

Faith in Democracy?
Religion and Politics in Canada

Faith in Democracy?
Religion and Politics in Canada

Edited by

John Young and Boris DeWiel

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

Faith in Democracy? Religion and Politics in Canada, Edited by John Young and Boris DeWiel

This book first published 2009

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2009 by John Young and Boris DeWiel and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-0117-8, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-0117-1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables and Figures	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
Faith and Politics in Canada	
John F. Young	
Chapter One.....	13
A Complicated Story: Exploring the Contours of Secularization and Persisting Religiosity in Canada	
Mebs Kanji and Ron Kuipers	
Chapter Two	36
The Charter and Civil Religion	
John von Heyking	
Chapter Three	61
The Autonomy Complex: From Creativity to Alienation and Oppression	
Boris DeWiel	
Chapter Four.....	88
Staking out Sacred Space: Muslims in Canadian Politics	
Paul S. Rowe	
Chapter Five	114
Consensual Shari'a Arbitration and Local Values Communities in Liberal Society: Splendid Isolationism versus the Search for Moral Referents	
John Soroski	
Chapter Six	151
Freedom of Religion and Terrorism in Canada	
Barry Cooper	
Appendix A	167
Contributors.....	189
Index.....	190

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1-1.....	4
Protestant and Catholic identification as a percentage of total population of Canada	
Table 1-2.....	5
Number of Religious Believers as Percentage of Provincial Populations in Canada (2001)	
Table 2-1.....	18
Dimensions and Indicators of Religiosity	
Figure 2-1	21
Average Degree of Religiosity in Various Societies	
Table 2-2.....	22
Religiosity in Various Societies	
Figure 2-2	29
Average Differences in Religiosity between People in Advanced Industrial and Agrarian Societies	
Figure 2-3	30
Average Differences in Religiosity between People in Advanced Industrial and Agrarian Societies by Generation	
Figure 2-4	31
Average Differences in Religiosity between Young People in Advanced Industrial and Agrarian Societies by Gender	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Earlier drafts of these papers were presented at a seminar held at the University of Northern British Columbia. The authors wish to thank the participants of this seminar and UNBC for its support of such inquiry. We also thank Tara Rogers and Clarence Hofsink for their research and editorial assistance.

INTRODUCTION

FAITH AND POLITICS IN CANADA

JOHN F. YOUNG

The title of this collection of essays, *Faith in Democracy?*, questions the capacity of Canadian democracy to embrace religious belief and disparate faith groups as legitimate players on the political stage. This is more than a rhetorical question, as issues and public policies in contemporary Canada reflect an increasing concern that religion and religious belief ought not to intrude in political debate and matters of governance. Faith risks relegation to the private sector. An example is the tempest that followed Pope Benedict's initial incursion into Canadian politics. In the immediate aftermath of the parliamentary decision to change the legal definition of marriage, Pope Benedict declared that Canada's laws allowing same-sex marriage were evidence of God's exclusion from the public sphere. Speaking to Canadian bishops, the Pope was critical of Catholic politicians in Canada who ignore the teachings of the Church, and yield to "ephemeral social trends and the spurious demands of opinion polls." He further declared, "In the name of tolerance your country has had to endure the folly of the redefinition of spouse, and in the name of freedom of choice it is confronted with the daily destruction of unborn children."¹ The Pope's statements caused no small stir. One proponent of same sex marriage responded by pointing out that Canada does not have a state religion, and that politicians "have a responsibility to not be proponents of a particular faith when making decisions that affect everyone."² Such a solution suggests that religious beliefs have only diminished status in the pantheon of ideas. They are private matters and have no role to play in the theatre of public policy. Religious leaders who engage in ongoing political debate ostensibly violate the separation of church and state.³ All beliefs may be equal, but some beliefs are more equal than others.

Yet religion is nothing new to the Canadian public square, and has intersected with politics throughout Canadian history. When Lord Durham

responded to the rebellions of 1837 and famously described Canada as “two nations warring in the bosom of a single state,” he had in mind much more than a dispute over language. Religious tension and conflict between friends and foes of Catholicism were fundamental to early Canadian politics. This tension was manifest not only in the pursuit of responsible government, but also in other subsequent policy arenas such as education and immigration. Such involvement was not considered trespass, but part of the play of politics. As John Webster Grant described, the representation of interests connected with organized religion helped establish religious pluralism as an important part of Canadian identity.⁴ Grant also highlighted that it was not the conflict itself, but the dynamics of that pluralism that had the most telling impact on society. Writing in the 1970s, he declared,

Undoubtedly, we have entered an era of religious pluralism. The future is likely to belong, however, neither to a static pluralism of inherited denominational traditions, nor to a polarized pluralism of competing claims to religious control, but rather to a dynamic pluralism of cells acting as leaven in the lump of society.⁵

How dynamic is religion in Canadian politics today? Is it now leaven in the lump linked to change and development in Canada or is it a reactionary force intent to defend and perpetuate the traditions of yesterday?

Canada’s connection with religious pluralism is certainly one source of its commitments to tolerance and multiculturalism. Yet these commitments also invite study of the consequences of axiological heterogeneity. Whether we refer to value pluralism, splendid isolationism, public morality, or moral relativism, ultimately we focus on the influence of moral perspectives within society, and the authoritative allocation of values that politics determine. Despite any efforts to set religion aside as an active ingredient, religious belief has played, and should continue to play, an important role in this contestation. To suggest it ought not to be part of public discussion and debate or influence public policy is to diminish democracy—not because the Bible or the Koran are superior political texts, but because democracy is, at its core, a debate.⁶ As the boundaries of public debate have broadened over past generations to include a multiplicity of perspectives, including ideas and beliefs previously considered socially unacceptable, it now seems odd to encourage the exclusion of values and beliefs that so recently were fancied as mainstream. Efforts to push such beliefs outside the public square set a dangerous precedent, provide rationale for further exclusion rather than inclusion, and logically culminate in monism rather than pluralism.⁷ At the

same time, as the arena admits greater disparity in values, it may be natural to question whether a Babel like confusion of disparate values and beliefs can foster not only passive tolerance of conflicting beliefs, but civic commitment, engagement, and responsibility. Grant's heaven presupposes not only contrasting values but also common commitments.

