

vindication could never be an immediate horizon, at least not as a political goal. What we find in her is a resistance of another kind: confident in God's grace, resistance was not a call to arms, but to trust. It is this kind of trust that is most compelling in this anthology. Imprisoned by our own idolatries, resistance can too easily become its own parody: rebellion. Not so for these authors, for whom the full flourishing of women is already anticipated in the calling that they have received as Christians. If it means that they have enlisted an ally as unlikely as John Calvin to remind them of such a calling, then so be it.

– Jane Barter Moulaison

**RELIGION, FAMILY,
AND COMMUNITY IN
VICTORIAN CANADA:
The Colbys of Carrollcroft
by Marguerite Van Die
Montreal and Kingston:
McGill Queen's University
Press, 2006. xx, 282 pp.
\$75.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.**

If you glanced at the subtitle as you began to read this review, perhaps you paused to wonder why someone who is not related to the Colbys of Carrollcroft would be interested in their family history.

Marguerite Van Die quickly draws the reader into the story she tells by forthrightly answering this very question. In an introduction that nicely frames the study, she explains that this is not so much a history of the Colby family; it is more aptly thought of as a case study of the connections between religion and everyday life in Victorian Canada. She aptly compares her approach to examining the lines and colour of a small detail on a larger canvas. The broader picture of religion and society in Victorian Canada is not lost by this attention to minutia; indeed, in a remarkable way one gains a greater appreciation of it by following the lives of the Colby family from one generation to the next.

This is not the book that Van Die expected to write. When she set out to explore religion and the Victorian family, her initial plan was to include an account of the Colbys among others. Her design for the study changed when she was introduced to one of their descendents who had opened the family home and its papers to the public. The family archives proved to be a treasure trove of letters, diaries, photographs and other memorabilia that Van Die links gracefully to studies of religion, family, and North American culture in an impressive display of scholarship. At the centre of the

story are Charles and Hattie Colby, who married in 1858 and settled in the Eastern Townships community of Stanstead; their parents and siblings, as well as their own children, appear episodically at key points in the narrative. For instance, Van Die presents a revealing picture of the responsibilities and liabilities of the extended Victorian family with a sensitive account of how the debts and drinking of one family member resulted in financial hardship for Charles and his young family.

As a study of marriage and family life during a time of social and economic transition, Van Die's book raises important questions about the public role of religion in Victorian Canada. Her descriptions of the "lived experience" of the Colby family shows the religious connections that were forged between home, community, and the new nation of Canada. (Among his other ventures, Charles was elected to the first dominion parliament after Confederation, and served as an MP until his defeat in the 1891 election.) By scrutinizing moral issues through the Colby lens, including Hattie's influence on Charles, we gain a greater appreciation of a time when issues such as temperance and divorce were not just issues of personal morality or local concern, but

debated at the highest levels of government.

The concept of "public" influence is further broadened by Van Die's convincing argument that responsibility for constructing religious identity and nurturing piety was shifting in this era from the institutional church to the Christian home. Her case study rather poignantly discloses the difficulties of handing on the religious world of one generation to the next, even with (or perhaps, one may wonder, because of) the concomitant "sacralization" of the home. Charles and Hattie Colby come across as deeply invested — both spiritually and financially — in both Congregationalist and Methodist congregations, and are thereby involved in the community. But religion was not as integral to either the family or community identity of their children. For those interested in the United Church's history, it is a point worth noting, since this was the ethos in which many of the leading lights of the church union movement were raised. Her evocative conclusion locates the Colbys in a situation familiar to families past and present: as they well knew from experience, she reminds us, "the world that parents bequeath to their children is not the one the children inherit".

— Phyllis D. Airhart