

Fortin, Denis. *Adventism in Quebec: The Dynamics of Rural Church Growth, 1830-1910*. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2004, 216 pp. Paper, \$19.99.

As Seventh-day Adventism has spread across North America, it has experienced a variety of regional variations. However, relatively little attention has been given to these geographical characteristics. In the 1940s, Harold O. McCumber examined *The Advent Message in the Golden West*, and more recently Doug R. Johnson wrote *Adventism on the Northwestern Frontier*. Although devoted to particular areas of the United States, neither of these books advanced any argument regarding the particular shape that Adventism took or why it developed as it did in these regions. While providing interesting narratives, these works did not provide much in the way of interpretive analysis.

Denis Fortin has now added a third work on regional Adventism with his account of *Adventism in Quebec*. In contrast to the earlier works, the author not only narrates the story of the denomination in this province; he also seeks to explain why Adventism went through cycles of progress and decline. He argues that there were three primary factors that ultimately weakened the church: the continuing migration of members to more populated areas (in this case the United States), a lack of financial resources, and—perhaps most importantly—frequent changes in local denominational leadership and, therefore, inconsistent guidance and support. He concludes that these issues remain significant today not only in Quebec, but in rural American churches generally.

In pursuing this argument, Fortin traces the development of Adventism in a series of chronologically organized chapters. After briefly describing Quebec's Eastern Townships in the nineteenth century, he examines the Millerite Movement's significant impact on the area. William Miller visited Quebec three times between 1835 and 1840, followed by Josiah Litch in 1842. The latter's arrival resulted in the first Millerite campmeeting, held in Hatley in June. Although they faced increasing opposition, the Millerites remained active in Quebec through the Great Disappointment of 1844. During the next few years, these Millerites formed what would ultimately become Evangelical Adventist and Advent Christian Churches. "By the end of the 1840s," Fortin observes, "Adventists in the Eastern Townships numbered about one thousand" (51).

This Adventist presence drew leaders of the developing sabbatarian Adventist movement into the region as they sought out former Millerites to whom they could present their beliefs. They argued that Jesus had entered the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary on October 22, 1844, to begin his final work of judgment, and that the seventh-day Sabbath was still binding on Christians and was the great test of the last days that would bring the true followers of God out of the Babylon of error and disbelief. With visits from Joseph Bates in 1848, from James and Ellen White in 1850, and Bates and John N. Andrews in 1851, small pockets of sabbatarian Adventists developed in the Eastern Townships in the early 1850s.

The conversion of two Baptist brothers, Augustin and Daniel Bourdeau, in the mid-1850s brought greater dynamism to the sabbatarian movement in the region. Fortin writes that "the Bourdeau brothers' preaching efforts were relatively successful and, by the end of the 1850s, Sabbatarian Adventist believers were found in most villages along the border [with Vermont]" (68). Between 1862 and 1865 several churches organized, including Troy-Potton, Richford-Sutton, Westbury-Eaton, and Sutton-Dunham. With the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church between 1861 and 1863, the Eastern Townships of Quebec came under the umbrella of the Vermont Conference. Unfortunately, this conference largely neglected Quebec into the mid-1870s, while the General Conference transferred the Bourdeau brothers to Iowa for several months in 1866, a decision that slowed the growth of the denomination in both Vermont and

Quebec. More significantly, Fortin points out, this action began a pattern of interrupted leadership that would continue to characterize the region. Other factors that weakened the small congregations included inadequate financial resources, interpersonal conflicts, and Augustin Bourdeau's shift from itinerant evangelism to serving largely as pastor of the Bordoville church in Vermont.

In 1875, Augustin Bourdeau began conducting extensive evangelism that continued until 1883 and resulted in the formation of the Quebec Conference in 1880, with 132 members distributed among three churches and two companies. Daniel Bourdeau rejoined his brother shortly thereafter. Although new members continued to join the denomination, emigration to the United States depleted the numbers. By 1884, the conference had nineteen fewer members than when it had organized. Meanwhile, the Bourdeau brothers had left again, although Augustin's son-in-law, Rodney S. Owen, provided strong leadership to the conference between 1884 and 1893. During this time, a school was established and colporteur work begun, and the denomination actively opposed a Canadian national Sunday law. With Owen's departure for Georgia in 1894, Fortin observes that "the phase of expansion and growth that had begun in 1875 had reached its peak" (152).

