

CSCH President's Address 2013

**Trial Balloons and Other Adventures with Clio:
John Sargent Moir, Catholic-Protestant Relations,
and the Writing of Canadian Religious History**

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John Moir was clearly dejected. It was the early spring, 1986, and his teaching career at the University of Toronto was winding towards a possible early retirement. He had planned a big book, perhaps one that would bring together many of the strands of research and writing that had marked nearly forty years of his dance with Clio, the muse of History. The new project was to be a history of Protestant-Roman Catholic relations in Canada. He had sought experts from both English and French Canada to support his application for a major research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. He had confided in me that although this would put his stamp on the question, it was yet another of what he called the trial balloons that marked his career in writing Canadian church history. Moir referred to himself, in jest, as a garden variety historian who was merely sending up a series of trial balloons on everything from Canadian Presbyterianism, church-state relations, education, and Biblical criticism, that were launched to allow colleagues and students to take aim at them with their own scholarship and try either to let them fly or pop them down. When the news arrived in this particular spring, SSHRC's negative decision shot the *magnum opus* balloon out of Moir's hands before he had a chance to launch it. While Moir may have taken SSHRC's

Historical Papers 2013: Canadian Society of Church History

lack of interest in his project as a rejection of his scholarship, what lay behind the decision not to grant the funds may have resided deeper in historiographical and social changes in a Canadian academy and nation that had left him behind.

In this presidential address I will explore John Moir's work on Catholic-Protestant relations and the questions that he framed. Admittedly there are many facets of Moir's scholarship and academic career which could be explored – the particularism versus European character of Canadian churches, the Canadianization of Christianity, the churches and nation-building, or denominational history, particularly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada – but Moir's influence on the writing of church history in Canada, within these fields, is far too vast for one paper. Nevertheless, within each of these areas, Moir often came back to a common theme echoed by George M. Grant, whom he often quoted on the subject: "Even in the cities, where there is the closest association of Protestant and Romanist in commercial, industrial, and political life, the two currents of religious life flow side-by-side as distinct from each other as the St. Lawrence and the Ottawa after their conjunction. But the rivers do eventually blend into one. The two currents of religious life do not."¹ Implicit in Moir's work were questions such as: how could issues of loyalty and nation building bring Christian churches closer together? Did Canadianization invariably lead to greater ecumenical understanding? To what extent did language trump religion as a focus of identity in Canada? How far did continued European influences mitigate against greater communion between Protestants and Roman Catholics? These questions played heavily in Moir's understanding of Protestant-Catholic relations in Canada, and these queries were the product of both his historical training and the "signs of the times" of the Canada in which he lived.

John Moir was born in Toronto on 14 February 1926 and grew up in Parkdale, the son of Richard and Hazel Moir. In 1948, when he completed his BA from Victoria College in the University of Toronto's very demanding Honours History program, his professors urged him to continue his studies at the graduate level. Under the watchful eye of the constitutional historian Chester Martin, John delved into an area of Canadian history to which few professional historians had given much consideration: the history of the Christian churches in Canada. Of course, church histories had been written, but generally they were commissioned by the churches themselves, were self-laudatory, and were written by clergy or dedicated (and sometimes uncritical) laymen. John wrote an MA

thesis on the *Christian Guardian*, a Methodist weekly and one of Protestant Canada's premier denominational newspapers. Although at the time he was an active member in the United Church, John wrote the history with all of the critical and analytic skills he had gleaned from his training at the University of Toronto. He had broken new ground and the senior members of the Department recognized that fact.

John did not seem to notice, however, how innovative he had actually been in pursuing church history in Canada in this way. As a doctoral student, Moir laboured under the supervision of the eminent Canadian historian Donald Creighton, who insisted that Moir continue pursuing Canadian religious history – an open field as far as the elder historian was concerned. John's resulting dissertation, on the relationship between the churches and the state in Canada West, set him on the road to being one of Canada's pioneer historians of its own religious history – written from the perspective of the professional historian. Published in 1959, *Church and State in Canada West* was the first of many of John's books, articles, and collections that explored the development of Christian churches in pre-Confederation Canada, the history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the survival of the Huguenots in Catholic New France, the development of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, the history of Biblical criticism in Canada, and aspects of the life of nearly every Protestant denomination in the county, in addition to editing of the correspondence of Presbyterian missionaries in eastern Canada and the documents of a Roman Catholic Oblate missionary in western Canada. His work was ecumenical, balanced, well researched, and open to new questions and pathways for further exploration.²

