

Millwood, N.Y.: Associated Faculty Press. 1985. Pp. viii, 215. \$22.95.

Generations of Canadians have thrilled to stories of the Underground Railroad, those romantic tales of escape and pursuit that described the flight from American bondage to freedom at the Canadian border. The notion that Canada was thus morally distinguished from the United States became a part of the national myth of racial enlightenment, reinforced by the brutalities accompanying the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, which seemed to demonstrate that Americans still had not caught up with Canadians. Unfortunately, the thrilling adventures always ended at the border, with the grateful slaves praising God and Queen Victoria. The assumption was that they went on to lives of freedom and equality in their "promised land," that Canada therefore had no "racial problem" to confront.

In the past fifteen years a substantial literature has arisen to challenge those comfortable assumptions. That the black immigrants suffered from social ostracism, economic disadvantage, and institutional segregation has been increasingly well documented. Nineteenth-century Canadians generally shared the more common racial attitudes of their American neighbors, and, though constrained by English law from the most overt practices, they indulged in personally discriminatory acts and harbored prejudicial ideologies comparable to those of the northern United States. No grounds exist for moral superiority; on the contrary, it is becoming recognized that the old myths have been a barrier to any realistic assessment of the situation of blacks in Canada.

Jason H. Silverman has produced a convenient and readable account of Upper Canadian racism between 1800 and 1865. His conclusions are consistent with the current state of knowledge. Silverman leaves untouched some issues, raised in the recent literature, that might have furthered the comparative objective announced in the preface. Several statistical analyses, for example, have shown that Canada did offer measurable advantages to the fugitives. Property ownership, wages, and the range of available employment were greater north of the border, and to examine the reasons for this might contribute to an understanding of comparative race relations. Despite a sympathetic description of black churches, schools, and newspapers, this book displays an apparent willingness to accept white observers' accounts of black defects and to explain the growth of prejudice as a reaction to the mistakes and failures of the blacks themselves. Such representations were symptomatic of prevailing white attitudes, not of black behavior, and they cannot explain the origins of Canadian racism. Much more

comparative work remains to be done before those origins can be traced.

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RAMSAY COOK. *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1985. Pp. x, 291. Cloth \$32.50, paper \$15.95.

"Scepticism is becoming more general and is protean in its adaptability to circumstance," wrote an anxious Protestant minister in 1880 (p. 41). His anxiety dramatized a "crisis of belief" that beset Canadian Christianity in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The modernism that had also shaken Victorian faith in Britain and the United States had two sources. The Darwinian revolution and historical criticism, each a powerful intellectual force, caused Canadians to question their Christianity, a process that was the more disconcerting because religion had been one of the foundations of nineteenth-century optimism. In this fine book Ramsay Cook examines the disintegration of Victorian complacency and elaborates the implications of the process for the emergence of modern Canadian society.

The response of Canadian Protestantism to modernism was not monolithic. Sir William Dawson elaborated a learned critique of Darwin, and J. W. Bengough satirized historical criticism as self-indulgent pedantry. An ultimately more influential body of opinion in the churches determined, however, that the scientific and historical challenges to Christianity must be confronted in a direct and pragmatic fashion. "The best apology for our faith," the Methodist Conference of 1892 insisted, "is not the scholarly treatise by the learned professor, but the consistent life which mirrors forth the life of Christ" (p. 229). The liberals believed that Christianity would be revitalized as an effective, modern faith "by translating Christianity into a message of social reform and good citizenship" (p. 230). Cook argues with impeccable logic that this substitution of sociology for theology resulted in the secularization of society. His theme is that the crusade of the Christian reformers produced not the kingdom of God on earth but, ironically, the secular city.

Anyone who has read late Victorian reform journals must be struck by the plethora of causes advocated in their pages. Despite the range and complexity of the panaceas, all reformers, except stringent materialists, appear to have been united by a conviction that modern society could be redeemed. Cook observes that reformers frequently used the term "regeneration" to describe their crusades, and the organic metaphor of rebirth is a constant in the

book. By elaborating their optimism, Cook integrates the causes of late nineteenth-century reformers within a framework of Christian faith.