Joseph Bangs Goodrich replaced Owen as president of the conference in 1893, providing vigorous leadership until 1897. From that point until 1910, the end date of this study, seven different individuals served as president of the conference and were unable to develop a good understanding of the region or provide consistent leadership. With the establishment of the Canadian Union Conference in 1902 and the decision to place its headquarters in Montreal, it was apparent that interest was shifting away from the Eastern Townships. Fortin concludes that "perhaps all that could be hoped for in the Eastern Townships was the maintenance of what had been achieved so far" (173).

Following this generally chronological account, Fortin in his final chapter summarizes his historical interpretation and then shifts to a more sociological discussion of the challenges facing contemporary rural churches in both the United States and Canada. Emigration of church members, the impact of modern society on rural families, and the high turnover of pastors have all contributed to a weakening of the rural church. Fortin calls for a new vision of rural church ministry that includes the training of lay leadership. A two-page Epilogue describes the development of Adventism in Quebec through the early twenty-first century. Three appendices list the early Adventist churches in Quebec, camp meetings up to 1910, and conference officers between 1880 and 1910.

Fortin has developed his study on the basis of extensive and solid research. Millerite sources include William Miller's books and correspondence, as well as such papers as the *Signs of the Times* and the *Advent Herald*. The *World's Crisis*, a publication of the group that would become the Advent Christians, is also a major source for the post-Millerite period. For the movement that became Seventh-day Adventism, he relies largely on a close reading of the *Review and Herald* reports for Vermont and Quebec, as well as letters to the editor. Not content to depend exclusively on religious publications, however, Fortin has also used local newspapers, particularly the *Stansstead Journal* and the *Waterloo Advertiser*, which provide him with significant supplemental information and an "outside" viewpoint. This type of research is slow and painstaking as one looks for bits and pieces of information scattered through many small reports. The author is to be commended for the broad range of his sources and the thoroughness with which he has handled them.

As noted at the outset, unlike previous regional histories of Adventism, in this volume Fortin has sought to move beyond simple narrative to provide an analytical

interpretation of his findings. He has carefully organized his information, presented it in clear prose, and systematically put forward his argument on the basis of clearly identified evidence. He has avoided the temptation of whitewashing problems, particularly the issue of inconsistent pastoral leadership. *Adventism in Quebec* offers not only provocative historical arguments based on solid research; it also provides evidence that should provoke reconsideration of the denomination's approach to rural churches. In that sense, it is something of a case study, as its subtitle, *The Dynamics of Rural Church Growth*, suggests.

In addition to these accomplishments, there are two things that I think the author might have done. First, except for a few references to other churches experiencing emigration problems, he does not discuss the development of Adventism in relationship to the economic and social history of the region. A quotation from a secondary source briefly refers to a recession affecting Quebec for thirty years after 1867 (130), but nowhere is this economic situation discussed in relationship to the Adventist experience. The connections between Adventism and the larger society need further exploration and might contribute to a deeper knowledge of the Adventist experience in Quebec.

Second, in several places more extensive detail would have enlivened the text and at the same time increased our understanding. Vague references to "interpersonal conflicts" and "personal failures" of pastors and members (99-100) make the reader wonder what was happening in these churches. While I am not suggesting that the author should give undue attention to scandal-mongering, human behavior is the "stuff" of history and concrete discussion of these issues would help us better understand the situation. There are several references to debates between Adventist evangelists and other ministers and, in one case, a reference to a debate being carried on in letters to a newspaper (124). Providing more detail regarding these debates would both create color and help us further understand the mindset of both Adventists and their opponents. A brief reference to four ministers "confronting" Owens and Moses E. Kellogg (141) raises many questions, among them being the form of the confrontation, the issues at stake, and the results. Finally, rather than simply stating that camp meetings occurred at a certain time and place, the author might tell us more about what happened at these gatherings. Who were some of the speakers, and what subjects did they discuss? What do reports say about the reactions and behavior of those who attended? How did the local newspapers respond to the meetings? Again, detail that moves beyond cursory references would put flesh upon the bare bones of historical fact, such as Fortin does in his discussion of Owens's response to the Sunday-law proposal (150-51).