Moir's work bore the influence of Creighton, whether he admitted it or not. Uncomfortable with jargon, paradigms, and models constructed by more social scientific historians, Moir preferred the history that was written as the interplay between character and circumstance, in the fashion of his mentor. Each of Moir's books bore the imprint of both historical movements and the significant persons who contributed to them: John Strachan, Egerton Ryerson, Charles Inglis, Joseph-Octave Plessis, James MacGregor, J.G. Shearer, Armand de Charbonnel, and T.T. Shields. He was a historian of his generation who incorporated A.R.M. Lower's ideas of the two solitudes of Canadian life, Creighton's Laurentian thesis of nation building from the St. Lawrence corridor outwards, J.M.S. Careless' postulations that metropolitan areas had broad hinterlands that were economically, politically, and socially dependent upon them, and Herbert

Butterfield's Whig sense of a progressive march of constitutional democracy under the freedom accorded by the British crown. Ideas of loyalty, identity, mission, and sectarianism became central themes in Moir's writing of church history in Canada. He was also typical of his generation in that he wrote about men and politics, with little acknowledgement of emerging studies of gender and class.

Moir's thinking was also influenced by the professional company that he kept. In 1960 a number of church historians met at Victoria College, University of Toronto, for the inaugural meeting of the Canadian Society of Church History (CSCH). The CSCH became a means for those interested in the history of Christian churches, regardless of denominational affiliation, to meet and engage each other on matters of common scholarly interest. The Society was predominantly male, with a good smattering of clergy, and ecumenical. When reflecting on the evolution of the CSCH over its first twenty years in 1979, Moir was not entirely accurate when he characterized the society as "hitherto largely by Protestants, for Protestants and about Protestants."³ While the majority of Moir's colleagues did meet that description, and while for period of time the CSCH has reflected this, the early years were more diverse than they might appear at first glance. Its first President, H.H. Walsh, was a Protestant who specialized in the Catholics of New France. Catholic participants in the early years of the CSCH included Resurrectionist priest George Boyle; Father J.E. Giguere; Jacques Monet, SJ; James McConica, CSB; Ambrose Raftis, CSB; Dr. Gregory Baum; Dr. Pierre Latellier; and Dr. Timothy Suttor. The CSCH met on its own within the religious colleges of southern Ontario – Victoria, Wycliffe, and St. Michael's College, McMaster – until its formal affiliation with the Learned, sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Federation. Each spring, attendees were treated to papers from both Protestant and Catholic scholars, and, true to form, John Moir delivered his first paper to the Society, in 1962, exploring sectarianism in the Canadian churches, observing the differences between Canada and the United States in terms of strong Protestant affiliation to mainline churches, the formidable presence of the "other" in French Canadian Catholicism, and the relative weakness and obscurity of Canadian sects. Moir's research was essentially a response to the recently published works of Ernst Troeltsch and Richard Niebhu.⁴ After serving as treasurer and secretary, Moir eventually became President of the CSCH in 1970.

In these early years of his career John Moir was preoccupied with

teaching, writing, and his ever-growing family (eventually eight children). In 1956, Moir accepted an assistant professorship at the fledgling Carleton University in Ottawa, where he taught for ten years until an old colleague from Toronto, Professor J.M.S. Careless, lured him back to the University of Toronto and its new Scarborough campus, in 1965. Moir remained at Scarborough (now UTSC) until his retirement in 1989. As a teacher of history, John Moir used his skill as a researcher and writer to produce several textbooks and edit collections of documents; he was a professor who believed that teaching and research could be wed effectively to the benefit of both the professor and the student. His graduate students respected his intellect and his dedication to his craft and vocation and appreciated his frank criticism. Most of all they loved his humanity – the way in which he treated students as whole persons, with complicated and multifaceted lives. He maintained a full teaching load of graduate and undergraduate courses and the supervision of numerous graduate students at the Department of History at the University of Toronto, the Toronto School of Theology, the Centre for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He also served a term as President of the Ontario Historical Society and was a co-founder of the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History (a church to which he converted in 1972); he was an active member in the Canadian Catholic Historical Association and the Canadian Historical Association. John was the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity from Presbyterian College (Montreal), the George E. Clerk Medal (1991) from the Canadian Catholic Historical Association, and the Sesquicentennial Medallion from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto.

