Dochuk, Darren, **Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America,** *New York: Basic Books, 2019, 688 pp.*

In the age of climate change, as many lobby for the demise of oil, Darren Dochuk offers a comprehensive account of its discovery and rise within modern culture, particularly within the United States. Dochuk is an historian who grew up in Alberta, Canada, in an economy fueled not only by oil but also, in his experience at least, by evangelical Christianity. *Anointed with Oil* focuses particularly on the relationship of brands of Christianity we have come to associate with parts of the United States and the power of petroleum in the construction of contemporary American democracy. The book casts a wide net in doing so, ranging timewise from the American Civil War to the present, and geographically from North America to the Middle East and beyond.

Dochuk argues that divisions originating in the early discoveries, production and regulation of oil and the involvement of certain strains of American Christianity are largely responsible for the current political and cultural divisions in American society as well as the current politics of oil. Oil and Christianity made the United States of America as we have it today, he contends.

Dochuk's history of oil is a story of the key players divided along the lines of how they wished the oil industry to play out and who worked accordingly. Those led primarily by the Rockefellers, who were early in their call for social and economic standardization and regulation, were pitted against the so-called "independents," who contested government interference and regulation. Christianity (mostly Protestant Christianity, although some Catholics were directly involved) also broke along the same lines. Those often referred to as mainline Protestant groups, such as some Baptists and Presbyterians, supported the Rockefeller camp, whereas those Christian groups who were mostly associated with the populist and often overwhelmingly right-wing churches aligned with the independents. While both sides of this conflict saw oil as a divine gift, precisely to America in its self-perceived role as exemplar to the world, the manner in which the United States would play this role was strongly contested. For the standardizers, oil would be a divine instrument for the building of God's kingdom on earth. It would be achieved through a Protestant work ethic of order,

constraint, disciplined laws, education, cooperation and diplomacy, in short, liberalism, the social gospel and a "civil religion of crude." The "independents" believed and practiced a "wildcat Christianity," which focused on religion as a personal relationship with the divine, individual inspiration, personal freedom, apocalyptic and a heavenly (rather than earthly) kingdom. Dochuk traces, rather convincingly, the interplay between the religious ideas and convictions of this division of Christianity and the corresponding divisions in creating an economy and politics based largely on oil.

How did this work on the ground? In terms of the historical development of the oil industry, it seems clear that at the higher levels of federal governance of the oil industry and its extension internationally, the Rockefellers and company and the oil corporations spawned by their efforts were the most successful. The capitalist desires for wealth and power as well as the social construction of orderly life found religious backing among mainline Christians, for whom the social gospel, disciplined lifestyle and missionary zeal served the organization of an industry that would revolutionize and enhance the quality of life for many. Oil became the Light of the World, thus referring to the biblical metaphor for Christ and his followers. For the independents, the wildcat Christians, who generally opposed regulation, such as rules-of-capture (who owns the natural resource and under what conditions), the oil industry was characterized more radically than it was for their opponents by boom-or-bust cycles. Rather than move them to seek some control in the face of nature's chaotic power, however, they attributed chance and their luck to divine jurisdiction; God, not Rockefeller, was in charge! Christian churches on both sides of the divide benefitted from oil revenues as their congregants filled the coffers with new money and founded seminaries, schools and colleges to increase their adherents. Christian preachers, missionaries and scholars with their rhetorical skills of persuasion and/or education in languages and cultures, often accompanied oilmen on their crusades for markets around the world.

This early division over oil also influenced how each side dealt with labour issues. In both cases the fight for justice in the form of better wages and working conditions was often fraught with violence and small, incremental gains for workers. In Chapter 5, "American Plans," Dochuk gives an account of the rise of unionism and the struggle to bring credibility and even glamour to this new and

transforming industry. Oil would transform not only the economy but also the culture of a nation. Meanwhile, the frenzy around capturing it and the resistance by ill-treated workers, especially the racialized, were considered by many Americans to be a "reign of terror." Violence and destruction, even murder, characterized the attempts of workers to improve their working conditions. Religious ideas added to the fervour of both employers and employees. Employers rationalized their efforts with paternalistic notions of kindness to the poor or the eradication of communist atheist notions attributed to union advocates. Workers often branded themselves as followers of Jesus, whom they interpreted to be a socialist of his time.

