Modern European Historiography Forum

Provincializing Christendom: The Case of Great Britain

The insular traditions of British ecclesiastical history have been transformed since the 1960s, when scholars began to pay attention to the theory of secularization, an inherently comparative and global theory of social change. More recently a wave of interest in imperial and colonial history has brought the foreign missionary enterprise into focus, and even more broadly the relationship between western religion and imperialism.[1]

In British academia, scholars who concerned themselves first with secularization were not historians, but sociologists. In the 1960s and 1970s, a small group of sociologists of religion—Alasdair MacIntyre, Bryan Wilson, and David Martin—set British religion in a comparative frame in beautifully written essays, at a time when American sociological theory was still dominated by the unreadable prose of Talcott Parsons.[2] Even though they were sociologists, they approached the problem of secularization historically as well as comparatively. Bryan Wilson's *Religion in a Secular Society* (1966) employed the classic sociological theory of secularization in the form of a sustained meditation on the contrast between the state of religion in Great Britain and the United States.

By the 1960s the contrast between the vigor and growth of the American churches and the sustained, long-term decline of Britain's churches was unmistakable. It was all the more notable because both countries were predominantly Protestant nations with a range of denominations that had, more or less, the same names. Britain had

1. Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); A. N. Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2004).
2. Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* (London: Watts, 1966); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Secularization and Moral Change*, Riddell Memorial Lectures 1964 (London: Oxford University Press., 1967); David A. Martin, *The Religious and the Secular: Studies in Secularization* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

This published forum was previously presented to the American Society of Church History at the 2005 Spring Meeting in Savannah, Ga., entitled "A 'Religious Turn' in Modern European Historiography?" The forum was in response to the article published by Thomas Albert Howard, "A 'Religious Turn' in Modern European Historiography?" in Historically Speaking *4 (June 2003): 25–26.*

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Church History 75:1 (March 2006)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088351 Published online by Cambridge University Press

state churches, but also many other denominations, including Baptists, Methodists, (Scottish) Episcopalians, and Congregationalists, and even scattered outposts of the Assembly of God and the Disciples of Christ. In Britain, though, it appeared that relatively few people attended these churches, which was demonstrably not the case in the United States. This raised a difficulty for the theory of secularization, which is a global theory of social change. Wilson's theory of secularization explained the decline of the European churches, including the British churches, neatly and comprehensively. One way or another, modernity and religion are antithetical. As modernity progresses, whether in the materialist forms of urbanization, industrialization, and the functional differentiation of society, or in the idealist forms of science, skepticism, and agnosticism, religion is inevitably pushed to the margins of society.

This left America as a problem to be dealt with, one recognized by Wilson although it posed for him few serious intellectual problems. In the theory of secularization, survivals of religion in the modern world are explained by reference to unusual circumstances relating to the exceptional history of the locality. Wilson resorted to an explanation rooted in American exceptionalism, a theory popular in the 1950s and 1960s for a variety of reasons including the absence of socialism in the United States. American exceptionalism has been a popular theme among American church historians during the last few decades. Peering over the Atlantic at Europe's empty churches, historians have concluded that Americans simply do a better job of sustaining religious faith and religious institutions than decadent Europeans. One of the consequences of the theory of American exceptionalism is relative indifference to the issue of secularization on the part of American historians of religion. Secularization simply does not apply to the land of the free. Whether it is because of Nathan Hatch's "whirlwind of religious liberty," or perhaps merely because we are especially good at selling God in the marketplace of culture, as Laurence Moore would have it, we are, in Jonathan Butler's deft phrase, "awash in a sea of faith."[3]

Wilson, however, although willing to concede that America was exceptional in the vigor of its religious institutions, was unwilling to concede that America was therefore more religious than Britain. As a

3. Nathan O. Hatch, "The Whirlwind of Religious Liberty in Early America," in *Freedom and Religion in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Richard J. Helmstadter, The Making of Modern Freedom (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 29–53; R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, Studies in Cultural History (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088351 Published online by Cambridge University Press

modern country, America must be a secular country. For Wilson, American religion was not really religion, but a secularized residue of religion, a continent wide and an inch deep. American religious faith prospered only by evacuating itself of any serious religious content, and the American churches succeeded only because of what he referred to as the "vacuousness of popular religious ideas."[4]