The Clerk Award and the Toronto Archdiocesan Medallion signalled the significance of Moir's ongoing interest in the relations between Canada's Protestants and Roman Catholics, which were the warp and woof of Canadian religious life until the 1960s. Although born and raised a Protestant, he had many Catholic relatives and later colleagues with whom he engaged in friendly but spirited discussion about things religious. Father James McGivern, SJ, and Professor Pierre Savard of the University of Ottawa were both lifelong collaborators and friends. Moir himself owned a copy of St. Jerome's Vulgate that he used, in its original Latin text, while attending Sunday services at Markham's Presbyterian Church. His fascination with things Catholic, its minority status, how it engaged Canadian politics, addressed issues of loyalty to the crown, or confronted Protestant neighbours were themes he took up in several essays and two

of his most significant monographs – *The Church in The British Era* and *Church and State in Canada West*. Similarly, these same themes appeared throughout his collections of edited documents and in his special collection, *Church and Society*, commissioned by the Archdiocese of Toronto in preparation for its 150th anniversary celebrations.⁵

It was late in his career when Moir finally articulated his frameworks for the discussion of Catholic-Protestant relations within Canadian historiography. For a conference commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Toronto, he penned an essay that provided a chronology that periodized Protestant-Catholic relations in Canada and also categorized the type of scholarship that was generally at play in the field. His periods unconsciously bore the perspective of a scholar who was steeped in the history of central Canada, since events in both Atlantic Canada and the prairie west did not fit neatly into the periods described. Moir regarded the colonial period up to about the mid-1840s as a period of official and popular toleration between Christians; this was followed by a period of sectarian activity and sometimes violence lasting until after the Second World War; finally, the late twentieth century was marked by a period of peaceful co-existence, particularly in the post-Vatican II period which ushered in a more ecumenical age. Moir was cautious, however, about the limitations of the periods, given the nature of how historians viewed the question of Protestant-Catholic relations as a totality. He clearly demarcated three approaches that had characterized how the question had been explored by his colleagues and peers: there were those who had seen Protestant-Catholic relations through a largely confrontational lens, with periods of breathing space between skirmishes; there were others of an irenic or ecumenical school – perhaps like himself – who uncovered positive relationships between the groups over the course of Canadian history, despite more vocal public testimony to the mutual antagonism between Protestant denominations and Catholicism; finally, there was a more recent sceptical school that tended to see less of a pattern to Protestant-Catholic relations and more a certain degree of shallowness in the public rapprochement between the two groups, suggesting a creeping indifference at a time, notably the late-twentieth century, when religion in Canada was becoming increasingly privatized.⁶

Where Moir situated himself within these broad categories is a little harder to ascertain. Anyone reading his first book, *Church and State and Canada West*, would assume that he was squarely in the confrontational school, particularly after reading his lively section on the foundation of

separate schools in what is now Ontario. In Moir's account, the battle lines were firmly drawn between the Irish Catholic immigrants, largely identified (though incorrectly) as the victims of the Famine, allied with French Canadian Catholic ultramontanes, squaring off against advocates of one common school system as espoused by the Methodist Superintendent of Education, Egerton Ryerson, or the amalgam of voluntarists, anti-Erastians, French Canadian anti-clericals, and Victorian liberals who rallied about the banners of George Brown's Clear Grits or A.A. Dorion's *Parti Rouge*. While perhaps, in his formative period as a writer, Moir appeared to have adopted the confrontationalist approach, his chosen period (the 1850s and 1860s), his place of action (the united province of Canada), and the characters engaged in these circumstances (Armand de Charbonnel, Egerton Ryerson, George Brown) probably dictated how the analysis of the origins of Ontario's separate Catholic schools would unfold.

Moir seemed well aware of these traps – the simplistic binaries that had ensnared historians before him. In a later work, *The Church in the British Era* (1970), Moir was quick to demonstrate that the Canadians of the 1850s were not as easily pigeonholed as some scholars had suspected:

The “fiery fifties” witnessed a triple polarization of forces within Canada—denominationalism opposing the new secular creed of liberal nationalism, Protestant opposing Catholic, and English opposing French. In part these tensions reflected an inherent ambiguity of the union – two “races,” two ways of life, and two main branches of the Christian Church had been forced to reside together in a single state because of Durham's recommendations. Such a general characterization is admittedly a simplification of the complex interaction of many social, economic, political, and religious forces, for neither English nor French, Protestant nor Catholic, nor even particular denominations, thought, acted, reacted or voted *en bloc*. Nevertheless the picture of a community wracked by confrontations in virtually every aspect of life remains a valid one.⁷

With these early writings, Moir had provided an important corrective to A.R.M. Lower's “Two Ways of Life,” a seminal essay published in 1943 on Canada's two solitudes – English Protestants and French Catholics – living out separate lives akin to the comments made in Lord Durham's *Report* about two nations warring in the bosom of a single state.⁸ Moir, however, acknowledged the struggle, but exposed battle lines, generals,

and “troops” that were less easy to stereotype.

