

on one hand, and religious life on the other. Pettipas does a careful and impressive job of pointing out both the strength of resistance and the powerless and marginal position occupied by Aboriginal people as a result of the entire spectrum of coercive policies they contended with. She does not isolate her topic but effectively places it within the broader context of the history of Indian administration in Canada, including that of Indian education, which officials saw as a central weapon in their battle against the future strength of indigenous religious ceremonies. Pettipas also includes a chapter in which she draws attention to similarities in the colonial experiences of New Zealand and Australia.

Any criticisms I have of this book are minor. It might have been strengthened with an historiographical overview, displaying greater awareness of recent debates about the "agency" of colonized people, in which the author directly challenges other points of view, but Pettipas makes her points implicitly throughout the book. It is based mainly on the traditional documentary sources for these topics—government and church records, and other manuscript, archival sources. She effectively draws upon published Aboriginal authors Edward Ahenakew, Abel Watetch, and others but there are no oral interviews. This topic, which extends well into the present century, might have lent itself to this method of gathering information.

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Raymond Huel, ed. *Western Oblate Studies 3/Etudes Oblates de l'Ouest 3*. Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers, 1994. Pp. 158. Can\$20.00.

Religious history has never been in the mainstream of historical studies in Canada; nevertheless, confined to the periphery, it continues to survive and even prosper. As Douglas Owrain pointed out in his *Canadian History: A Reader's Guide*, the last few years have seen a revival in religious history. Likewise, John Schultz asserts in his *Writing about Canada* that the issue of secularization is one of the hottest debates in intellectual history. In French Canada, however, religious concerns have always occupied a more central position than in English Canada, especially after Catholicism became inextricably entangled with French-Canadian nationalism from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1960s. Indeed, until after the Second World War, those who wrote history in French Canada were often religious, such as the most prolific and widely read historian of the twentieth century in Quebec, abbé Lionel

Groulx. If historians were secular, such as François-Xavier Garneau, their work had to receive the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities before it became acceptable for general distribution and use in schooling. Unfortunately, because history was often written to promote the nation, historical writing about religion, religious institutions, and religious figures was subjective and often of dubious worth. It was simply hagiography which promoted the virtues of the "great men and women" of the glorious French-Canadian nation as it struggled for survival in a sea of English-speaking people. After the Second World War, the victimization theme continued but the heroes who symbolized the best of Catholicism were suddenly found wanting or were forgotten altogether.

Following the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, the place of religion within the French-Canadian context changed dramatically. Catholicism in its many guises has suffered terribly at the hands of the writers of "new history," those who glory in social history by applying the methods and theories of the social sciences. Historians taking a Marxist approach, such as Brian Young in his study of the Seminary of Montreal, see religious institutions as a bourgeois tool. Those wallowing in nationalist victimization, such as Michel Brunet, have gone so far as to accuse the Catholic Church of perpetuating the economic and political domination of French Canadians by their British oppressors. The blinkered writers of the "new history," such as Brian Young and John Dickinson in *A Short History of Quebec*, downplay the importance of Catholicism. Fortunately, there is also a more balanced approach being sought and taken. The late Marta Danylewycz's *Taking the Veil* is a good example of a well-researched account of the female religious orders being an alternative to marriage, motherhood, and spinsterhood for women of all classes in Quebec. The series of articles presented and edited by Raymond Huel in *Western Oblate Studies 3* exemplifies this more appropriate and balanced approach to religious history.

In his exceptionally well-informed introduction to this collection of essays and in his article calling for a reinterpretation of Western Oblate history, Huel outlines a blueprint for the study of religious history in the future. In a very perceptive and coherent analysis, he outlines the direction research on matters religious, and on the Oblates in particular, should follow. He understands, as do the individuals who contributed to this collection, the necessity to use the most recent methodologies in the humanities and social sciences. Missionary chronicles of the past, largely written by participants such as Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché (*Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique*), possessed two biases: Christianity, as represented by the Oblates, was the only legitimate form of spiritual expression and western European civilization was the model to be imitated by peoples being evangelized by the

Oblates. The purpose of these accounts was not necessarily to document missionary activity, but to awaken the interest of the Catholic population in missions, stimulate vocations, and raise money.