An introduction to the study of religion and politics in Canada must highlight that the country is hardly a single entity or in possession of a single identity. It may be more appropriate to suggest that there are many different Canadas. As a federal state, there are significant differences across the ten provinces and three territories, something taken as a given by Canadians, but sometimes poorly understood outside Canada. There are different solitudes between the Canada found in large urban settings and the Canada of rural communities and small cities. Inter and even intra provincial variations might explain why Canadian efforts to define itself tend more towards what Canada is *not* (i.e. not the United States of America) than what Canada is. Those few federal planks that extend, however thinly, across the provinces and connect all Canadians support heavy loads. Thus, the Medical Care Act is regarded by some as a supporting beam of our national identity. Efforts to reform the Act are thus perceived as a dismantling of Canada, as if prior to the Act in 1966 there was no Canada, only too much territory and not enough population or government. In order to profile some of these differences across Canada, we provide here a snapshot of religious pluralism in Canadian society. This pluralism is manifest not only through the multi denominational beliefs of Canadians, but also through federalism and public policy. We then review some of the recent flashpoints in Canadian politics to illuminate the challenges inherent in balancing competing values and beliefs.

According to the 2001 census, Canada is still a predominantly Christian country, even if it is reluctant to identify itself as such. The census suggests that three out of four Canadians identify themselves as Christians: including Catholic (43%), Protestant (29%), Orthodox (1.6%) and self identified "other" Christian faiths (2.6%).⁸ There are more than a dozen different Christian denominations in Canada with membership greater than 100,000 adherents, and so religious pluralism is well engrained in Canadian society. Yet to even loosely describe Canada as Christian requires specific qualifications. The declaration of religious affiliation or identity, for example, is a poor measure of religiosity, defined by the degree to which religious beliefs are considered important to the individual and measured by the frequency of religious practice and attendance. Only 32% of all Canadians attend religious services at least monthly, while 54% of Canadians engage in monthly or more frequent

religious practices such as prayer.⁹ Perhaps more relevant are data that reveal trends across time. The data in Table 1 suggest that while the Christian population is still a majority, it is also a diminishing proportion of the Canadian population. Most noticeable is the persistent decline of Protestants.

Table 1-1: Protestant and Catholic identification as a percentage of total population of Canada

	Protestants	Catholics	Percent of Total Population
1901	56	42	98
1971	44	46	90
1991	35	45	80
2001	29	43	72

Source: Statistics Canada

Why the marked and consistent Protestant decline? One explanation is change in immigration policy. Protestants comprised about 40% of the immigrant population prior to 1961, but fell to just 10% of all immigrants in the decade between 1991 and 2001.¹⁰ Immigration also accounts for rapid increases in the numbers of Islam, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh believers in Canada. The rates of growth in Canada for each of these religions are dramatic. Between 1991 and 2001 the Muslim population in Canada grew by 129%; Hindu 89%; Sikh 89%; and Buddhist 84%.¹¹ Immigration can also help to explain some continuity in the proportion of Catholics in Canada. Although the percentage of immigrants who identify themselves as Catholics has declined (from 39% prior to 1961 to 23% in the decade ending in 2001), Catholics continue to be the largest religious group among all immigrants to Canada in each decade since 1961.¹² However, immigration can only explain part of Protestant decline. Although the population of non Christian religions has doubled over the previous decade, they still collectively account for only 5% of the total Canadian population.¹³

Two further explanations for Protestant decline are examined more closely in the next chapter of this volume by Kuipers and Kanji. Over the last decade, there has been an increase of almost 1.5 million Canadians without any religious affiliation. This growth means that one in every six Canadians now has no religion, a proportionate increase from 12% of the population in 1991 to 16% one decade later. On first analysis, the standard

modernization thesis seems to hold: the more urban, industrialized and educated the population, the weaker the demand for religious association.¹⁴ The growth of the state, particularly in such realms as health and social services and public education, has clearly undermined some traditional roles of the church, and thus contributes to this diminution of demand. Reginald Bibby argues, however, that the decrease in religious affiliation does not confirm any increase in atheism or secularism. He suggests that many individuals still entertain religious beliefs but do not associate with specific religious groups or identities.¹⁵ Be that as it may, the non religious find their largest share (35%) of any age cohort among adults between the ages of 25 and 44 and their smallest share (6.2%) in the age cohort over 65 years. These data may indicate future declines in religious affiliation, although not directly connected to Protestantism.