As a whole, Moir’s writing revealed a far more irenic approach to Protestant-Catholic relations, perhaps conditioned by his reading of the complexity of the engagement of character and circumstance in the colonial period. His penchant to see the positive in sectarian relations certainly became evident in one of his most valuable contributions to Canadian scholarship, *The Church in the British Era*, the middle volume of Ryerson Press’s valiant effort to chronicle the history of Christianity in Canada, featuring a volume on New France by H.H. “Nick” Walsh and a reprinted volume on modern Canada by John Webster Grant. In the course of exploring religious relations in British North America after 1760, Moir suggested the inevitable clash between the European principle of *cuius regio, huius religio* really never materialized in the British conquered territories which now constitute Ontario and Quebec. What should have been, by European standards, a time when the British conquerors might attempt to convert the local Roman Catholic majority to the king’s faith, became a period when character appeared to intervene to redirect circumstances. Moir discovered leaders on each side of the religious divide who made compromises and chose to work together for the greater good, rather than taking the newly acquired British territories through protracted sectarian struggles and potential religious warfare.

In the process of unpacking the first half century after the conquest, Moir focused on the Catholic-Protestant coexistence as stabilized by the cooperative and, at times, genial relations between Governor James Murray and Bishop Jean-Olivier Briand and, later, Governor Sir Guy Carleton (Lord Dorchester), Briand, and his successor Bishop Joseph-Octave Plessis. Collectively these men affected compromises that assured the loyalty of the Catholic clergy to the British crown and thereby the stability of the colonies in the face of ongoing troubles in what became the United States. In exchange for their loyalty to the state, Plessis and Briand won concessions from the crown such as the Quebec Act, in 1774, which secured toleration and freedom of worship for Catholics in the old province of Quebec. Unlike in Britain itself and other imperial territories, Catholics in Canada would be exempt from the penal laws and test acts; they could vote, stand for public office, and aspire to the liberal professions. On-going loyalty was professed by Plessis, who issued a *mandement* in support of the British defence of Canada in 1812. Plessis, who was later rewarded with a salary from the crown and the unofficial title of archbishop, provided for Moir the image of how Catholic-Protestant relations

“might” be in Canada. In Moir’s writing, Plessis appeared as the model bishop, devout in his religious principles, attendant to the faithful with whom he was entrusted, loyal to the crown, and co-operative in his relationships with the ruling Protestant elites. Plessis joined John Strachan, Egerton Ryerson, Charles Inglis, and James MacGregor as one of the heroic Christian personalities of *Church in the British Era*.

Moir often used the Plessis/Briand model as a framework by which he could evaluate denominational relations in other colonies at other times. In Nova Scotia, Father Edmund Burke of Halifax, later Bishop Burke, is one such character, who was loyal both to his church and to his monarch. Burke might have had theological dust ups with local Protestant leaders over matters of doctrine, but at an official level he was one in whom Lieutenant Governor Dalhousie could have complete confidence. Through this confidence and cooperation, concessions in education and church building were conceded by the state. Similarly, in Upper Canada, Scots emigrant Alexander Macdonell, the first Bishop of Upper Canada, and Nova Scotia-born Michael Power, the first Bishop of Toronto, are depicted very much in the Plessis “loyalist” mode. Macdonell’s loyalty was unquestioned; Moir is clear about the Scotsman’s raising of the first Catholic regiment in the British Empire since the Reformation, his tireless efforts on behalf of the Tory and ministerial elite of the colony (including John Strachan), his personal leadership of the defence of the eastern sections of the colony in the War of 1812, and the rapprochement achieved by the bishop and the Orange Order in advance of the “loyalty election of 1836.”

