

Public Religion in Canada from Mackenzie King to Trudeau:

Entering the Age of Pluralism 1945-1982

George Egerton

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This essay studies the history of public religion in Canada from the period of the Second World War to the patriation of the Canadian Constitution of 1982 with its Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Through these years, Canada would be transformed from a self-proclaimed “Christian democracy” of denominational pluralism, through an interval of religious pluralism, to a secularist pluralism, based on how courts and politicians have applied the Charter. Although attention will be given to the spectrum of world religions represented in Canada, the analysis focuses primarily on the predominant Christian churches to which most Canadians, including aboriginal peoples, belonged. Until the 1970s, Christianity, in its national denominations, presented the only religion with public functions beyond the private realm—in culture, social institutions, law, and politics.¹ While surveying the life of the major Canadian churches, therefore, this study focuses on the public functions of religion, most specifically on the dialectic of religion and politics in both formal and informal constitutional discourse, as Canadians attempted to identify and legislate the fundamental principles, values, rights, institutions, and procedures by which they wished to be governed. It is argued that the records generated by constitutional debates and decisions, and especially the centrally important quest to define and constitutionally entrench human rights, illuminate most clearly the historic shifting in the relations of religion and politics, church and state, in Canada’s political culture, where the former public functions of the churches were challenged and displaced with a secularist liberal ideology and jurisprudence. While the analysis centers on the role of Canadian political, legal, and religious elites and lobbies,

churches and parachurch coalitions, the story is narrated in the larger context of Canadian cultural and social history and the broader Western cultural history in which Canada participates.

Given the controversies and divisions amongst sociologists of religion, the following analysis is discrete in deploying secularization theory to explain the transformation of Canadian religion and its public functions. Key elements of classic secularization theory are used for at least descriptive purposes, including “differentiation” of religious from political and legal institutions and functions, and “privatization” of religion within individuals, families, and religious communities in civil society—without adopting the secularization metanarrative that modernization invariably generates non-religious, scientific/rationalist mentalities destructive of religious belief. Indeed, the later sections of the essay indicate how religious groups struggled and reconfigured to regain public functions in the face of the hegemony of secularist liberal ideology, in tandem with the return of public religions globally by the 1980s.²

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When Prime Minister Mackenzie King convened the Canadian Parliament for its first session after World War II, the day began with “A Prayer for the King's Majesty.”

O LORD our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth; Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lord, King GEORGE; and so replenish him with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that he may always incline to thy will, and walk in thy way; endue him plenteously with heavenly gifts; grant him in health and wealth long to live; strengthen him that he may vanquish and overcome all his enemies; and finally, after this life, he may attain everlasting joy

and felicity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.³

This Parliamentary prayer, taken from the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England, invoked by the Speaker since 1877 at the commencement of each day the House of Commons met, both reflected and expressed the long religious history of the peoples who had come together in the Confederation of 1867 and who had developed diverse forms of the Christian faith in the new land. By the time of the 1867 Confederation, Canada had rejected the British model of Anglican establishment, the American constitutional separation of church and state, and the French Republican excision of religion from the public sphere. Nevertheless, despite their differences, the principal Christian denominations of Britain, America, and Canada functioned similarly as public religions exercising, whether formally or informally, important priestly, prophetic, and pastoral functions.

In its relationship with the state, the dominant function of denominational religion in Canada has been to legitimate governmental authority with divine sanction and to serve as chaplain to public institutions. This can be seen most explicitly in the prayers that marked the opening of daily procedures in Parliament and Provincial legislatures, and also many local, public institutions, including municipal governments and schools. Similarly, the prayers for rulers and those in authority given regularly by the major Canadian denominations, and most specifically in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, also signified the legitimating functions of Canadian religious institutions. The traditional cooperative relations of Canadian politics and religion can be seen as well in many other areas—notably state funding for military chaplaincies, constitutionally-entrenched, publicly-funded confessional schools, church-run welfare institutions, the care and control of aboriginal peoples, and a jurisprudence which sanctioned distinctly Christian norms of morality, particularly in areas of family relations and sexual behavior.⁴