Table 1-2: Number of Religious Believers as Percentage of Provincial Populations in Canada (2001)

Province Territory	Population	Catholic	Protestant	Other Christian	Non Christian	No Religion
	thousands		<i>Percentage of population</i>			
Newfoundland	508	36.9	59.7	0.6	0.2	2.5
Prince Edward Island	133	47.4	42.8	2.6	0.2	6.5
Nova Scotia	898	36.5	48.8	1.5	0.9	11.6
New Brunswick	720	53.6	36.6	1.2	0.5	7.8
Quebec	7,126	83.2	4.7	2.2	3.8	5.6
Ontario	11,286	34.3	34.9	5.0	8.7	16.0
Manitoba	1,104	26.5	43.1	5.4	3.0	18.3
Saskatchewan	963	29.8	46.6	4.3	0.9	15.4
Alberta	2,941	25.7	38.9	5.7	4.5	23.1
British Columbia	3,869	17.2	31.4	6.1	8.5	35.1
Yukon	29	21.0	33.2	4.0	1.2	37.4
Northwest Territories	37	45.7	31.3	2.9	1.3	17.4
Nunavut	27	23.3	66.7	3.2	0.2	6.0

Source: Statistics Canada

Kuipers and Kanji also point out that the decline in Protestantism may have much to do with choices that mainstream Protestants have made

concerning their practices and doctrines. Some mainstream Protestant churches have abandoned some of the traditionalism that helped define their faith.¹⁶ This “supply side” explanation, encouraged by Rodney Stark and other scholars,¹⁷ carries some weight when we compare the real number decline among mainstream Protestant churches in Canada (770,000 adherents in the 1990s) with the increase in membership among “other” Christian congregations (427,000 during the same period).¹⁸ More than half of those who left the four main Protestant Churches - the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church or the Lutheran Church - were compensated by increases to Baptist, Evangelical, Mormon, Adventist, and other Christian faiths.¹⁹

All these explanations not only help explain the decline of mainstream Protestantism, but also help illuminate the changing contours of the religious landscape in Canada. Further detail of this landscape is also provided when we focus on specific regions, which help us recognize the different Canadas. When we look at provincial populations, for example, there are very noticeable differences. Table Two summarizes some of the most identifiable characteristics. Newfoundland, which joined Canada in 1949, is the only province with a Protestant majority, while Quebec is the only province with a Catholic majority. British Columbia, on the other hand, has a plurality of those who profess no religion. And the three northern territories each have different religious landscapes.

Certainly, historical and cultural factors are a large part of the explanation for such provincial variation. Thus, Quebec maintains an enduring identification with Catholicism, although this affiliation in no way suggests high levels of commitment to Catholic doctrine or to regular attendance. In fact, Quebec has among the lowest levels of religiosity to complement the highest levels of religious affiliation in Canada.²⁰ Additionally, immigration patterns facilitate the emergence of ethnic and cultural neighbourhoods, particularly in large metropolitan areas, such as Toronto and Vancouver. Yet historical and cultural factors again reveal only part of the story. There are also important institutional and structural explanations that are part of these provincial differences. One example is the difference in education policy across the provinces. For better or worse, the Federal Government in Canada plays no meaningful role in the delivery of public education. Provincial jurisdiction has meant that the curriculum and financing of schools are determined at the provincial level, which has led to a variety of distinct models across Canada. While all provinces provide full funding for public schools, four provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec) provide similar funding for “separate schools,” a designation that has reference to Catholic schools in the first

three provinces and to English speaking schools in Quebec.²¹ Separate boards are not recognized in the other six provinces, including Manitoba, which first abandoned Catholic schools in 1890 and provoked a national crisis. Just as relevant as the existence of separate school boards is the policy in five provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec) to provide public money to independent schools, in some cases as high as 60% of comparable funding to public schools. Since the majority of these schools have strong religious identities, the pursuit of government funding has led to a series of court challenges when such funding is denied, and, in the case of Ontario, even to investigations by the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

At issue is why the provincial government in Ontario provides full funding for Catholic schools and no public money for independent schools with other religious identities and curriculum. UNHRC ruled that Canada was under obligation to provide an effective remedy to eliminate discrimination in the allocation of public funding to schools, and implied that either public funding should be extended to all religious groups, or that public funding for Catholic schools should be terminated.²² Yet the Canadian government protected the status quo with reference to the constitutional division of powers between federal and provincial governments and the historical political bargain that protected enumerated school financing within the Constitution. Eliminating public funding for Catholic schools would require a constitutional amendment, a ridiculously difficult challenge in the Canadian context. Alternatively, extending full funding to other denominational schools in Ontario alone would cost that province up to 700 million dollars per year, an expense best left to political, rather than judicial, decision making.²³ Although UNHRC reaffirmed its concerns in November 2005, the decision continues to be ignored by the governments of Canada and Ontario, suggesting some limits to tolerance do exist. This issue of public funding to religious schools flared most recently in the Ontario provincial election in 2007. The election platform for the leading opposition party included promises to extend full funding to religious schools, which became a dominant issue of the campaign and became a strong factor in the re election of the government.²⁴

While we will not investigate any correlation between such religious funding and religious identity here, such policy choices not only attract political attention and controversy, but also help define and shape the religious profiles of each province. Together with the overall dynamics of religious identification, federalism is another important context for the study of religion in Canada. Public policy is determined nationally and

provincially, and each of the provinces has its own unique constellation of religious identities and political forces. This helps explain why some of the issues discussed in subsequent chapters reflect provincial decisions and politics and how religious pluralism impacts national identity.

A further feature of the religious landscape in contemporary Canada is that there is now little viability for political parties with overt religious platforms. As mentioned above, this has not always been the case, and both the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the Social Credit Party were good examples of 20th century religious-political movements.²⁵ Both of these parties came to power at the provincial level and left their marks on Canadian politics. Since the CCF reorganized itself in 1961 and entered into closer relationships with organized labour, the successor New Democratic Party has shed much of its Christian identity. While it maintains a social gospel mindset, the party's positions on contemporary issues tend to reflect post Christian and post materialist interests. It is more likely that political influence has had a larger impact on the doctrine of the United Church of Canada than religious doctrine has shaped the New Democratic Party.²⁶ The Social Credit Party has not played any significant role since the 1970s, although the Reform Party of Canada that rode a populist wave in national politics in the 1990s was viewed by many as a second coming of Social Credit. Certainly the Reform Party relied on religious believers for support both at the ballot box and within the organization. But the party itself was a populist movement without an overt religious platform and Reform remnants eventually merged with remnants of the Progressive Conservative Party to form the Conservative Party of Canada in 2003. It is clear the articulation of traditional religious interests in Canada is *within* parties rather than *by* political parties. One particular exception is the Christian Heritage Party, which seeks to apply inerrant biblical principles to Canadian politics. The party has been running in national elections for 20 years, but has never elected a candidate. In the January 2006 Federal election, the CHP ran only 45 candidates in the 308 ridings throughout Canada and won 28,000 votes, or 0.2% of the total vote. In this instance, the exception proves the rule. While groups of believers can influence candidate and leadership selection, parties that pursue success at the ballot box have been careful to downplay references to religion.