I also have some questions for which in some cases there may be no definitive answers. Is there something about Adventism that requires strong pastoral leadership? It is clear that when supervisory ministers were absent, the churches went into decline; yet the Baptists, for instance, seem to do quite well with their congregational form of organization. Also, one frequently finds in nineteenth-century Adventist literature references to a low spiritual state in the church, as referred to in this work (95). What does this mean? It tells us about the opinion of whoever might be our source, but should it be taken at face value regarding the people that are being described? And lastly, the frequent turnover of pastoral leadership that Fortin argues was a major factor in the ups and downs of Adventism in the Eastern Townships seems to have been a general characteristic of Adventism. The denomination has followed almost everywhere the policy of frequently moving not only pastors, but virtually all of its personnel. If this is true, how is the effect of this practice distinctively important for the Eastern Townships? I suspect that the rural nature of the region may have made it more

vulnerable to the effects of constant personnel change than areas with greater population. This issue deserves further thought, for it has denomination-wide implications.

These criticisms and questions, however, are minor in relation to Fortin's accomplishment in this volume. He has provided a model of thoroughness and analytical and interpretive acuity that hopefully will be followed by other regional studies of the denomination. *Adventism in Quebec*, while addressing a seemingly minor topic, will be helpful not only to historians but also to anyone concerned with the health and development of the church.

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Green, Alberto R. W. *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*. Biblical and Judaic Studies, 8. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003. xviii + 363 pp. Hardcover, \$42.50.

Alberto Green is Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Studies at Rutgers University, New Jersey. *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* is his first monograph, aside from a number of journal articles (e.g., "The Date of Nehemiah: a Reexamination," *AUSS* 28 [1990]: 195-209). The author received a Ph.D. in 1973 from the University of Michigan, with the dissertation "The Role of Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East," published in 1975 under the same title by Scholars Press. The monograph series in which the book is published is edited by William H. Propp from the University of California, San Diego, and includes such important contributions as *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreter*, *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography*, and *The Structure of Psalms 93-100*.

In his introduction, Green points out the need for a systematic study of the *storm-god* motif, since it represents one of the most important concepts in the evolution of human religious experience, transcending sociocultural, geographic, and chronologic boundaries. The purpose of the book is to fill a current vacuum and provide an interpretation for the ideological and sociological importance of this motif throughout the ANE, following a geographic sequence from Mesopotamia (chap. 1), through Anatolia (chap. 2), Syria (chap. 3), and arriving, finally, at Coastal Canaan with a strong emphasis on the *storm-god's* relationship with YHWH (chap. 4). The author justifies this last delimitation on the basis of the scarce iconographic and epigraphic material from this region (6), and in this way follows the classic work on the same topic by A. Vanel, *L'iconographie du dieu de l'orage dans le Proche-Orient ancien jusqu'au VIIe siècle avant J.-C.* (1965), but enlarges the geographic panorama and adds a sociocultural interpretation. However, besides iconography, Green also takes into consideration epigraphic material of mythological, epic, or historical character. Correctly, the author observes that the relationship between the texts and images is not always an easy one to interpret, and suggests a methodology that looks for the points of contact between the various classes of data (3). An important detail in the interpretation of the motif is the presence of its semidivine attendants that are associated with the *storm-god* in both the literary and archaeological sources and provide, according to Green, a key element in deciphering the importance and function of the motif throughout the ANE (2). Methodologically, Green's study is a typological comparison of a phenomenon occurring in various cultures that are chronologically and geographically removed from each other, acknowledging the challenges that such a comparison presents (7). The author mentions from the outset that the form and function of the *storm-god* motif is a dynamic one, changing from region to region, and that a difference in the manifestation of the motif exists between the public and domestic cults (4). Therefore, any general conclusion