For his own part, Michael Power, the first Roman Catholic bishop of Toronto (1841-7) became another model of religious leadership for Moir. Born in Halifax, in 1804, Power was educated first by the ultra loyal Father Edmund Burke and then sent for religious formation and Holy Orders to Montreal and Quebec City. When appointed to the newly created see of Western Upper Canada, soon to be renamed Toronto, he immediately engaged in a co-operative and positive relationship with the governing elites of the United Province of Canada and became friends with the Methodist luminary Egerton Ryerson and the Anglican Bishop John Strachan, who quickly put to rest to his concern that two persons could not hold title to the same See according to apostolic tradition. Moir once again saw the leadership offered by these three men as providing a positive example of how the province’s principal Christian denominations could co-exist, co-operate, and profess loyalty to a common crown. In

1846 Ryerson appointed Power to the first School Board for Canada West's Common or public Schools, which consisted of clerical and lay representatives of all the major Christian churches; Moir appears to delight in the fact that this ecumenical body elected Power its first chair. For Moir this was more than just a historical exercise in peaceful co-existence between churches; it was a foundational argument in the claim that separate schools in Ontario were not necessarily Catholic policy at the outset of educational reform in the province. Power's untimely death from typhus in 1847 shocked the community and brings forth this near panegyric from Moir: "There can be no doubt that this tragic loss of an enlightened educationalist injuriously affected the future course of elementary education in the province. In fact Bishop Power's co-operation with Ryerson in the scheme of national education seems to have been an embarrassment to the extreme advocates of Roman Catholic separate schools ever since."⁹

It might be argued that Moir's somewhat irenic approach to Catholic-Protestant relations was most likely conditioned by the fact that he chose to focus much of his early scholarship on the elites of the pre-Confederation period, prior to the sectarian touchstones that marked the later nineteenth century: the Fenian raids, the two Riel uprisings, the Equal Right Association, the Jesuits Estates controversy, the conscription election of 1917, and the rise of the KKK in Saskatchewan in the 1920s and subsequent anti-Catholic legislation in that province. Yet there is more to Moir's approach to Catholic-Protestant relations in Canadian history than just timing. When the aforementioned "fiery fifties" became a showcase of sectarian rhetoric and violence, Moir did not deny the polarization that occurred in colonies where once toleration and compromise were normative. Reading between the lines, Moir suggests that foreign influences were principally at the root of sectarianism. In the mid-nineteenth century, British and European seeds of discontent, when planted in Canada, germinated into denominational division and discord. Seeds of imported discontent included disruption of the Presbyterian Church of 1843, the growth of modern Biblical criticism in the German universities, Tractarianism in the United Kingdom, and Ultramontanism in Rome and France. What is implied in Moir's writing is that these foreign troubles found a welcome home in some Canadian communities, thereby destroying the equilibrium that had been established in an earlier period by denominations and between churches and the state. Moir's writing latched on to themes of Canadian politics and religion as being

expressions of the art of compromise, of which Confederation itself was a fitting example. While not necessarily an advocate of Canadian exceptionalism, Moir did often quote a rhyme from the 1830s that singled out the differences between Canada and the United States, when it came to denominational relations:

Where sacreligious [sic] hands profane
Religion's Consecrated fane
The Convent's smoking ruins stain
A soil unblessed like Canada.¹⁰

In one of his last essays on Protestant-Catholic relations, written in 1991 for the *Gathering Place* anthology, Moir saw Toronto's Belfast image as being rooted not so much in animosities between Catholic and Protestant citizens in that city, but rather as a reflection of the Protestant reaction against papalism and the political Catholicism that went with it. In other words, Catholics might not be the enemy, but foreign Ultramontanism certainly was.¹¹

Time and time again, Moir singled out the European Ultramontane movement and the reestablishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the United Kingdom as potentially the worst disruptive force to denominational relations in Canada's history. The work of Bishop Frobin-Janson in his preaching tours of Quebec in the 1830s, provided toxic fuel for the Ultramontane fire that soon caught during the episcopates of Jean-Jacques Lartigue and Ignace Bourget of Montreal. As an ideology, Moir viewed Ultramontanism as becoming embedded in a class of French Canadian politicians who disrupted the political life of the united province of Canada; the same ideology eventually showed itself among the growing Irish population, which Moir traced (albeit erroneously) to the Great Famine. Just as Plessis, Briand, Burke, and Power personified a Catholicism that could work in a co-operative ethos with Protestants such as Carleton, Dalhousie, Strachan, and Ryerson, Moir uncovered a collection of Canadian Ultramontanes who were uncompromising advocates of Catholicism, its relationship to the state, its role in education, and its place in the moral life of the nation. In addition, on the other side of the denominational fence, he focused on some of the more vociferous voluntarist Protestant antagonists to the Canadian form of "papal aggression": George Brown of the *Globe*, Joseph Howe, and the Reverend Joseph Wild.