Also missing in Canada is an organized and influential religious lobby. Much has been made of the political influence of the religious right in the American context. But despite some consternation among the political left in Canada and some hope among religious interests, religious groups have little clout in Canada's corridors of power. Canada has not sanctioned

established religion since 1854, and neither does it enjoy the civil religion tradition that has been cultivated in the United States.²⁷ While Canadians implore God to keep their land glorious and free as they sing their national anthem, traditional religion finds few examples of public expression in daily life in Canada. The United States, in contrast, has promoted a consciousness of a redeemer nation in pursuit of a divine purpose. The specifics of religious belief may vary, but patriotism presupposes trust in God. The United States also has a political system that possesses multiple points of access, with checks and balances among the judiciary, Congress, and the President. It includes citizen sponsored initiatives and referenda and greater expectations of elected representatives voting in the legislatures according to constituent rather than party interests. Such access improves the prospects for organizations, religious or not, to influence legislation. The emergence of a religious right in America was also a consequence of judicial decisions and political initiatives from four decades ago. Reactions to such national level decisions as *Roe v. Wade* and the campaign for an Equal Rights Amendment fuelled greater awareness of the need for national action. Political participation among religious groups followed, as did cross denominational political organizations. This participation was directed towards federal politics rather than local or state policy. Canada as a nation has had no such crystallization of a religious right. Or at least not yet. More recent debates behind the redefinition of marriage and perceived secularism of the Supreme Court of Canada and various Human Rights Commissions have spurred stronger reactions from religious leaders and believers in Canada. In this volume, John von Heyking explores the emergence of a secularist civil faith and inerrant Charter, while Boris DeWiel studies the theology of secularism relevant to the Canadian context.

The number of issues that have surfaced over the past decade suggests not only a conflict of values, but also an intensifying struggle to define the boundaries of debate in Canada. The disputes are many, and connect directly with the allocation of values and rights and the persistence of religion in the public square. Can a Catholic social organization, the Knights of Columbus, refuse to rent their hall to a lesbian couple for their marriage celebration? Might a born again Christian require patrons of his copy services shop to take their business elsewhere? Can a school teacher write letters to the editor of a local newspaper opposing gay rights without losing his teaching certification? Can a student attend school with a ceremonial dagger? Can a news magazine publish cartoons with religious content considered newsworthy to some and offensive to others? As marriage is redefined, can a fundamentalist sect legally practice polygamy?

Managing and resolving such contestation are not easy tasks. Some of this contestation is correctly identified as the politics of universality in conflict with the politics of difference.²⁸ Yet within such disputes we also find efforts to suggest that public policy choices must be value neutral. Religious belief is increasingly perceived as a particular identity and not in the universal interest, which threatens to overshadow the more established embrace between religious pluralism and Canadian identity. Canada thus appears willing to yield to the temptation to recognize an absence of religion as a foundation for the promotion of tolerance and a common identity. In contemporary Canada, secularism thus auditions for the role of neutral adjudicator for democratic government, even if secularism lacks neutrality and is but a variation on a religious theme.

Tolerance is a much simpler value and not much of a virtue when it can also be confused with indifference. I am mostly indifferent to my neighbour's passion for the accordion, for example, especially when his practice is unheard and within the confines of his own walls. But when he practices into the night outdoors on his patio, my commitment to tolerance is tested. So it is with contemporary Canada, as changes in the relative commitment to religious beliefs in society influence and shape Canadian law. How tolerant is Canada is tested as substantial change is introduced in public policy. The last three chapters in this volume address consequences and tensions connected to Canada's commitment to religious pluralism. The attention to Islam is less centered on the specifics of Muslim faith than on the challenges of reconciling universal and particular interests. Although Muslims are a small minority in Canada, global events and dramatic rates of growth combine to foster some measure of alarm, possibly misguided. Paul Rowe looks at Muslims in Canada and the degree to which the Canadian context shapes Muslim communities and political behaviour. John Soroski studies the difficulty in reconciling both universal and particular perspectives in liberalism and in Canadian law. Barry Cooper asks whether addressing the threat of extremist groups might reshape civil liberties in Canada.

Collectively, these essays address John Webster Grant's assessment that religious pluralism provides leaven for Canadian society. Secularism as an ersatz religion is now part of that leaven. With the displacement of traditional religious values, however, it remains to be seen whether secularism can strengthen the vitality of religious pluralism. Additionally, whether or not Canada's commitment to pluralism can embrace Islam and encourage Islam's embrace of pluralism will help determine the endurance of faith in democracy and heavily influence Canadian politics in the future.

Notes

¹ "Pope Scolds Canada on Gay Marriage, Abortion," Associated Press, September 8, 2006. <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2006/09/08/pope-canada.html>. For the text of the speech, see "Address of His Holiness benedict XVI to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Canada-Ontario on their 'Ad Limina' Visit," http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060908_canada-ontario_en.html.

² "Pope Scolds Canada."