If the dominant political functions of religion in Canada have been the “priestly” legitimization of

government authority and the pastoral provision of social services, a secondary function has been the “prophetic” critique of public values, behavior, and institutions and, at times, campaigns to achieve legal enforcement of perceived Christian values. In Canada this political role for public religion has shown itself in the Protestant moral crusades of the late nineteenth and the twentieth century for temperance, prohibition, Lord's Day observance, and laws against various vices. Similarly, in Quebec the Catholic hierarchy exercised an increasingly powerful patrimony over the cultural and political life of French Canadian society.⁵

From the more radical sections of the churches, the crusade broadened out from targets of primarily personal immorality to a critique of the basic social and economic institutions which were seen as perpetrating the injustices of a capitalist system. In the powerful Social Gospel movement which emerged in Canadian society, socialist and radical ideological criticism was joined to dissenting prophetic Christianity in a passionate matrix which had major impact on Canadian political and religious life in the early twentieth century.⁶

If the depression and “dirty thirties” rekindled prophetic criticism in Canadian religious elites of the injustice and inadequacies of the prevailing liberal-capitalist economic system, the outbreak of a Second World War two short decades after the carnage of the Great War once again drew churches and state together, as religion would be mobilized to affirm and legitimate governmental authority and war aims in a struggle against the evils of Nazism, Fascism and militarism. The national churches, Catholic and Protestant, added their support to the authority and policy of the government. Chastened, however, by their memories of the previous war experience, the churches eschewed the crusading zeal of former times. It was largely a matter of defeating an obviously evil enemy and of ministering to troops and those at home experiencing personal anguish and tragedy. The war effort, nevertheless, drew the churches and government into a closer partnership in that both perceived and portrayed the war as a

struggle to defend Christian and democratic civilization against the pagan forces of totalitarian Nazism. As with Canada's partners in wartime, especially Britain and later America, government leaders sought legitimization and guidance in time of national emergency through manifest appeals to the political and religious foundations of Western societies: democratic ideology and Christian religion. Here government leaders took the initiative in invoking special days and weeks of national prayer for victory and peace. Government spokesmen from the Prime Minister down, with very few exceptions, buttressed their war effort speeches with appeals to divine sanction. The historian of the church's role in Canada's war effort portrays the churches' perception of their mission as "freely-independent partners of the state in this task."⁷

The Protestant churches and the Quebec Catholic hierarchy projected quite distinct visions of the nature of Canadian Christendom. While Protestants emphasized a renewed quest for liberal democracy, social welfare, and a new international organization to replace the League of Nations, French Canadian Catholics were more oriented to a hierarchical-corporatist culture reflecting Canadian experience. Nonetheless, the national churches all remained firm in their consensus that Canadians were engaged in a just war for the defense of Christian civilization, overseas and at home. This remained true despite the major strains on Protestant-Quebec Catholic relations generated by crises over conscription for overseas service. When the war ended, government and church leaders across the towns and cities of the country joined with the public in religious services of thanksgiving which hailed the victory as providentially ordained.

The political rhetoric that portrayed Canada explicitly as a Christian state continued after the war as the problematic nature of the victory for Christian civilization in Europe became apparent, and as erstwhile Christian states of eastern and central Europe fell under communist control. Indeed, the genesis of the Cold War saw the Canadian church-state partnership maintained and strengthened. If the

war left major divisions between English and French-speaking Canadians deriving from the conscription crises, Protestants and Catholics agreed in the postwar period on the dangers of atheistic communism to the liberal and Christian values central to the Canadian state.

A survey of religious affiliations, institutions, and behavior in the postwar years reveals the ubiquity of Christianity in public and privatized sectors of Canadian society. While there were substantial numbers of Jews, mainly in the larger cities, the presence of non-Christian religions was small to non-existent. Aboriginal peoples had nearly all been converted, at least formally, to one or other of the major Christian denominations, and the Canadian state was happy to place the schooling of aboriginal children largely under church control in residential schools—an assimilationist practice which, despite good intentions, led to major abuses and later attempts at reparation.

