⁶⁶ on the other, they

63 For an important preliminary statement of this relationship, see Nancy Christie, " 'Proper Government and Discipline': Family, Religion and the Discourse of Death", in Michael Gauvreau and Ollivier Hubert, eds., *Religion and Social Practice/ Religion et pratiques sociales* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming).

64 For the timing of the implementation of these new forms of social regulation, see Louis Rousseau, "À propos du 'réveil religieux' dans le Québec de XIX^e siècle : où se loge le vrai débat?", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 49, no. 2 (Fall 1995), pp. 223–245; Roberto Perin, "Elaborating a Public Culture: The Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Quebec", in Marguerite Van Die, ed., *Religion and Public Life in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 87–108; Hardy, *Contrôle social et mutation de la culture religieuse au Québec*. For an illustration of the way in which the threat of mixed marriages occasioned by religious pluralism altered the Catholic policy and the way in which it regulated marriage, see Gagnon, *Mariage et famille au temps de Papineau*. For the previous era in which rituals alone sufficed to order family relations, see Ollivier Hubert, "Ritual Performance and Parish Sociability: French-Canadian Catholic Families at Mass from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century", in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, pp. 37–76.

65 For the older pattern of the co-option of the family by the local congregation, see Christie, " 'Proper Government and Discipline' ". The breakdown of older educational and socio-economic patterns has been suggestively treated by Terry Crowley, "Rural Labour", in Craven, ed., *Labouring Lives*; Gordon A. Darroch, "Home and Away: Patterns of Residence, Schooling and Work among Children and Never-Married Young Adults, Canada, 1871 and 1901", *Journal of Family History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (April 2001), pp. 220–250.

66 The rise of this public discourse has been treated in Christie, "Introduction", in Christie, *Households of Faith*, pp. 15–17.

erected a panoply of institutions aimed at “saving” the threatened social constituencies of children, youth, and family. These included Sunday Schools, the YMCA, settlement houses, church young people’s clubs, national temperance societies, and, at the level of state practice, the child welfare movement and legislative reforms directed at regulating the work of women and children.⁶⁷ Although some historians might read this process as simple social control of young working-class men and women by middle-class elites,⁶⁸ this creation of new institutions reflected rather a form of “denominational control”. In a period of heightened competitive religious rivalry, Protestant churches sought to affirm their “national” character first and foremost by fostering closer connections between church, young people, and family formation, thus ensuring a constant and stable flow of new converts.⁶⁹ However, it was Quebec Catholicism, despite its reputation as a bastion of “traditionalism”, that was the innovator and appeared more “modern” than Protestantism in terms of regulatory practices, evolving institutional systems and public discourses directed at the family two or three decades before the Protestant churches. Catholicism’s advance was due in large part to a higher level of rural-urban migration, especially in the Montreal region, which dictated the need to formulate new strategies to ensure the incorporation of larger numbers of working-class people into associational life,⁷⁰ the need to compete in a climate of religious pluralism against a Protestant majority by creating charitable and educational institutions managed directly by the Catholic clergy⁷¹ (a trajectory whose social consequences have been pursued in the contribution of Lucia Ferretti and Chantal Bourassa in this collection), and the need to frame appropriate family roles for middle-class young men to inoculate them against modes of economic behaviour and political ideologies

67 For this Protestant institutional assault, see in particular Patricia Dirks, “Reinventing Christian Masculinity and Fatherhood: The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1900–1920”, in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, pp. 290–318; Kenneth L. Draper, “Redemptive Homes – Redeeming Choices: Saving the Social in Late-Victorian London, Ontario”, in Christie, ed., *Households of Faith*, pp. 264–289. For a broader exploration of this cultural transition at the urban level, see Kenneth L. Draper, “Religion Worthy of a Free People: Religious Practices and Discourses in London, Ontario, 1870–1890” (PhD dissertation, McMaster University, 2000). For the Protestant origins of the child welfare movement in Ontario, see Christie, *Engendering the State*; and, for the church’s articulation of a broader reform constituency through social service, see Christie and Gauvreau, “*A Full-Orbed Christianity*”, chap. 3.

68 This is the argument proffered by Carolyn Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

69 For a suggestive reading of this impetus to religious institution-building in nineteenth-century Britain, oriented to the concept of “denominational control” rather than class-centred “social control”, see Snell, *Rival Jerusalems*, p. 288. For Canada, this would suggest the need for much further exploration of Protestant Sunday Schools and new types of youth associations in the late nineteenth century. From this standpoint, it is not coincidental that these new organizational initiatives closely followed upon the creation of “national” church organizations among Methodists and Presbyterians in the 1870s and 1880s.

70 For the successful adaptation of Catholicism to the associational life of working-class neighbourhoods in Montreal, see Ferretti, *Entre voisins*.

deemed “unproductive”.⁷² By the latter means, Catholicism sought to affirm the bonds between the church and middle-class commercial and professional elites.