Power's successor in Toronto, Comte Armand de Charbonnel, at times appeared to be Moir's "goat" as relations between the churches soured and disintegrated in the 1850s. Charbonnel, a French-born aristocrat and second Roman Catholic bishop of Toronto, is portrayed as a European who imported a virulent strain of Ultramontanism to Canada and who was met with force in the political arena by Egerton Ryerson and George Brown. Moir did not mince words about what lay at the root of sectarian bitterness in central Canada. With evident sympathy for the Methodist leader, Moir used Ryerson's own words, unqualified, to identify the evil: "To this latest unequivocal demand [regarding separate Catholic schools], a demand which dominates the issue for the remainder of the Union, Ryerson replied that it originated in the "new class of ideas and feelings" which de Charbonnel had introduced from Europe."¹² Moir was equally pointed in his identification of the Protestant foil in the sectarian breakdown. George Brown, ardent Free Kirk Presbyterian, anti-Erastian, and Victorian liberal, "took up a fiery cross which ultimately divided the province into two hostile armed camps, Roman Catholic versus Protestant. A century has passed but the heather is still burning, or at least smouldering."¹³

While the burning heather analogy suggests a century of sectarian struggle between the 1850s and when Moir was writing in 1959, his eventual reading of the period was far less incendiary. As he continued to write over the next twenty-five years, other themes in his writing converge with his interest in Catholic-Protestant relations and may very well modify what appears to be a more confrontational approach to his evaluation of inter-church engagement. Among the most well known of Moir's trial balloons were those sent up regarding the Canadianization of the churches and the issue of loyalty. In two very important essays, "The Problem of the Double Minority," published in *Social History-Histoire Sociale* in 1971, and "A Vision Shared," published in 1986 in a special volume of *Canadian Issues*, Moir began rethinking the binaries of Catholic-Protestant relations and discovered another level of complexity, one that had been under his nose since he first put pen to paper.¹⁴ In each essay he mapped out the "double minority" thesis regarding English-speaking Catholics. The term was a play on the "double majority" principle which had been the unofficial manner of passing legislation in the legislature of the united province of Canada, wherein bills specific to a section needed the majority of votes in that section and an over-all majority in the Assembly. In his double minority thesis, Moir concluded that English-speaking Catholics,

mostly Irish and Scots, were a religious minority in Canada as a whole, and a linguistic minority in their own church, when faced with French Canadian dominance. Moir then set out to demonstrate that English-speaking Catholics were essentially torn between their religious ties to French Canadians and their evolving cultural similarities with Protestant Canadians, with whom they shared a common tongue. While there was no escaping the evident theological differences between the two communities, English-speaking Catholics and Protestants came to discover common ground on issues regarding politics, loyalty to the crown and British institutions, and perhaps even a vision of what Canada might become. Indeed there were bombastic individuals on both sides of the religious divide who would prevent a close ecumenical bond, at least until the 1960s, but nevertheless the bilingual schools question in Ontario, education issues in New Brunswick, the South African war, and the two world wars provided sufficient evidence that the traditional binary of the two religious solitudes in Canada was overly simplistic. While he never explicitly stated it, Moir implied that the more a group became Canadianized, the greater the possibility for positive inter-church engagement.

A definition of Canadianization is highly problematic, but in an earlier work, "The Canadianization of the Protestant Churches,"¹⁵ Moir had defined certain conditions germane to it: the growth of local leadership and an indigenous clergy, the elimination of the trappings of church establishment and the acquisition of the legal status of a church, and a psychological affinity to Canada, wherein churches identify closely with the land, people, and ethos of Canada.¹⁶ Moreover, as early as 1959, he argued that the churches in Canada West were essentially experiencing a "centripetal nationalism" – essentially a sensibility that "sought to equate all creeds by separating them from the world of politics." For Moir, Ultramontanistism was essentially un-Canadian and its persistence kept Catholics from sharing this "Canadianization" fully.¹⁷ At least this was his position early in his career. Upon further study and deeper reflection he modified this position: the Quebec model of church-state relations and separate schools notwithstanding, as Catholics outside of Quebec relinquished close ties with the state, they became more acculturated to a social environment in which they were on an equal footing with non-Catholic citizens. For Moir, English-speaking Catholics provided a bridge between the traditions, wherein links of language proved to be the first of many ties that might bind the two religious solitudes. He might even extend the notion of Canadianization further by seeing the Confederation