David Martin systematically outlined the theory that secularization is normal and religious vitality the exception in his *General Theory of Secularization* (1978), where he identified different paths of secularization in modern Europe, making due exception for the (then) exceptional cases of Ireland and Poland.[5] Martin's underlying assumption was that it is just a matter of time, at least in Europe. Standing behind him one could almost hear T. H. Huxley, Darwin's bulldog, who summarized the voice of the modern secularized intellectual in his comments for the Encyclopedia Britannica (1910): "That this Christianity is doomed to fall is, to my mind, beyond a doubt; but its fall will neither be sudden nor speedy."[6]

In the 1970s historians began to take up the theme of secularization. An ecclesiastical historian of the insular school, Owen Chadwick (whose two volumes on the Victorian Church failed to mention foreign missions once), published an intellectual history of secularization in 1975.[7] In the 1970s, however, before the linguistic turn and other turns, most historians were interested in social history, and it was the materialist rather than the idealist version of secularization that held sway, especially after the publication in 1976 of Alan Gilbert's *Religion and Society in Industrial England*.[8] In what has been in some ways the most influential book about modern English religious history published in the past half century, Gilbert applied the theory of secularization with a broad brush to the entire period from 1740 to 1914. Since the 1970s secularization has remained a highly influential organizing theme in British church history. It would be possible to publish an anthology of quotations taken from historians of British religion who have invoked the theory of secularization during the last thirty years. Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Sheils, in their *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present*, call on

4. Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society*, 122.
5. David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978).
6. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1910), 14:20b.
7. Owen Chadwick, *Victorian Church*, An Ecclesiastical History of England 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966); *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, Gifford Lectures 1973–74 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
8. Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel, and Social Change, 1740–1914* (London: Longman, 1976).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088351 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Alan Gilbert to sum up the situation in the mid-1990s, which he does by declaring the inconceivability of any path to a future other than a secular one. The only alternative would be a "kind of demodernization which would radically reverse the process of secularization" and "might prove catastrophic for civilization as a whole."[9]

The durability of secularization when applied to Britain, and to Europe generally, is all the more remarkable for the beating the idea has taken in the last three decades, largely from a recognition that beyond the boundaries of Europe, the United States is not the only part of the world where the theory of secularization makes no sense at all. There has been a certain amount of political panic about the unexpected religious fervor of nonwesterners, a concern extending even to stalwart secular journals such as *Foreign Affairs*, and reflected in scholarly works on the rise of fundamentalism, the study of which has attracted considerable amounts of money.[10] Anthropologists and sociologists and mission studies specialists have, in their separate ways, documented the flourishing state of various forms of religion in far-flung corners of the globe.[11] The important central point here is the breaking of the binary opposition between religion and modernity, which has led some scholars such as Peter van der Veer to ignore secularization as an idea no longer of any interest in the study of religion.[12] Religion in general, including Christianity, is now seen as not only compatible with modernity, but as in some contexts a species of modernity.[13] It is now generally accepted that Christianity, far from being doomed to extinction as Huxley predicted, is flourishing around the world, with incalculable, unpredictable, and for some people frightening consequences.[14]

If secularization is discredited, and religion and modernity coequal partners in the modern world, where does that leave the history of

9. Alan Gilbert, "Secularization and the Future," in *A History of Religion in Britain Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present*, ed. Sheridan Gilley (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 520.
10. David Aikman, "The Great Revival. Understanding Religious 'Fundamentalism,'" *Foreign Affairs* (July–August 2003): 188–93; Gabriel Abraham Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
11. Lamin O. Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003); David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
12. Peter van der Veer, *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, Zones of Religion (New York: Routledge, 1996).
13. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).
14. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088351 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Christianity in Europe during the last three hundred years, and what are the implications for a religious turn in European historiography? Demonstrations that religion and modernity coexist happily in the third world do little to solve problems for historians of Europe, where religion and modernity appear to remain at odds and secularization, as a theory of decline, remains the best available general explanation of decline. However, there have been dissenting voices in the field of British religious history, and David Martin was one of the first. His intellectual trajectory has been more complicated than I indicated above. In 1965 he published an essay entitled "Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularisation."[15] Martin never followed up on his project of eliminating secularization, and instead returned first to a systematic exposition of secularization theory, and then to histories of the coexistence of religion and modernity in Latin America. For Martin, the religious history of Latin America represents an alternative historical trajectory, one in which pentecostal religion thrives precisely because of its alignment with some forms of modernity. It has been left to historians to take up the task of developing an alternative to secularization in Europe, first implicitly and then explicitly.[16]