Huel explains that today scholars working on the Western Oblate History Project recognize the complexity of human activity, with spirituality but one element in what is termed religion. Since most modern writers who concern themselves with the Oblates are not religious but rather seculars, theological subjects have lost their lustre and the social, economic, and cultural activities of the Oblates and of the Aboriginal societies have taken centre stage. This situation allows the modern historian to study Oblate activity as involving human agents with varied motives and ambitions. Huel points out too that in the past, the resistance of the Native community to the Christian message was interpreted as another providential test of the mettle of the Oblates, rather than a reaction natural for a people with a religion of their own. Also, with the increased interest in women's history in the past twenty-five years, gender has become a focus in religious history in both English- and French-speaking Canada. Studies by Ruth Brouwer on Presbyterian women in the Indian missions and Rosemary Gagan on Canadian Methodist women missionaries in Canada and the Orient complement work done by Danylewycz on gender-oriented religious topics in French Canada. The presence of nuns in missions, schools, and hospitals sometimes produced gender conflict which was exacerbated by jurisdictional disputes. Huel rightly urges a greater contextual analysis by religious historians.

In his critical introductory essay, Huel identifies the handicaps of traditional Oblate accounts of their activities in the Canadian North West and of the cultural and religious biases reflected in the period in which they were written. He also suggests that we must move beyond the hagiographical stage of writing, such as focussing on the altruistic endeavour within an idealistic Christian community. Understanding that Christianity is at the core of western European civilization, Huel realizes that historians must take account of the values and beliefs of the western European missionaries who came to the North West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in an attempt to impose their values on peoples of a differing civilization with a differing belief system and mental world. Huel deserves much credit for seeking out individuals with this perspective, who contributed to making this book a guide for historians of religion in the modern age.

One of the new approaches to the past is presented by Anne-Hélène Kerbirou, who analyses an extensive collection of photographs of Aboriginal peoples in various Oblate archives. Although these photographs, some of which should have been reproduced in this volume, are an important source of information about the Aboriginal people, they explain more about the Oblates

who took the photos than the individuals photographed. They represent a will to capture traces of things the Oblates believed merited being preserved. Kerbirou explains how they reveal the Oblate social, cultural, and religious views, which were those of Europeans in America. These photographs in the various Oblate collections, twenty thousand in all, visually expose the various stages in colonization of the West and the sociological phenomenon of the observation-confrontation of two cultures.

Two other articles examine the relationship between the Oblates and different female religious orders. In her study written in French, Claude Roberto discovered that harmony prevailed between the Oblates and female religious communities such as the Filles de Jésus and the Soeurs de l'Assomption who ran Native schools. On the other hand, Sister Margaret McGovern found the opposite; the Sisters of Providence and the Oblates fought an ongoing battle for control of education in schools over which they shared jurisdiction. This rivalry became more pronounced when other Christian denominations were involved. David Leonard explores how this theme played out in the Peace River Country as the Oblates vied with the Anglican missionaries for souls. Based on their different methods of propagating the Gospel, Leonard concludes that the Anglicans were theologically weak. The "fair and honourable competition" gradually lessened as both groups faced the increasing needs of newly arrived parishioners of western European background.

This informative collection of essays also includes a feminist perspective by Diane Payment. Using oral history and writing in French, she reconstructs the relations between the Catholic clergy and Métis women. The fact that the clergy came out of the western European paternalistic tradition and that these women accepted those social values and norms is hardly surprising. Like all women, they were marginalized within the Church and expected to endure their lot in life, raise large families, and not become involved in political and social debate. In treating the Métis women alone, however, Payment leaves the impression that they were seen in a unique way by the church, a point she has failed to prove.

Although this book is bilingual, presenting articles in the language used by the authors at the third symposium on the history of the Oblates in western and northern Canada held at the Faculté Saint-Jean in Edmonton in 1993, Huel provides an excellent summary of each for the unilingual reader, whether French or English. Huel's introductory essay Huel creates a yardstick by which other such publications will be measured in the future.

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