compromise in 1867 as the secular model through which the voluntarist churches of Canada might be inspired to greater unity – in some cases this might mean organic union (a precursor to the well-known ecclesiastical unions of 1874, 1884, and 1925) and even perhaps a shared vision between some Catholics and Protestants in Canada.

Perhaps Moir was also broaching a new categorization of Protestant-Catholic relations that he never formally identified, although he wrote about it. Three levels of Catholic-Protestant interplay appear in his writings. First, these sectarian relationships were negotiated in a formal sense within the constitutions and laws of a country (as evidenced in the colonial period); secondly, Roman Catholic-Protestant relations could be witnessed and tracked in the public square by means of political engagement and in the secular and religious press; and, finally, and not as well developed in his writing, Catholic-Protestant relations might be witnessed in the way religion was lived on the ground. This may be where he was headed when he wrote “Toronto’s Protestants and Their Perceptions of their Roman Catholic Neighbours” in 1991. At a macro level Catholics had equal rights in Canadian society – some would say on the educational issues more equal than others; in the public sphere there was an anti-papalism that permeated Protestant thought; but in the area of lived religion, even when all hell might be breaking loose in the press, some pulpits, and the corridors of political power, ordinary Catholics and Protestants worked together, lived in the same neighbourhoods, ate together, voted for the same politicians, and married one another. In his essay on “Canadian Protestant Reaction to the *Ne temere* Decree,” Moir had begun to reflect on lived religious circumstances, this time a Vatican regulation on the validity of Catholic marriages, and how it came to disrupt Catholic-Protestant relations.¹⁸ What is key in this essay is that Moir uncovered the fact that issues such as marriage – and the potential invalidity of mixed marriages – were vital to the way in which religion was lived on the ground. The possibility of Catholic partners abandoning their Protestant spouses, as a consequence of a non-canonical marital arrangement, had potentially devastating repercussions for women, children, and social institutions. Religion was a lived phenomenon in Canada, and this is perhaps where good Catholic-Protestant relations mattered most. Moir was never able to explore these latter ideas very substantially, but he pointed to new directions which have been since taken up by other scholars – that in the rhythms of Canadian life English-speaking Catholics and Protestant found more in common than what has

been historiographically or even popularly supposed. It may have been in this direction that the prospective SSHRC grant would have afforded him the liberty to write.

One cannot help but think that the timing of his project grant was not right. Canada had changed. It was a more multicultural and multi-faith world in which John Moir now worked, and questions of secularization, which he spent little time discussing in his work, were now at the forefront of writing in Canadian church history. The new debates about secularity and Canadian society were now squarely on the academic agenda with the works of Ramsay Cook, Marguerite Van Die, David Marshall, Phyllis Airhart, Michael Gauvreau, and in the suggestions made by John Webster Grant in the conclusion of his revised edition of *The Church in the Canadian Era*. Perhaps this new historiographical wave, and Moir's own personal witness to the secularization of his Canada, prompted him to write, in 1991, of a third and more sceptical school of Protestant-Catholic-relations scholarship that merely regarded the new ecumenism as a fig leaf trying to hide growing indifference to religion in Canada.¹⁹ Whatever the case, it appeared, sadly, that the questions that he wished to raise about Protestant-Catholic relations were no longer interesting to others engaged in the writing of Canadian history in an increasingly secular Canada.