The characteristic revisionist genre has been the local study, beginning with two books published in the 1970s: Hugh McLeod's *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* and Stephen Yeo's *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis.*[17] Neither book challenged the sociological theory of secularization explicitly; both challenged it implicitly, by setting it to one side and looking for causes of the decline of Britain's churches that were not taken directly from the classic theory. In 1982 Jeffrey Cox's *The English Churches in a Secular Society* added to the body of local studies, but in his first and last chapters he openly challenged the theory of secularization on largely empirical grounds, asserting that there are distinctive characteristics of the social history of British religion, not found in the theory of secularization, that account for the declining influence of Britain's churches.[18] In the nineties Jeremy Morris, Mark Smith, Simon Green, and Sarah Williams published local studies that challenged one aspect or another of

15. David Martin, "Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularisation," in *Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences*, ed. J. Gould (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1965).
16. Jeffrey Cox, "Secularization and Social History," *Theology* 78 (February 1975): 90–98.
17. Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1974); Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).
18. Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870–1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088351 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the secularization model.[19] Hugh McLeod published a comparative study of working-class religion in London, Berlin, and New York, as well as numerous useful and influential histories that adopted a skeptical stance toward secularization theory, although drawing on it freely where he found it useful.[20]

Despite the achievements of the skeptics, their collective achievement is smaller than the sum of its parts. There is no new "turn" in modern British religious history, only a collection of dissenting monographs. Callum Brown, the most aggressive revisionist historian, attempted a direct empirical rebuttal of the secularization theory in his article, "Did Urbanization Secularize Britain?" in 1988,[21] and then took his crusade against the theory directly to the sociologists in the 1992 collection of essays edited by Steve Bruce entitled *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*.[22] Brown not only challenged the empirical basis of secularization theory, but sketched out the elements of an alternative model of religious change in the modern world.[23] His elements of an alternative view, along with those in a follow-up list by Jeffrey Cox, have been

19. J. N. Morris, *Religion and Urban Change: Croydon, 1840–1914* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell, 1992); Mark (Mark A.) Smith, *Religion in Industrial Society: Oldham and Saddleworth, 1740–1865*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline: Organisation and Experience in Industrial Yorkshire, 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); S. C. Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c. 1880–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
20. Hugh McLeod, *Piety and Poverty: Working-Class Religion in Berlin, London, and New York, 1870–1914*, Europe Past and Present Series (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1996); *Religion and the People of Western Europe, 1789–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Studies in Economic and Social History (London: Macmillan, 1984); *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian England: How Secular Was the Working Class?* (Bangor, Wales: Headstart History, 1993); *Religion and Society in England, 1850–1914*, Social History in Perspective (New York: St. Martin's, 1996); and *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848–1914* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000). See also the work of another judicious skeptic, David Hempton: *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750–1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1984); *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society, 1740–1890* (London: Routledge, 1992); *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c. 1750–1900* (London: Routledge, 1996); *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland from the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005).
21. Callum Brown, "Did Urbanization Secularize Britain," *Urban History Yearbook* (1988): 1–14.
22. Steve Bruce, *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*, ed. Steve Bruce (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).
23. Callum Brown, "A Revisionist Approach to Religious Change," in *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*, ed. Steve Bruce (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 55–56.

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too sketchy to add up to an alternative point of view.[24] In 2001 Brown attracted a general rather than merely a scholarly audience, including television appearances, with his *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000*.[25]

In some ways, Brown has retraced the footsteps of David Martin, first challenging the theory of secularization, and then returning to a modified version of it as a broad background theory for empirical work. Shifting the chronology of secularization, as he does, opens the door to a reevaluation of the importance of religion in early-twentieth-century Britain. At the same time, it leaves the broad theory intact. Brown postponed secularization to the 1960s, when religion fell prey to a particular form of modernity characterized by changing gender roles and the new youth culture. Bryan Wilson goes even further and projects secularization into the future. In a review of David Martin's celebration of the rapid spread of Latin American pentecostalism, Wilson asks: "May not the current of secularization, running powerfully in the West, overtake or eviscerate the Pentecostal Revival in the Third World?"[26]

