

In This Issue

1992 marks the 350th anniversary of the founding of Montreal. In keeping with the celebrations surrounding this event, the theme of the seven essays selected for this year's issue of *ARC*, is "Religion, History and Empire." In commemoration of this event, we introduce this issue with two essays specifically related to Canada. The first, by John S. Moir, provides a synopsis of the Birks Lecture Series delivered at McGill University in the Fall of 1991. Moir traces the way in which various Christian groups have tried to establish the territory, now known as Canada, as a "Christian" nation. The second essay, by Douglas J. Hall, is also an abridged version of a public lecture; it highlights the impact of Canada's geographical position next to a world superpower, and suggests that this experience is a useful metaphor for exploring the prophetic witness of the church, which also lives on the edge of empire.

The next four articles all explore the theme from a specific context in human history. Frederik Wisse cautions scholars about the potential dangers for distortion that can result from various critical methods used in reconstructing the past. He then discusses several factors that might offer an opportunity for deriving more accurate historical evidence from the early Christian writings. Clayton E. Beish takes the reader to sixteenth-century Wittenberg where he re-examines the motivation and political repercussions caused by the actions of the various church leaders during the opening days of the Protestant Reformation. Stephen B. Scharper moves the reader to nineteenth-century America where he searches the work of Alexis de Tocqueville for seeds which, when properly tended, could add to the budding literature on a contextual, liberative, North American theology. Using numerous examples from the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Alan T. Davies examines the way in which empires often combine imperial impulses with a religious and philosophical idea of the ideal community.

The final article, by Gregory Baum, provides a re-examination of Augustine's *City of God*. After identifying certain affinities between the fourth and the twentieth centuries, Baum examines the basis of hope that sustained Augustine in the midst of a collapsing civilization, and suggests that this same hope might also guide contemporary Christians in building communities that embody respect, love, service and universal solidarity.

In addition to a much expanded book review section, this issue of *ARC* marks the debut of an entirely new feature, the *Computer-Assisted Research in Religion Forum* (CARRF). Initiated by, and co-edited with, Todd Blayone, CARRF fills a void in academic publications by focussing upon the non-technical computer information needs of professionals, scholars and students

working within the area of religion and related disciplines. Included in the present issue are a series of three informative (even humorous), introductory articles on electronic mail (e-mail) and its potential for scholars in religious studies. This is followed by three full-length reviews of various multilingual and bibliographic database computer programs.

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