The following tables attempt to chart the changing religious demography of Canada, from 1931-1981, using census data, church statistics, and polling results.

Table 1: Selected Denominational Census Affiliation, with % of Canadian population

Year	1931	%	1941	%	1951	%	1961	%	1971	%	1981	%
Total	103767	10	1150	10	14009	10	18238	10	21568	10	240834	10
	86	0	6655	0	429	0	247	0	315	0	95	0
Roman	410296	40	4806	42	60694	43	83428	46	99748	46	112103	47
Catholic	0		431		96		26		90		85	
United	202106	20	2208	19	28672	21	36640	20	37688	18	375801	16
Church	5		658		71		08		05		5	

Anglican	163907	16	1754	15	20607	15	24090	13	25431	12	243637	10
	5		368		20		68		75		5	
Presbyterian	872428	8.	8305	7.2	78174	5.	81855	4.5	87233	4	812110	3.
		4	97		7	6	8		5			4
Lutheran	394920	3.	4018	3.5	44492	3.	66274	3.6	71574	3.3	702905	2.
		8	36		3	2	4		5			9
Baptist	443944	4.	4844	4.2	51958	3.	59355	3.3	66724	3.1	696850	2.
		3	65		5	7	3		0			9
Greek Orthodox	102529	1	1398	1.2	17227	1.	23976	1.3	31660	1.5	314870	1.
			45		1	2	6		5			5
Jewish	155766	1.	1685	1.5	20483	1.	25436	1.4	27602	1.3	296425	1.
		5	85		6	5	8		0			2
Pentecostal	26349	0.	5774	0.5	95131	0.	14387	0.8	22039	1	338790	1.
		3	2			7	7		0			4
Ukrainian Catholic	186879	1.	1859	1.6	19105	1.	18965	1	22773	1.1	190585	0.
		8	48		1	4	3		0			8
Other	409716	1.	4490	1.5	54271	1.	82506	1.2	10558	1.2	Disaggregated	
		6	19		9	4	3		05			
No Religion	21155	0.	1916	0.2	59679	0.	94763	0.5	92957	4.3	175238	7.

		2	1			4			5		5	3
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Source: 1981 Census of Canada.

Table 2: Census Affiliation of Smaller Denominations

Year	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Total Population	10376786	11506655	14009429	18238247	21568315	24083495
Adventist	16058	18485	21398	25999	28585	41605
Brethren in Christ					21290	22260
Buddhist	15921	15676	8184	11611	16175	51955
Christian and Missionary Alliance	3560	4214	6396	18006	23630	33895
Christian Reformed	not available	Not available	Not available	62257	83390	93330
Church of the Nazarene					13490	13360
Christian Science	18499	20261	20795	19466	included with Other	
Churches of Christ, Disciples	15831	21260	14920	19512	16400	15350
Confucian					2125	2010

Doukhobor	14978	16878	13175	13234	9165	6700
Eastern Orthodox					314830	361565
Free Methodist	7740	8805	8921	14245	19125	20270
Hutterite	included with Mennonite	included with Mennonite	included with Mennonite	included with Mennonite	13650	16530
Jehovah's Witnesses	13582	7007	34596	68018	174810	143485
Mennonite	88837	111554	125938	152452	168150	189370
Mormon	22041	25328	32888	50016	66635	89870
Plymouth Brethren					5265	8060
Salvation Army	30773	33609	70275	92054	119665	125085
Unitarian	4453	5584	3517	15062	21000	14500
Other	10124513	11217994	13648426	17676315	20807925	disaggregated