While both the standardizers (Rockefeller and associates) and independents often resorted to forms of welfare capitalism, the Rockefellers' oil corporations eventually tended towards forms of partnership between labour and capital, such as establishing advisory boards consisting of employers and employees. For the independents, labour relations was more of a mixed bag, consistent with their notions of individual freedom and lack of standards across oil patches. As is characteristic of the work as a whole, this chapter is peppered with stories of major players, the Rockefellers and the Pews, as well as less known and obscure characters. One such was 13-year-old Charley Spikes, who, following his conversion at age 13, became known as Mister Preacher as he toiled among oil workers in the field and attuned the Gospel message to his co-workers. The case of the rape and killing of Anna Brown of the Osage Nation is just one illustration of the particular violence of racism against native peoples, some of whom had become rich from the oil industry. The role of William Lyon Mackenzie, later to become Canada's prime minister, in educating John D. Rockefeller on the importance of unions and the protection of workers will catch the interest of Canadians.

Dochuk focuses on the United States and the integration of oil into the deepest elements of its culture, the revolutionary nature of its foundation, the myth of its being a Light to the World and its self-perceived mission to spread democracy around the world, all finding foundation in the kinds of Christianity it made its own. As oil is fluid, however, so is the spread of its effects, economically, politically and culturally. Dochuk has also been diligent in assembling data on American involvement in the Canadian oil fields, in African countries (cf. pp. 464-467 on boycotts in Nigeria)

and more extensively in the Middle East. In all of these instances, religious players were involved. In the Middle East, for example, the so-called "independents" attempted early accord with Israel (1950s), whereas Rockefeller and majors succeeded, but not easily, in the Arab states. In both of these cases, Dochuk points out, the major players brought religious convictions to bear on their ambitions. Many independents saw the establishment of Israel and Zionism, in particular, as the fulfilment of biblical prophecy and the furthering of the apocalyptic approach of the End Times. For most liberal Christians, the ecumenical notion of cooperation with other religions, such as Islam, and hence the negotiations with the Arab states, melded nicely with their economic and political ambitions. Chapter 7, "Holy Grounds," captures the heady, but also painstaking, efforts of American oilers attempting to establish influence and even control over oil production in the Middle East. From the beginning, the nature of the political landscape and the United States' attempts to keep both Israel and the Arab states within their sphere of influence are highly reliant on the murky nature of oil politics and on religious players. William Eddy, a professor and son of missionaries, who had learned Arabic first by chanting with "holy men" on street corners in Cairo in the 1920s, was one such player. His goal was to build international cooperation based on "religious brotherhood." He became an effective cultural broker for the extension of American oil interests in the Middle East (pp. 293ff).

The political power shifts within the United States are signalled at the beginning of Chapter 10 as Alberta's premier, Preston Manning, officially opened the Canadian Oil Fields, a project resulting from a collaboration with those Dochuk calls "the new evangelicals." These included J. Edgar Pew and internationally known evangelist Billy Graham. They were fresh off the Republican National Convention of 1964, which saw the ascendency of Barry Goldwater over Nelson Rockefeller as leader of the Republican Party, a political turning point for the so-called evangelical Christians. This association of many evangelical Christian groups with the most conservative wing of the Republican Party would only grow stronger in the following years up to the present.

Anointed with Oil concludes with "The End of the American Century" (Chapter 12) and an epilogue on God and oil in the new millennium. In his usual style of intensive data, large landscape and biographical narratives, Dochuk takes the reader through the oil

crisis of the 1970s, the Middle East's growing control of oil, and the increasing awareness of an environmental crisis. In all of these categories Dochuk maintains a focus on the complex interlocking of the economic, political, cultural (especially religious, Islam as well as Christianity) and social dimensions of oil.

Those who are specialists in various fields, such as economics, labour relations, political science and religious studies, might object to the wide-ranging nature of the treatment of these areas. Religion scholars, for example, may find the characterization of the religion of the "independents" or "new evangelicals" to be somewhat reductionist. Yet the thesis is certainly viable and the amount of data Dochuk has assembled here is truly impressive. He offers a compelling historical background to the present divisions and challenges to democracy that we see emerging in the United States today. Also, there is much ground throughout the text for both students and more advanced researchers to pursue further. The narrative ends on page 560. The last 128 pages feature summaries of major characters and corporations, an exhaustive list of acronyms, a bibliography and most importantly over 50 pages of notes, some of which give extensive additional background information and explanation of the text. There is also a very detailed and helpful index.

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