³ Another case in point would be then Federal Minister Pierre Pettigrew's criticism of the Catholic Church's position on the redefinition of marriage more than one year before the Pope's statement. Pettigrew claimed that the Church had no right to engage in such a political debate, declaring that "the separation of Church and state is one of the most beautiful inventions of modern times." See "Church Told to Butt Out: Same Sex Debate No Place for Religion," *National Post* (January 28, 2005), A1. Oddly, some proponents of this separation have argued the state has an obligation to establish guidelines for the enforcement of moral relativism, compliance to which would coerce churches to alter their religious doctrine. This would supposedly strengthen the separation of church and state. See *CBC's Radio Commentary*, July 18, 2005, <http://www.cbc.ca/insite/COMMENTARY/2005/7/-18.html>.

⁴ John Webster Grant, "Religion and the Quest for a National Identity: The Background in Canadian History," in Peter Slater, ed., *Religion and Culture in Canada* (Waterloo, Canadian Society for the Study of Religion: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1977), 7-22. Quote on pp 19-20.

⁵ Grant, pp. 19-20.

⁶ See, for example, Boris DeWiel, *Democracy: A History of Ideas* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000).

⁷ See William Galston, "Religion and the Limits of Liberal Democracy," in Douglas Farrow, ed., *Recognizing Religion in a Secular Society: Essays in Pluralism, Religion, and Public Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 41-50.

⁸ Statistics Canada, "2001 Census: Analysis series, Religions in Canada" (May 13, 2003) Catalogue No. 96F0030XIE2001015.

⁹ Warren Clark and Grant Schellenberg, "Who's Religious?" Statistics Canada: *Canadian Social Trends* (Summer, 2006) Catalogue No. 11-008. The data are from the General Social Survey from 2004. More tellingly, religiosity remains higher among immigrant populations than among Canadian born. See also Colin Lindsay, "Canadians attend weekly religious services less than 20 years ago," *Matter of Fact* (Statistics Canada, June 2008).

¹⁰ Statistics Canada: Religions in Canada.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ For more on the debate concerning secularization, see Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Reginald W. Bibby, "Nevers, Nones, and Nots: Latent Life in Unexpected Places," unpublished paper, www.reginaldbibby.com.

¹⁶ Roger O'Toole, "Religion in Canada: Its Development and Contemporary Situation," *Social Compass* 43:1 (1996), 119-134.

¹⁷ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (Rutgers University Press, 2005).

¹⁸ Statistics Canada: Religions in Canada.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See Warren Clark and Grant Schellenberg, "Who's Religious?" and Reginald Bibby, "Religion à la Carte in Quebec: A Problem of Demand, Supply, or Both?" published in French, "La Religion à la carte au Québec: Un problème d'offre, de demande, ou des deux?" in *Globe* 10:2 (2007-2008), 151-179. English version available at <http://www.reginaldbibby.com/papers.html>.

²¹ This latter designation is only since 1996. Prior to that date, Quebec funded Catholic and Protestant school boards, after 1996, French and English language schools.

²² United Nations, Human Rights Committee, 67th Session: Communication No. 694/1996, p.13.

²³ Larry Johnston and Susan Swift, "Public Funding of Private and Denominational Schools in Canada," Toronto: Ontario Legislative Library, 2000, p.3 <http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/1000/10286133.htm>.

²⁴ See Andrew Cardozo, "Ontario Election proved funding of religious schools too close to segregation..." *The Hill Times*, October 15, 2007.

²⁵ See Bruce L. Guenther, "Populism, Politics and Christianity in Western Canada," *Historical Papers: Canadian Society of Church History* (2000), 93-112.

²⁶ Roger O'Toole refers to criticism that the United Church of Canada is less a church than "the New Democratic Party at prayer." See O'Toole, "Religion in Canada."

²⁷ Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96:1 (Winter, 1967) 1-21; Wilfred M. McClay, "Soul of a Nation," *The Public Interest* no. 155 (Spring, 2004) 4-19.

²⁸ See Charles Taylor, et al, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

CHAPTER ONE

A COMPLICATED STORY: EXPLORING THE CONTOURS OF SECULARIZATION AND PERSISTING RELIGIOSITY IN CANADA

MEBS KANJI AND RON KUIPERS

I. Secularization: More than a “Subtraction Story”?

The “secularization thesis” has become a dominant theme in the contemporary academic study of religion. According to this thesis, the heady period of intellectual foment and ferment called the Enlightenment inaugurated historical processes of rationalization that would ultimately spell the end of religion as a publicly significant cultural phenomenon. José Casanova describes the way in which those holding this thesis would come to regard the prospects of religion after Enlightenment:

Reduced to a pre-scientific and prelogical primitive form of thought and knowledge, religion necessarily had to disappear with the ever-progressive advancement of knowledge, education, and scientific worldviews. The “darkness” of religious ignorance and superstition would fade away when exposed to the “lights” of reason.”¹

In his monumental work, *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor polemicalizes against this account of religion’s modern fate. He describes this narrative as a dubious “subtraction story,” a story that seeks to explain modern secularization as nothing other than the result of a continuous process through which “human beings have lost, or sloughed off, or liberated themselves from certain earlier, confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations to knowledge.” Such a subtraction story, he says, mistakenly encourages us to understand modern secularization as little more than a trimming process through which human beings discover “underlying features of human nature which were there all along, but had been

impeded by what is now set aside.”² On this account, historical processes of secularization follow a linear trajectory, along which a segment of humanity can be seen to shed slowly the irrational accretions of myth, religion and the sacred, in order to uncover a rational core of free thought and autonomous science, which may finally come out from under the stifling constraints of heteronomous religious authority.