Source: 1981 Census of Canada

Table 3: Showing Denominational Membership, 1946-1979

Denomination	1946	1951	1956	1961	1966	1971	1976	1979
United Church	767998	834118	933488	1036936	1062006	1016706	940251	90722
Anglican	434,851 (1948)	489974	584292	669291	671410	627346	601737	59425
Presbyterian	174225	177312	188448	200640	200125	182559	169445	16619
Lutheran Council	44,131 (1948)	121,288 (1953)	147494	172391	189228	200025	209038	21641
Baptist Federation	132110	134742	136503	137951	136599	132003	128489	12766
Pentecostal Assemblies	45,000 (estimated)	45,000 (estimated)	50,000 (estimated)	60,000 (estimated)	65,000 (estimated)	150,000 (estimated)	175000 (estimated)	11736
Jehovah's Witnesses	11218	20580	28540	40230	41042	49204	62880	63994

Source: Denominational Yearbooks, compiled by H. Macleod, in Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, 1982.

Table 4: Showing % Weekly Attendance for Protestants and Catholics in Canada for Select Years

Year	1946	1956	1965	1970	1974	1975	1978	1979	1980	1985
Roman Catholics	83	87	83	65	59	61	46	53	50	43
Protestants	60	43	32	28	27	25	27	26	26	29
Totals	67	61	55	44	44	41	35	37	35	32

Source: Canadian Institute of Public Opinion

Table 6: Religious Denominations of Aboriginal Peoples, 1959

Anglican	Baptist	United Church	Presbyterian	Roman Catholic	Other Christian	Aboriginal	Not Stated	Total
41543	3160	24520	2318	96963	2814	4026	3782	179126

Source: Canada Yearbook, 1962, 149.

The tables serve to indicate changing Canadian religious affiliations, denominational membership figures, and weekly attendance statistics, from the 1940s to the 1980s. The data can be referenced when claims are made in the chapter regarding measurable elements of religious identity and behavior. From these tables, it can be seen that Canada in the mid-twentieth century, was overwhelmingly Christian in the religious affiliations chosen by respondents to census queries, while the polling of sample populations indicated very high levels of weekly attendance at churches and of

belief. The national mainline churches, Protestant and Catholic, dominated the denominational spectrum, with the smaller denominations, mainly of conservative evangelical Christians, having only regional strength—particularly in the western and maritime Provinces. No evangelical denomination exercised a national presence comparable to the Southern Baptists in the United States. While the Roman Catholic Church was the largest single denomination, its adherents were majoritarian only in Quebec, with English-speaking and European migrant Catholics predominant in most of the other Provinces. The United Church as the leading Protestant Church, together with the Anglicans, could claim religious leadership in all Provinces except Quebec. Although there were some 28 denominations listed in the 1951 census, 78.5% claimed affiliation as Roman Catholic, United Church, or Anglican.

Church buildings, which had occupied public space in rural and urban centers from an early point in their founding, now were spread across the country. Along with banks and government edifices, churches occupied a central place in public space, and in the towns and cities represented an architecture of worship with their spires pointing to the heavens. In an age before the widespread construction of community clubs, church buildings, with their parish halls and basements, served as centers for social and cultural activities of communities, besides their specifically religious activities.

If Canadians' religious identities were strong and transgenerationally enduring, rivalries and competition among denominations were intense, especially from the smaller evangelical churches, while the deep antagonism between Protestants and Catholics remained a principal feature of Canadian culture and politics.⁸ The victory of Maurice Duplessis' Union National Party in the Quebec election of August, 1944, guaranteed the continuing close Provincial cooperation of church and state during his Premiership until his death in 1959. Duplessis ran an encompassing system of patronage to sustain loyalty from the religious elites while not challenging the church in the wide domain of its functions. The conservatism of Catholic leaders, who had been deeply attracted to corporatist aspects of Mussolini

and Franco's Fascism in the crisis of the 1930s, now returned to a neo-Thomist philosophy which permeated the learning of the classical colleges and also provided guidance to Quebec's political leaders. Beyond traditional Catholic authors and texts, philosophers like Jacques Maritain presented neo-Thomism in a renewed context, addressing the challenges of rebuilding the international order and advancing the cause of human rights.⁹ Concurrently, the postwar years would see a ferment of "personalist" Catholic discourse, centered in the youth movement, Action Catholique, which would prepare a new generation of leaders to challenge the political and religious establishment in the 1950s and usher in the "Quiet Revolution" after 1960.¹⁰