Such integration is a useful construct, because individual regenerators were as varied and complex as their causes. Cook's taxonomy provides new insights into the thought and work of a dozen more or less prominent late nineteenth-century reformers. Goldwin Smith's search for order is better understood through an implicit comparison with the work of Phillips Thompson; similarly, Thompson's liberal reformism takes on a new dimension when juxtaposed to the causes of the Sage of the Grange. Cook has explored the sources of the regenerators' thought through exhaustive research. The result is not only a better understanding of its content but also a greater appreciation of its range. Indeed, one of the praiseworthy characteristics of this book is its sensitivity. Some of the regenerators were, in their thought, extreme, if not eccentric. Yet Cook never indulges in ridicule nor resorts to easy comic relief. Rather, throughout the book he manifests both sympathy and respect for his subjects; in this regard, Cook's own background as a son of the manse asserts itself in an admirable way.

MacKenzie King, notorious eccentric, linked the world of the regenerators with modern Canadian society. In what is probably the book's best chapter Cook elaborates King's intellectual and spiritual growth from his undergraduate days to the publication of *Industry and Humanity* (1918). Cook argues persuasively that King turned to political economy as the best vehicle by which his faith could be applied to modern society. King was the very epitome of the regenerator who contributed to the secularization of twentieth-century Canada. Cook describes *Industry and Humanity* as a "sermon preached by a socially conscious, but certainly not radical, liberal Presbyterian" (p. 208); it is ironic that an essentially religious tract became the blueprint for a social security system that would make the church obsolete.

That such an important problem has, until now, been insufficiently explored is remarkable. Cook's first-rate book fills the gap, and to the extent that any book can be described as definitive, this one is.

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RONALD RUDIN. *Banking en français: The French Banks of Quebec, 1835-1935*. (Social History of Canada, number 38.) Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1985. Pp. xiv, 188. Cloth \$20.00, paper \$9.95.

Canadian banking historiography is woefully weak. Beyond a surfeit of generally uncritical multivolume

commissioned histories, the literature is limited to several useful summaries of the financial sector, a sprinkling of specialized scholarly articles, and a few unpublished theses. In part, this neglect reflects the lack of adequate archival material. Given its long history of mergers and centralization, Canadian banking has relatively few current corporate owners, and they have often destroyed, pruned, or simply failed to make available records under their control. In part, too, this lacuna reflects the underdevelopment of Canadian business history. In an era and discipline where subspecialties proliferate, it is rather remarkable that Canada boasts no business or even economic history journal, is home to no business history associations, and has held only one conference specifically by and for business historians.

If our understanding of general Canadian banking history is weak, our knowledge of business and banking *en français* in Quebec is virtually nonexistent. Ronald Rudin's book is the first scholarly study of French-Canadian activity in a complete sector of the economy. In the absence of such investigation, long-held views of French speakers as disinterested in business, poor risk takers, and, because of some vaguely defined cultural traits, ill suited for capitalist endeavor, have dominated popular and much scholarly thinking.

It is against this background that Rudin's contribution must be put. His succinct study of the general activity of the nine French banks in operation between 1835 and 1925, based as it is on a careful use of published government statistical series, census data, and the holdings of private bank archives, demonstrates that the smaller French-Canadian banks operated in ways virtually indistinguishable from their larger English-Canadian counterparts. The occupational background of directors, the banks' profitability, and the institutions' general structure of assets and liabilities had more to do with size than language of operation. Presumably, too, the incidence of managerial incompetence and dishonesty uncovered by Rudin was paralleled in the English-Canadian sector, although Rudin is quiet on this point.

The operation of French- and English-Canadian banks differed in only one key area: French-Canadian banks concentrated on the French-speaking market and English-Canadian banks focused on the English-speaking sector for the collection of savings deposits and the selling of shares. This market delineation functioned as a two-edged sword. It provided the small French banks a "solid clientele" with which to resist the predatory activities of Canada's large English banks at the turn of the century. Such market specialization, however, also restricted the French banks to