Taylor finds this subtraction story unconvincing for several reasons. First of all, he thinks it does little to explain how the historically emergent secular alternatives to Western society’s former religious orientation “could become the necessary objective pole of moral or spiritual aspiration, of ‘fullness’.” In order to explain the powerful attraction of these emerging secular options, Taylor asks us to move beyond the common subtraction story and also consider what additional *positive* story must have been told about them. Only such a story, Taylor suggests, can help us understand the historical shift from “a condition in which our highest spiritual and moral aspirations point us inescapably to God, one might say, make no sense without God, to one in which they can be related to a host of different sources, and frequently are referred to sources which deny God.”³

A second and related reason for finding the subtraction story unconvincing is that, in refusing to credit the operation of a more positive narrative, it fails to help us appreciate the full complexity of the modern social landscape. It fails to help us understand the way in which a plethora of spiritual options today, of both sacred and secular varieties, have, in this “age of authenticity,” acquired the power to vie for the hearts, minds and imaginations of those who inhabit it. According to Taylor, “Western modernity, including its secularity, is the fruit of new inventions, newly constructed self-understandings and related practices, and can’t be explained in terms of perennial features of human life.”⁴

The empirical research and analysis we provide in this essay confirms several of Taylor’s suspicions concerning the adequacy of the secularists’ subtraction story. Using the data provided by the World Values Surveys (WVS), we examine various dimensions of contemporary religious life, an examination which reveals a much more complex picture than the typical secularist subtraction story suggests.⁵ In doing so, we focus particular attention on the position Canada occupies with respect to global levels of secularization and persisting religiosity. Do the levels of persisting religiosity in Canada put it in league with the United States, which is often considered to be the sole anomaly to the secularization thesis among advanced industrial nations? Our research suggests an intriguing answer to that question.

Finally, in telling what we consider to be a more complicated story about the effects of secularization processes in advanced industrial nations like Canada, we simultaneously challenge the thesis recently put forward by the political scientists Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart. In *Sacred and Secular*, they set out to defend (albeit in a somewhat mitigated fashion) the subtraction story implicit in the secularization thesis. According to Norris and Inglehart, this thesis retains explanatory force for those fortunate societies that have been able to provide a high level of material comfort and security for their members. As we shall see below, they think that the need for the consolation that religion supposedly provides decreases the day-to-day anxiety of people about issues concerning their material comfort and security. According to Norris and Inglehart, with the exception of the United States, the secularization thesis can in retrospect be understood to have enjoyed a high level of predictive accuracy, especially in predicting the fate of religion in these prosperous societies. Because they tie secularization to material prosperity in this way, they consider persisting and even rising levels of religiosity across the rest of the globe to be primarily due to the material insecurity experienced by members of less prosperous societies.⁶ As the title of our paper suggests, however, we think that, even in advanced industrial nations, the situation is much more complicated than Norris and Inglehart believe. Yet before delving into this analysis of the World Values Survey data, we must first take a closer look at the secularization thesis itself to gain a deeper understanding of the story that Norris and Inglehart affirm, which we propose to complicate.

II. Secularization and Disenchantment: A Decline in Religious “Demand”?

According to Taylor, “a common ‘subtraction’ story attributes everything to disenchantment.”⁷ In introducing the word “disenchantment,” Taylor referred to the influential work of the sociologist Max Weber, who famously described the result of modern processes of secularization and rationalization as “the disenchantment of the world.”⁸ According to this notion, once science provides us with a “naturalistic” explanation of the world, religious beliefs having to do with “God” or “transcendence” must come to be seen as the superfluous vestiges of the “magical” or “enchanted” thinking of a bygone age.⁹ While Weber was aware that there may be losses inherent in this “eclipse of the transcendent” (to use Taylor’s phrase), he remained resolute in describing the modern world as disenchanted. According to Taylor, for Weber “this sense of loss is

inevitable; it is the price we pay for modernity and rationality.... [W]e must courageously accept this bargain, and lucidly opt for what we have inevitably become.”¹⁰

For Weber, our disenchanted world, bereft of the consolations of transcendence once promised by religion, allows for a particularly modern form of thought that is distinctive precisely in its freedom *from* primitive, pre-scientific thought patterns. To this extent, his version of events can be read as a “subtraction story”: in freeing itself from the primitive and the magical, modern thought becomes free *for* the pursuit of scientific discovery. What we are left with, said Weber, is a world which we now consider to be fundamentally “knowable.” Rationalization, the path along which the world becomes disenchanted, implies that “principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation.” This calculability was, for Weber, precisely what it meant for the world to be disenchanted. It meant that “one need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service.”¹¹

Along with historical processes of rationalization, Weber also drew attention to processes of societal differentiation, through which such secular value spheres as the political, economic, aesthetic, erotic and scientific or intellectual have been freed from the authoritative dominance of the Medieval Christian Church to pursue autonomous developmental courses. As a result of such societal differentiation, the religious sphere shrinks in terms of both its scope and its influence.¹² According to the secularization thesis, then, particularly in Weber's version, we have subtraction on two fronts: rationalization (disenchantment) and societal differentiation (the shrinking public significance of the “sacred” sphere).