While the Catholic hierarchy of Quebec could count on a faithful flock, which continued to look to their church for a diffuse array of public social, educational, health, and welfare services, Canadian Protestant leaders anticipated the postwar period with some unease. Facing the renewed crisis of a Second World War, in 1942 the United Church initiated a nationwide study of unprecedented scale, with the intention of identifying the underlying principles which should guide the church and the nation in the postwar era. The result, after extensive regional input, was the publication in 1944 of "A Report of the Commission on Church, Nation and World Order."¹¹

The "Report," which engaged the leading regional and national leadership of the church with careful balancing of the church hierarchy—social gospellers from the Left and business interests from the Right—fused the principal streams of United Church traditions into a powerful and appealing amalgam, which would chart the immediate future for church policy into its most successful and influential decade. The legacy of the social gospel can be seen in the endorsement of neo-liberal and social democratic projects being discussed avidly in Britain, and which would be articulated in the Beveridge Report, published as a British Government White Paper in December, 1942. The leading themes of the United Church Report included full Canadian participation in establishing a new

international order of collective security to maintain peace; Parliamentary reforms to promote national unity and guard civil liberties, including the rights of minorities; enhanced governmental economic planning with policies to redistribute wealth and to institute counter-cyclical financing to maintain full employment; government initiatives in social insurance and security, housing, immigration, child and family support, nutrition, and health care—with the goal of establishing the foundations of what would soon be called the welfare state. What made the Report religiously distinctive was its insistence throughout that programs to advance social and economic justice must be premised on “The Religious principles of Social Order” and acknowledge “The Primacy of the Spiritual.” In integrating liberal themes of social welfare, human rights, and the social gospel with underlying premises of Christian realism, the Report reflected clearly the pervasive influence of Neo-orthodox theologians such as Karl Barth, Emil Brünner, and especially Reinhold Niebuhr, whose most influential works were published through the years the Report was being drafted.¹²

The United Church, after the war and the thanksgiving celebrations for victory, launched itself into a “Crusade For Christ and His Kingdom” with an inaugural rally in Toronto, 1 July 1945, where some 20,000 faithful marked both Dominion Day and the 20th anniversary of the formation of the United Church.¹³ The crusade would last through 1946, mobilizing the faithful and also raising funds for major church expansion across the country, especially in the postwar spread of suburban residential developments. The United Church leadership continued to rail against the liquor trade, gambling, and any plans to open diplomatic relations with the Vatican, but its principal endeavor in the decade ahead was to plan and effect an unprecedented era of expansion. As the postwar years unfolded, the United Church, combining Christian orthodoxy and morality with a social-economic mission, could claim a foremost status amongst the national churches and, together with continuing informal establishment of the churches, speak as the “conscience of the state.”¹⁴

The Liberal Party of Mackenzie King and his successor in 1948, Louis St. Laurent, were both positively attentive to Canada's religious foundations and supportive of the churches' public functions. King, a devout if eccentric Presbyterian, combining Calvinism with occult Spiritualism, conceived the Liberal Party's legislation of family allowances and commitment to full employment in the successful election of 1945 as deriving from his faith as a Christian "regenerator."¹⁵ Louis St. Laurent, educated in the pervasive Thomism of Quebec's Catholic colleges, was steeped in neo-Thomist authors like Jacques Maritain. King and St. Laurent shared a commitment to maintaining Canada's status as a Christian democracy, especially after the Gouzenko affair of 1945 shocked Canadians into a realization of the new danger of espionage and "atheistic communism. They both realized that the rising question of human rights, both domestically and internationally, presented a question that touched deeply on religious functions, in defining the norms for personal behavior as well as the politics and jurisprudence in a self- proclaimed Christian polity.