On one level, during this period the churches have been perceived to be “hegemonic” because their newly national bureaucracies could integrate a range of reform constituencies under the aegis of an activist Christianity, but it is necessary to point out that this period was characterized both by a proliferation of new sects, which broke away from the mainstream churches, and by rival discourses over the nature of religious authority proffered by groups that did not necessarily accept those articulated by clerical or middle-class elites (an argument advanced both by James Opp and Susan Neylan). Moreover, what might have appeared as hegemonic control was no more than a loose congeries of reformist groups, each of which appropriated the authority that Christianity conferred for its own ends. Where the cultural authority of the Edwardian churches derived from their ability to integrate the working class, Aboriginal peoples, women, and immigrants, the period subsequent to the Second World War witnessed a repositioning of the church vis-à-vis the state and a jettisoning of its working-class component. This in turn entailed a realignment of the church away from its nexus of social reform. Where previously the simple message of revivalism was intended as a means to integrate ordinary people into the culture of Christianity, the postwar period was characterized by a reassertion, in both Protestant and Catholic churches, of esoteric theological knowledge and an embracing of a middle-class elitism. At the same time, the focus of its social discourse shifted to the arena of the private, namely issues of marriage, sexuality, and divorce. Ideologies of regulation took on a similar complexion in Quebec at this time, in which Catholic Action groups, responding to the perceived breakdown of the older associational life of the urban parish, overtly promoted a style of religious practice that evinced uncompromising hostility to what they termed old-style devotional Christianity, and one which they saw as a form of feminized religion. In Quebec, more so than in English Canada, the fact of female piety became the central axis of secularization.⁷³

Social regulation, as this overview suggests, occurs through the interplay of different institutional alliances, and the social outlook underpinning it changes from generation to generation. As a regulatory institution, the church was the handmaiden of not one singular ideology; rather, Christian thought intersected both with the ideology of the *ancien régime* and with various

72 The transition in the 1850s and 1860s from regulation of male behaviour through the ritual of the local congregation to regulation through a specific public discourse has been suggestively explored by Ollivier Hubert, “L’invention de la marge comme invention de la famille : le cas du Québec rural, XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles”, in Christie and Gauvreau, eds., *Discordant Kin?*

73 Michael Gauvreau, *Catholicism Betrayed: Elites, Popular Religion, and the Cultural Origins of the Quiet Revolution, 1931–1971* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, forthcoming).

forms of liberalism. Because of this, the church is a key social agency through which to chart changes in social values and practices. Although historians of religion have examined the political positioning of churches, the ethnic impulse within Roman Catholicism, and the church as an instrument of class formation and expression, we need a more general framework by which we can explore how social power was organized and exerted, changing interpretations of the social order, and how the interplay between these altered, wider social patterns and institutional arrangements was renegotiated over time. By linking power, institutions, and culture, the concept of social regulation compels historians of religion against abstracting the church from the larger society; more importantly, because it is an analytical tool not connected to any particular ideological position, it can function more or less as a prism through which we can trace the constantly changing interplay between institutions and cultures across time. The mutually enhancing concepts of social regulation and cultural authority are especially appealing for those who wish to enrich the conversation between historians of English Canada and Quebec because, together, they circumvent frameworks such as “liberal” or “modern”, which tend to posit Quebec in terms of its otherness as anti-liberal or anti-modern in light of the strong institutional presence of Catholicism. One of the persistent obstacles facing English Canadian social history is the misplaced belief that we are *de facto* a more secular society largely because our founding myth, in the incarnations of Hartz, Lower, Careless, and McKay,⁷⁴ situates us in a socio-cultural stream defined in terms of post-Revolutionary doctrines of anti-institutional individualism. In turn, this interpretive proclivity posits religious institutions — and religious cultures more generally — as necessarily anti-modern because they are communitarian and because they are seen to levy a system of constraints upon the freedom of the individual. English Canadian historians need to assimilate the fact that, despite religious pluralism, our social ideologies were as much the creation of religious institutions as they were of supposedly secular institutions such as the state. Rather than positing that religious culture was marginal to the development of Canadian society, it is more necessary to begin from the premise that the Canadian polity was characterized by weak state structures, most notably a late development of public welfare programmes which remained tied to a mixed economy and continued to privilege private initiative.⁷⁵ In this scenario, English Canada

74 McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework,” p. 635, echoes Arthur Lower’s own 1940s liberal project to view Quebec as a priest-ridden, communitarian “other” outside the liberal project. This notion of the “two ways of life”, first coined by Lower, continues to pervade discussions among religious historians in English Canada. See, for example, Gregory Baum, “Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec”, in David Lyon and Marguerite Van Die, eds., *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 150.

75 See, most notably, James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Christie, *Engendering the State*; Nancy Christie, “Interrogating the Nuclear Family”, in Christie and Gauvreau, eds., *Discordant Kin?*.

was as much a clerical society as Quebec was a “priest-ridden” one. Revisionists who emerged in Quebec after the Quiet Revolution wished to view Quebec as similar in social formation to other Western societies; their desire to accentuate the “modern” elements in Quebec society led them to elaborate a socio-economic paradigm that largely eviscerated religion.⁷⁶

While we wish to follow a historiographical trajectory that conceives of Quebec and English Canada as undergoing similar social developments, we have more particularly been influenced by the new school of post-revisionism, which has repositioned the church as an important mechanism determining cultural discourse and the structuring of society. We urge that a similar exercise be undertaken for English Canada. Through the framework of social regulation, new interpretive questions can engage both English Canadian and Quebec historians in a fruitful exchange, and the practice of religious history can be firmly embedded in new departures in social and cultural history. The result will be a social history without borders, constrained neither by the essentialism of “limited identities” nor by a largely artificial and self-imposed avoidance of the terrain of political culture and practices, and the close study of the elaboration and substance of social ideologies. At its most rudimentary, the study of religious experience relies upon a broad conception of a pluralistic civil order, that overlapping realm of private and public which connects the individual to the state. In a society characterized by weak and late-developing state structures, the core producers of social ideologies were religious institutions; by virtue of this alone, it is imperative that they be granted a prominent analytical presence in the research agenda of the social historian.

⁷⁶ For a synthesis based upon this interpretive trajectory, see Paul-André Linteau *et al.*, *Histoire du Québec contemporain. Le Québec depuis 1930* (Montreal: Boréal, 1989).