Today, however, sociologists and other scholars of religion are coming to terms with the fact that the predictions of religion's demise put forward in the classic secularization thesis appear to have been premature. Religious traditions and life patterns have not gone quietly into the private sphere, and various measures of demographic trends such as the WVS show that, if anything, the global population is becoming more rather than less religious.¹³ The secularization thesis has nevertheless remained resilient and influential in the face of such countervailing historical trends in the sociology of religion as well as other intellectual disciplines. Such resilience has led contemporary sociologists of religion like Casanova, David Martin and Peter Berger to suspect the operation of ideological factors in a thesis that claims to be merely descriptive of historical developments.¹⁴

As we noted above, Norris and Inglehart respond to these criticisms of the secularization thesis by mounting what might be described as a “rearguard” action in its defense. In *Sacred and Secular*, they suggest that “talk of burying the secularization theory is premature.”¹⁵ In spite of the fact that WVS data show that, when viewed on a global scale, historical levels of religious participation not only persist but are increasing, they maintain that a qualified version of the secularization thesis can still be maintained and defended. According to their analysis, WVS data show that “the importance of religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those living in poorer nations, facing personal survival-threatening risks.” This aspect of global religiosity suggests to them that “feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal and personal risks” are a key factor driving its increasing levels.¹⁶ In advanced industrial societies like Canada, where citizens enjoy a high level of material security, Norris and Inglehart predict that historical processes of secularization will continue apace.

Norris and Inglehart, then, would not be surprised to come across a news story like the one which ran in the *National Post* on September 13, 2006, in which journalist Dave Rogers reported the imminent closure of Ottawa-Hull’s First Anglican Church (in whose cemetery Ottawa’s founding fathers are buried) because of a severe decline in church attendance and enrollment.¹⁷ Norris and Inglehart would likely view such a story as consistent with their prediction that *demand* for religion and religious services continues to decline in affluent societies such as ours, irrespective of the current state of the *supply* of such services.¹⁸ The language of supply and demand suggests Norris and Inglehart employ a market model of religious trend analysis in their mitigated defense of the secularization thesis. This model, introduced by Rodney Stark and others,¹⁹ claims that “the most influential strands of thought shaping the debate over secularization can be broadly subdivided into two perspectives”—demand-side and supply-side theories. Supply-side theories, such as those put forward by Stark and his colleagues, hold that the human demand for religion remains constant and stable and any observed fluctuations in human religious participation or activity can be explained by fluctuations in the supply of religious services by religious institutions. Demand-side theories, on the other hand, “suggest that as societies industrialize, almost regardless of what religious leaders and organizations attempt, religious habits will gradually erode.”²⁰ That is, as industrialization progresses, the actual demand for religion declines in the affected population. Employing the same language, Norris and Inglehart maintain

that “although the original theory of secularization was flawed in certain regards, it was correct in the demand-side perspective.”²¹

In the analysis that follows, we wish to examine the merits and deficiencies of Norris and Inglehart’s affirmation of the demand-side perspective. Their stance is clearly controversial, as many theorists still see merit in the supply-side perspective. Does a steady decline in a certain population’s participation in and association with various aspects of institutional religious life mean that such people have become less religious or spiritual? We think that a simple yes or no answer to this question belies the complexity of the reality before us. Because the notion of religiosity is so complex, several different dimensions of *human* religious participation need to be considered. Consequently, we need to examine a variety of different aspects of religiosity (including support for mixing religion and politics) in order to confirm or reject any broad-gauged generalizations about secularization. The following data analysis tries to access and portray at least some of that complexity.

III. What Do the World Values Surveys Say?

1. Six Dimensions and Indicators of Religiosity

The World Values Surveys (WVS) provide several measures that deal in some way with the issue of religion. However, different indicators pertain to different aspects of religiosity. We begin our examination, therefore, by organizing the WVS data into six dimensions of religiosity (see Table 1).

Table 2-1: Dimensions and Indicators of Religiosity

I. Subjective religiosity

- 1. (v9) Indicate how important it is in your life: religion?*
- 2. (v196) How important is God in your life?*
- 3. (v186) Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are: a religious person, not a religious person, a convinced atheist, or don’t know?*

II. Religious Involvement

- 1. (v185) Apart from weddings, funeral and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?*
- 2. (v40) Do you belong to religious or church organizations?*
- 3. (v184) Do you belong to a religious denomination, if yes which one?*

III. Prayer

- 1. (v198) Do you take some moments of prayer, meditation or contemplation or something like that?*
- 2. (v199) How often do you pray to God outside of religious services?*
- 3. (v197) Do you find that you get comfort and strength from religion?*

IV. Beliefs

- 1. (v191) Do you believe in God?*
- 2. (v192) Do you believe in life after death?*
- 3. (v193) Do you believe people have a soul?*
- 4. (v194) Do you believe in hell?*
- 5. (v195) Do you believe in heaven?*

V. Confidence in Religious Institutions

- 1. (v147) How much confidence do you have in churches?*
- 2. (v187) Generally speaking, do you think that the churches in your country are giving adequate answers to the moral problems and needs of the individual life?*
- 3. (v188) Generally speaking, do you think that the churches in your country are giving adequate answers to problems of family life?*
- 4. (v189) Generally speaking, do you think that the churches in your country are giving adequate answers to people's spiritual needs?*
- 5. (v190) Generally speaking, do you think that the churches in your country are giving adequate answers to social problems facing our country today?*

VI. Religion and Politics

- 1. (v200) How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following: Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office?*
- 2. (v201) Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections?*
- 3. (v202) It would be better for (this country) if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office?*
- 4. (v203) Religious leaders should not influence government?*

The first dimension considers people's *subjective evaluations* of the relevance that religion and God have in their lives. The second dimension measures people's *religious involvement* in religious services, religious organizations, and religious denominations. The third examines the role that *prayer* plays in people's lives, both in terms of practice and personal gain. The fourth taps people's religious *beliefs*, including their belief in God, life after death, the concept of the soul, and the opposing concepts of heaven and hell. The fifth assesses people's *confidence in religious institutions*, including their ability to give adequate advice on matters of