One of the reasons for the lack of an alternative to the theory of secularization lies in the nature of the theory. Secularization is not a sociological theory so much as an overarching master narrative, one that is still largely intact as it applies to Europe even though it is no longer generally persuasive beyond the geographical borders of Europe. By master narrative I mean nothing very sophisticated. It is possible to choose a different name for it—paradigm, grand narrative, and so on—that will serve the same purpose. Allan Megill has set out a simple scheme for labeling narratives used by historians as either (1) narrative, (2) master narrative, or (3) grand narrative, a distinction based primarily on scale.[27] A narrative is the self-consciously crafted story designed to solve a problem for the scholar. A master narrative is the larger story within which the narrative is embedded. A master narrative is partly acknowledged, but also partly hidden, acting as a kind of shifting theatrical backdrop to the narrative that makes action on the stage intelligible. Invocatory by nature, the master narrative

24. Jeffrey Cox, "Master Narratives of Long Term Religious Change," in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000*, ed. Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 211.
25. Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000*, Christianity and Society in the Modern World (London: Routledge, 2001).
26. Bryan Wilson, "Can the 'Latter Rain' Survive Consumerism?," *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 March 2002, 8.
27. Allan Megill, "'Grand Narrative' and the Discipline of History," in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. F. R. Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 151–73.

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summons up in the reader's mind a larger story that fills in the gaps in the narrative.

During the last thirty years the master narrative of secularization has been largely discredited as a global theory of social change applying to all parts of a world characterized by religious diversity, religious growth, and unpredictable religious conflict beyond the boundaries of Europe. As a broad explanation for the declining influence of Christianity in Europe, however, secularization remains largely uncontested. Historians of Europe who invoke secularization have the advantage of a master narrative that fills in the gaps in their story and makes it intelligible to hearers and readers. Skeptics who write detailed monographs demonstrating that the secularization theory does not appear to work in a particular case are confronted with the impotence of the empirical rebuttal, a rebuttal that could only be fully persuasive if it were to be set in the broader context of an alternative master narrative that does not exist. In 2002 I was co-director along with Hugh McLeod and Peter van Rooden of a conference at the University of Amsterdam on "Master Narratives of Religion in Modern Europe," our goal being some discussion of what an alternative to the master narrative of secularization might look like.[28] At this conference, with some exceptions, American church historians were indifferent to the project, anthropologists and sociologists of the nonwestern world were interested in documenting the convergence of religion and modernity, and historians of European Christianity told narratives rather than master narratives, explaining for instance what happened in a particular diocese in the late nineteenth century, and so on. The time was not yet ripe in 2002 for a new turn in the historiography of European religion, or at least not the particular turn that the directors hoped to see.

This is not to say that the historians who are skeptical about secularization have been wasting their time. The elements of an alternative master narrative may be identified in their work, especially in the convergence of interest in the social and political location of religious institutions. In the conventional view secularization undermines religious belief, leading men and women to abandon the churches. As Robert Currie and Alan Gilbert put it,

> The most striking effect of secularization, so far as churches are concerned, is simple disbelief in the supernatural. Plainly once such disbelief becomes widespread, individuals need unusual qualities to be sure of the utility of churches' religious function. But churches do have other functions, and these may be perceived to have a utility

28. http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/gm/conferences/2002a.htm.

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> more or less independent of that of strictly religious functions. A church might therefore attract many recruits even in a highly secularized atmosphere, were it not for a less dramatic but very important effect of secularization, namely the tendency of a population that does not accept the existence of the supernatural to lose interest in, and even knowledge of, the churches' ideas and concerns.[29]

At the conclusion of his extensive local study of Yorkshire's religious institutions, Simon Green suggested an alternative view: "Conventional wisdom and common sense suggest that the people stopped going to church because they no longer believed what the churches taught them. Perhaps the causal mechanism was really closer to the opposite: they stopped believing because they stopped going."[30]

The emergence of a new master narrative based on alternative views of European history will take time. An individual historian cannot sit down with a copy of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, like H. G. Wells writing *An Outline of History*, and rewrite the history of the modern world. Although it is possible to think constructively about a master narrative, it is impossible to write one from scratch. The elements of a new master narrative must be identified in ongoing scholarly discussions among historians who are concerned with the history of religion, and also in broader discussions in society about the nature of religion in the modern world.