In the course of his career, however, John Moir won the respect, admiration, and even love of his students and colleagues for his integrity and professionalism as a scholar and his abiding commitment to his students, both graduate and undergraduate. In the course of writing this address I invited former students and colleagues to share with me their impressions of Moir as a teacher, scholar and friend. Almost all offer effusive praise of his scholarship, his "trial balloons," his humility in identifying himself as a garden-variety historian, his dedication to students, his wit, and his great humanity. His influence was felt among Catholic, Protestant, and agnostic scholars who appreciated his pioneering efforts in Canadian religious history. With regard to John's teaching, one former Catholic student commented: "His critiques tended towards the encouraging and supportive, rather than the cynical or censorious, while insisting on an uncompromising quest for thoroughness in research, accuracy in representation and balance in interpretation. As with many of the very best professors I believe that he regarded his students as his teachers, fellow sojourners committed to the quest for knowledge. As to his character, I thought that the combination of an innate warmth and gentleness, matched with a deep humility, contributed to the development

of a teacher focused on critical and compassionate service. In sum, I experienced him as a man of maturity, with sufficient accomplishment and integrated ego to welcome alternate or creative interpretations, perspectives and understandings. Within academia such maturity is not always present in great measure.”²⁰

In a review of Moir’s first book, Thomas R. Millman, writing in the *Canadian Historical Review*, praised the book and its author by stating: “If the sound workmanship of *Church and State in Canada West* stimulates further intensive study of Canada’s religious heritage and the production of more and better books about the place of the churches in our national story, the author will have done Canadian church history a good turn.”²¹ It was curious that Millman chose a Boy Scout terminology of a “good turn.” In a similar homage, à la Baden Powell, a former colleague wrote to me saying: “If there are campfires in heaven where people tell great stories, I would like to be sitting next to him.”²² The good turns became great turns, the many balloons were launched and floated, and we have all been the better for it.

Endnotes

1. Cited in John S. Moir, “Toronto’s Protestants and Their Perceptions of their Roman Catholic Neighbours,” in *Catholics at the Gathering Place: Historical Essays on the Archdiocese of Toronto, 1841-1991*, eds. Mark G. McGowan and Brian P. Clarke (Toronto: CCHA and Dundurn Press, 1993), 325.
2. John 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). A near complete bibliography of Moir’s scholarly work appears in Paul Laverdure, ed., *Christianity in Canada, Historical Essays by John S. Moir* (Yorkton, SK: Laverdure & Associates and Redeemer’s Voice Press, 2002), 162-8.
3. John S. Moir, “Twenty Years Retrospect: the Canadian Society of Church History,” Canadian Society of Church History, *Papers* (1979), 81.
4. Laverdure, ed., *Christianity in Canada*, 25.
5. John S. Moir, *The Church in the British Era: From the British Conquest to Confederation* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), and John S. Moir, *Church and Society: Documents on the Religious and Social History of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto from the Archives of the Archdiocese* (Toronto: Archdiocese of Toronto, 1991).

6. Moir, "Toronto's Protestants," 313-28.
7. Moir, *Church in the British Era*, 178.
8. A.R.M. Lower, "Two Ways of Life: The Primary Antithesis of Canadian History," Canadian Historical Association, *Report* (1943).
9. Moir, *Church and State in Canada West*, 138.
10. Moir, "Toronto's Protestants," 315.
11. Moir, "Toronto's Protestants," 313-28.
12. Moir, *Church and State in Canada West*, 150. He softened his position, using only Ryerson's words and one reference to ultramontaniam in his co-authored article on Charbonnel in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (1990). Nicolson was an ardent admirer of Charbonnel, which suggests that Moir's stand on the former bishop of Toronto was moderated somewhat in the joint authorship of the essay.
13. Moir, *Church and State in Canada West*, 145.
14. John S. Moir, "The Problem of a Double Minority: Some Reflections on the Development of the English-speaking Catholic Church in Canada in the 19th Century," *Social History – Histoire sociale* 7 (April 1971): 53-67; and John S. Moir, "A Vision Shared? The Catholic Register and Canadian Identity Before World War I," *Canadian Issues – Thèmes canadiens* 7, *Religion and Culture: Comparative Canadian Studies* (1985): 356-66.
15. Moir, "The Canadianization of the Protestant Churches," Canadian Historical Association, *Report* (1966): 56-69.
16. Cited in Laverdure, ed., *Christianity in Canada*, 40.
17. Laverdure, ed., *Christianity in Canada*, 53.
18. John S. Moir, "Canadian Protestant Reaction to the *Ne Temere* Decree," Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Study Sessions* 48 (1981): 79-90.
19. Moir, "Toronto's Protestants," 313.
20. Email to the author from Brian Hogan, 27 March 2013.
21. Thomas Millman, Review of *Church and State in Canada West: Three Studies in the Relation of Denominationalism and Nationalism, 1841-1867*, *Canadian Historical Review* 41 (1960): 78-9.
22. Email to the author from William Westfall, 3 April 2013.