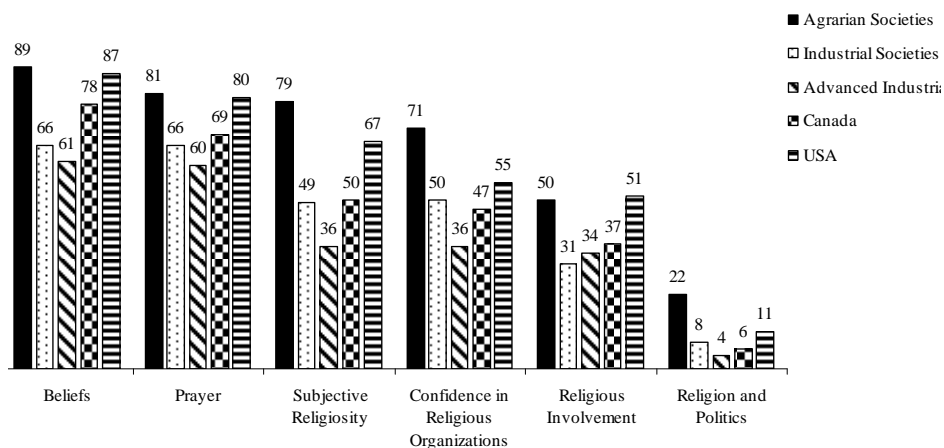
morality, the family, spirituality, and social problems. The sixth and final dimension centers on *the link between religion and politics*. How much influence do people feel religion ought to have in politics?

2. Average Degrees of Religiosity in Various Societies

When we compare the average degree of religiosity on each of these six dimensions across various types of societies – agrarian, industrial and advanced industrial (see Appendix A for a complete listing of the countries included in each of these categories)—we do see, as Norris and Inglehart suggest, that people in advanced industrial societies tend to be less religious than people in agrarian states.

For example, Figure 1 shows that people in advanced industrial societies are less likely to have consistent broad-based religious beliefs and to place less stock in prayer than people in agrarian states. People in advanced industrial societies also have weaker subjective evaluations of their own religiosity and are less likely to place confidence in religious institutions and their advice. And lastly, people in advanced industrial states are less likely to be involved in religion and to support the mixing of religion and politics.

Notice however that not all citizens in advanced industrial states respond in exactly the same ways. Some are clearly more religious than others. Canadians, for example, may not be as religious as Americans, yet they are clearly more religious than average citizens in other advanced industrial states. Notice also that regardless of the type of society that we examine, the evidence consistently shows that the average degree of religiosity varies across different dimensions. For instance, measures pertaining to beliefs and prayer indicate higher average degrees of religiosity than do indicators of subjective religiosity and confidence in religious institutions across all three types of societies. Similarly, measures of subjective religiosity and confidence in religious institutions suggest higher average degrees of religiosity than do measures pertaining to religious involvement and the mixing of religion and politics. Some key points to draw from these data are that degrees of secularization can vary even among advanced industrial societies and they can also vary depending on the measures of religiosity that are employed. An important implication of these findings may be that particular aspects of religion in advanced industrial societies are more or less resilient to forces of industrialization and secularization than others. Any future predictions about secularization, therefore, need to take both of these considerations into account.

Figure 2-1: Average Degree of Religiosity in Various Societies

Note:

Beliefs: People's beliefs in God, life after death, the concept of soul, and the opposing concepts of heaven and hell.

Prayer: The role that prayer has in people's lives, both in terms of practice and personal gain.

Subjective Religiosity: People's subjective evaluations of the relevance that religion and God have in their lives.

Confidence in Religious Institutions: People's confidence in religious institutions' ability to give adequate advice on matters of morality, family, spirituality and social problems.

Religious involvement: People's involvement in religious services, religious organizations and religious denominations.

Religion and Politics: The influence people feel religion ought to have in politics.

Source: 2000 World Values Surveys.

For example, although people in advanced industrial states may appear generally not to be as religious as people in agrarian states, there is evidence to suggest that a strong majority still maintain certain core religious beliefs, and that a strong majority still value prayer, particularly in such countries as Canada and the United States. Secularization in advanced industrial states, however, may be having more devastating consequences for people's sense of subjective religiosity, their confidence

in religious institutions, their religious involvement and their support for the idea of mixing religion and politics. Notice though, that according to these aggregate results, people in advanced industrial societies are in fact more inclined to be involved in religion (34%) than people in (generally less wealthy) industrial societies (31%). This difference suggests the possibility that some form of resurgence in religious involvement (either in the traditional or some new unconventional sense) may be underway in advanced industrial states, and this may have an affect on any future prognostication concerning secularization processes in advanced industrial states. At the very least, as the philosopher Jürgen Habermas reminds us, “we must keep in mind that the dialectic of our own occidental process of secularization has as yet not come to a close.”²² What is more, when we unpack these dimensions into their individual components, we find even more inconsistent results.

Table 2-2: Religiosity in Various Societies

Dimensions and Indicators of Religiosity	Types of Societies			
	Agrarian	Industrial	Advanced Industrial	Canada
I. Subjective religiosity				
1. Importance of religion (very important)	78%	36%	22 %	33%
2. Importance of God (very important)	75%	41%	22%	41%
3. Degree of religiosity (a religious person)	84%	71%	65%	77%
II. Religious Involvement				
1. Frequency of attending religious services (at least once a week)	27%	8%	5%	7%
2. Percentage belonging to religious organization	38%	11%	24%	30%
3. Percentage belonging to a religious denomination	86%	74%	72%	73%
III. Prayer				
1. Percentage indicating they take some moments for prayer	86%	64%	63%	82%
2. Percentage of prayer to God outside religious services (pray everyday)	63%	47%	39%	48%
3. Percentage indicating that they derive comfort and strength from religion (based on those who “take some moments for prayer”)	95%	88%	77%	78%