

Professor Hugh McLeod BA, PhD (Cantab), FBA

Emeritus Professor of Church History

[Department of History \(/schools/historycultures/departments/history/index.aspx\)](/schools/historycultures/departments/history/index.aspx)

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About

I am a historian specialising in the religious history of 19th and 20th century. I recently retired from my Birmingham chair, but I am still very active in research and postgraduate supervision.

Qualifications

Hugh McLeod took his BA in History at Cambridge University in 1966 and his PhD in 1971. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Lund (2003), University of Helsinki (2011) and the Open University (2012). In 2008 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

Biography

In 1970 he came to Birmingham as Research Fellow in Modern History. After teaching at Warwick University, he taught in the Department of Theology at Birmingham from 1973 to 2004, becoming Professor of Church History in 1994, and Head of Department 1995-7, before returning to Modern History in 2004. He has held visiting positions at the Universities of Amsterdam, Uppsala and Münster, has been a Fellow of the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies, has given the Vonhoff Lectures at the University of Groningen (2004) and the Hulsean Lectures at the University of Cambridge (2008), was president of the Ecclesiastical History Society 2002-3, and of CIHEC, the international organisation of historians of Christianity 2005-2010.

Teaching

- Seminars for the MA and MPhilB in the History of Christianity.

Postgraduate supervision

Supervising PhD theses on Josephine Butler, Joseph Sturge and anti-slavery, J.W.Graham and Quaker modernism, Christian vegetarian movements, the Labour Churches, Congregationalism in the Edwardian period, Nonconformists and war.

Research

McLeod's research is focused on the social history of religion in western Europe and the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries. His most recent book, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2007. The period from the later 1950s to the early 1970s was a time of decisive religious change throughout the Western world. In many countries there was a rapid decline in church-going, and at the same time the religious options widened dramatically. The 'Sixties' were an international phenomenon in religion as in so much else, and while the central focus of the book is on England, considerable attention is also given to other countries, notably France and the United States. The book makes extensive use of oral history in order to show how the changes were experienced by 'ordinary people', but at the same time the explosive events of these years are placed within the context of longer-term social change.

He is working on two projects at present. The first is '*Religion and the Rise of Sport in Modern England*' (the subject of his Hulsean Lectures in March 2008) The lectures focused on the period from the French Revolution to the Second World War, arguing that in this period sport provided an arena in which many of the battles between religious and secularising forces and between rival versions of Christianity were fought out. During this period the relationship between religion and sport went through successive phases of repulsion in the first half of the 19th century, growing attraction in the middle decades of the century, intimacy in the later 19th century, and gradual separation in the 20th century. The book will look at each side of this many-sided and constantly changing relationship, including elite and amateur sport, 'muscular Christians' and those for whom sport offered a way of escape from the all too powerful influences of religion in English society. It will also look at developments since World War II, and it will place England in an international context, drawing on research in other countries, such as the United States, France and Ireland, where more work on this theme has been done.

As a Fellow of the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies at Uppsala in 2010 he was part of a group researching long-term patterns of religious change in the modern West. The second project focuses on a theme of considerable contemporary academic and media interest, namely the differences and similarities between the religious trajectories of the United States and Western Europe since the 1790s. In spite of the large volume of work recently published on this topic he believes that most of it suffers from a tendency to underestimate the similarities as well as inadequate explanations for the differences.

Past research

His first book, *Class and Religion in the late Victorian City* (1974) was a study of London between 1880-1914. Drawing on contemporary social surveys, statistics of church-going, autobiographies and local church records, it introduced themes, including urbanisation, secularisation, and the relationship between religion and social class, which have remained central to his work. It prepared the way for his most ambitious project, *Piety and Poverty: Working Class Religion in Berlin, London and New York 1870-1914* (1996), a comparative study of church, synagogue and popular religion in three of the world's greatest cities, highlighting the interaction between religion and class, gender and ethnicity.

McLeod's second book, *Religion and the People of Western Europe 1789-1970* (1981), a revised edition of which appeared as *Religion and the People of Western Europe 1789-1989* (1997), was a pioneering attempt at identifying long-term patterns of religious development, with special reference to the relationships between religion and

politics, and between religion and social change. Another work of synthesis was *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914* (1996), which made considerable use of material from interviews conducted by the pioneers of oral history in the 1960s and 1970s.

Secularisation in Western Europe 1848-1914 (2000) compared trends in England, France and Germany, looking not only at changes in individual belief and practice and relations between church and state, but also at changing national identities and the role of religion in popular culture. He has edited several books, either singly or as part of a team, including in 2006 *World Christianities c.1914-c.2000, volume 9 of the Cambridge History of Christianity*, volume 9 of the Cambridge History of Christianity.

Other activities

He is a vice-president of CIHEC, the international organisation of historians of Christianity. He is editor of the Routledge series, Christianity and Society in the Modern World, which he founded with the late Bob Scribner in 1983, and he is on the editorial board of *Church History*, *Church History and Religious Culture*, *Hispania Sacra*, the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, *Quaker Studies* and Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte.

Publications

- Forthcoming: 'Religion, politics and sport in Western Europe, c.1870-1939'
- Forthcoming: 'The "sportsman" and the "muscular Christian": rival ideals in nineteenth-century England'
- 'Sport and Religion in England, c.1790-1914,' in Nick J.Watson and Andrew Parker (eds), *Sports and Christianity* (Routledge, 2013), pp 112-130
- 'Separation of church and state: an elusive (illusive?) ideal,' in Karl Gabriel, Christel Gärtner and Detlef Pollack (eds), *Umstrittene Säkularisierung: soziologische und historische Analysen zur Differenzierung von Religion und Politik* (Berlin University Press, 2012), pp 460-480
- 'Homosexual Law Reform, 1953-67,' in Melanie Barber and Stephen Taylor (eds), *From the Reformation to the Permissive Society: A Miscellany in celebration of the 400th Anniversary of Lambeth Palace Library* (Boydell Press, 2010), pp 657-78
- *The Religious Crisis of the 1960's* (Oxford University Press 2007)
- Editor of and contributor of five chapters to *The Cambridge History of Christianity, volume 9, World Christianities c.1914-c.2000* (Cambridge University Press 2006)
- 'God and the gallows: Christianity and capital punishment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,' in Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds), *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation* (Boydell & Brewer, 2004), pp 330-356
- Editor with Werner Ustorf and author of Introduction to *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe 1750-2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- "'Thews and Sinews": Nonconformists and Sport in Nineteenth-Century England,' in David Bebbington and Timothy Larsen (eds), *Christianity and Cultural Aspirations* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2003)
- 'Anticlericalism in Britain, c.1870-1914,' in Nigel Aston and Matthew Cragoe (eds), *Anticlericalism* (Alan Sutton, 2000), pp 198-220
- *Secularisation in Western Europe 1848-1914*, Palgrave Macmillan 2000