There is no more annoying scholarly article than the prescriptive one, in which the author tells other historians what kinds of books and articles they should write, and I am not going to do that here. I will however venture a prediction: that in discussions and debates over the next decade a new general view of European religious history will emerge, one based on two themes. Both themes are illustrated in the titles of recently published books. The first is Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, which many people regard with some justification as impenetrable or even unreadable, but is full of insight.[31] Chakrabarty refers to two kinds of provincialization: the geographical provincialization of Europe, largely the result of World War II and subsequent decolonization, and the provincialization of the European mind. Although he never confronts secularization directly, he proposes among other things to provincialize Huxley with a desecularization of our categories of historical analysis, without explaining in much detail exactly

29. Robert Currie, Alan D. Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles Since 1700* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 122.
30. S. J. D. Green, *Religion in the Age of Decline*, 390, 391.
31. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088351 Published online by Cambridge University Press

how that might be done. More important for our purposes, though, is the geographical provincialization of Europe. At some point, it will become possible to investigate European religious history without assuming that we are seeing a preview of the history of the entire world. We are seeing instead a form of European exceptionalism in the decline of Christian ideas and institutions during the last three hundred years.

Important evidence has appeared recently that the idea of European exceptionalism might be an element of an alternative master narrative: it was noticed in *The New York Times*! In an article of January of 2005 that actually succeeded in distinguishing between evangelicalism, fundamentalism, and pentecostalism, and used charts and graphs supplied by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, *The New York Times* informed its readers that "Almost everywhere you look around the world, *with the glaring exception of Western Europe,* religion is now a rising 'force.'"[32] Even more evidence of "the provincialization of Europe" in matters of religion appeared a couple of months later on the op-ed page. "In short," wrote Nicholas Kristof, "for the first time since it began two millenniums ago, Christianity is no longer 'Western' in any very meaningful sense." Furthermore, it is "in those countries, where religion enjoys privileges—Britain, Italy, Ireland, Spain or Iran—that establishment support seems to have stifled faith."[33] If *The New York Times* recognizes the provincialization of Europe in matters of religion, can historians be far behind?

The second phrase that I suggest will be central comes from the title of a book edited by Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf, *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000.*[34] If Europe has been exceptional, what has been exceptional about Europe? The word Christendom defines a particularly European form of Christianity, one that is territorial, parochial, elitist, political, and closely allied with governments. Even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the churches of Christendom have been entangled with governments and elites as they struggled for influence in an increasingly pluralist setting, where their influence can no longer be taken for granted. Especially in the provision of public education, the established churches and former established churches of Europe have been deeply involved in part-

32. Laurie Goodstein, "More Religion, but Not the Old-Time Kind," *New York Times,* Sunday, 9 January 2005, 1, 4 (emphasis mine).
33. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Where Faith Thrives," *New York Times,* Saturday, 26 March 2005, A27.
34. Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf, ed., *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088351 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nerships with governments, providing a form of religion that is "for" the people rather than "of" the people. Many European churches, of course, do not share these characteristics, but even voluntarist and gathered and evangelical and pentecostal churches must operate in the shadow of Christendom and appeal to people who have been born into, or whose grandparents were born into, a particular kind of religious settlement unique to Europe. The contributors to this book are asking the right question: what has happened to Christendom during the last three centuries, and why? This will require an examination of the unique—the exceptional—characteristics of European religious history. The provincialization of Christendom has already begun, although there is much more to do.

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Challenging Dechristianization: The Historiography of Religion in Modern France

Over the past few months, the two leading journals in contemporary French intellectual life have opened their pages to a polemical battle between two historians of French religion, a French scholar Catherine Maire, and the American Dale Van Kley, who teaches at Ohio State University. The immediate object of the dispute between these two was the French translation of Van Kley's book on the religious origins of the French Revolution.[1] Maire's assault is both fierce and comprehensive, for she accuses Van Kley of fundamentally misunderstanding Jansenism, the movement of Catholic dissidents inspired by Augustinian theology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which he has been studying for the last three decades. According to Maire, Van Kley incorrectly interprets Jansenism as a form of Protestantism, which he uses as the basis of a Whiggish narrative that culminates in the downfall of the absolute monarchy. I do not think I am being unfair to detect a note of Gallic nativism in Maire's critique, a proprietary sense that an American scholar who claims expertise in this arcane subject must necessarily be overreaching himself. But I open with this exchange because it establishes two

1. Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, 1560–1791* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996); Van Kley's work was translated as *Les Origines religieuses de la Révolution française, 1560–1791* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Catherine Maire, "Aux sources politiques et religieuses de la Révolution française: Deux modèles en discussion," *Le Débat* 130 (May–August 2004): 133–53; Dale Van Kley, "Sur les sources religieuses et politiques de la Révolution française," *Commentaire* 108 (winter 2004–5): 893–914.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700088351 Published online by Cambridge University Press