The scale of Canada's contribution to the victory of the Grand Alliance stimulated a maturing sense of national status and a desire to play an enhanced role in world politics commensurate with the nation's standing as the fourth largest economic and military power by the war's end. As well, there was growing interest in the question of human rights in light of the revelations of wartime atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis, especially in the Jewish holocaust, and the spreading postwar repressions by Stalinist communist regimes. At home, there was an increasingly uneasy conscience on the part of Canadian civil libertarians on such matters as the rigors of the War Measures Act, wartime treatment of Japanese Canadians, discrimination against Chinese Canadians and aboriginal peoples, harassment of Jehovah's Witnesses in Quebec, and mounting efforts to suppress the menace of domestic communism. Indeed, the international efforts to define and protect human rights as a principal function of the new United Nations organization would attract major interest and controversy in Canada and would soon

engage religious and political elites deeply in what would prove to be a long-term and far-reaching constitutional discourse regarding the protection and promotion of human rights in Canadian jurisprudence.

The Liberal Governments of King and St. Laurent, respectively, established two successive Parliamentary Committees through 1947-48 to advise on Canadian policy on the drafting by the United Nations of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and whether Parliament should create a Canadian Bill of Rights.¹⁶ Religious teachings touched directly on human rights campaigns, both supportively and critically and, from an early point in the project for the Universal Declaration, Canadian churches played a vital national and international role in shaping opinion, articulating political values, and influencing policy, even as Canadian civil libertarian initiatives often came from the more secularist forces of labor and the political Left.

Canadian religion functioned ambiguously—progressively and prophetically on the one hand, joining with liberal and secularist proponents of a Canadian bill of rights to re-envision Canadian political culture, and conservatively on the other, to legitimate governmental authority as part of the churches' traditional priestly role in defining the nation's moral and legal norms and guarding the state against external and internal dangers. While Canadian national churches advocated protection of human rights, as in the United Church's Report on Church, Nation and World Order, their support was conditioned upon such rights being given an explicit theological foundation which reflected the traditional fusion of Christian and democratic values in Canadian history. This theme was repeatedly voiced by Protestant and Catholic politicians in the Parliamentary Committees studying the question, culminating in support for an amendment which would have changed the first article of the draft declaration to read, "All men are born free and equal in dignity being vested by the Creator with inalienable rights."

When it proved impossible to premise the Universal Declaration on theological foundations, Canadian political leaders voiced major misgivings. Along with deep Anglo-Canadian attachment to the British doctrine of Parliamentary supremacy and an aversion to the American-style system of judicial review, Quebec religious and political leaders opposed any intrusions upon Provincial rights and any secularist human rights agenda which refused to privilege religion in public life. The solution identified by religious and political elites, and advanced in the reports of the Parliamentary committees, was to give human rights explicit religious grounding in any future Canadian Bill of Rights. Quebec Roman Catholic MPs, together with their Prairie Protestant evangelical cohorts, discerned that the elevation of human rights, internationally and nationally, represented a distinct danger to religion in its freedoms, public functions, and privileges. Indeed, the Canadian misgivings on the Universal Declaration led the government to instruct their United Nations delegation to abstain during the vote in the General Assembly in December 1948. Only a furtive appeal by Lester Pearson, who headed the Canadian delegation, convinced the Liberal government to vote in support of the Universal Declaration and thereby avoid being grouped with the select group of the Soviet bloc, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa in abstaining.

Leading Canadian civil libertarians were disappointed and angered at the government's hesitant approach to the Universal Declaration and proceeded to press St. Laurent to take up the question of legislating a Canadian Bill of Rights. The Prime Minister was opposed to pursuing this project through constitutional innovation touching on Provincial prerogatives. But after the Liberals were safely reelected in the spring of 1949 on a program which emphasized Canadian support for the establishment of NATO and containment of communism, St. Laurent allowed Senator Roebuck, the Liberal Party's foremost advocate of human rights, to head up a Special Senate Committee composed of Liberals to review policy on human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the possibility of writing a Canadian

Bill of Rights. Roebuck recruited leading Canadian civil libertarian voices to appear before his committee, including J. King Gordon, a former United Church minister who now worked in the United Nations Division of Human Rights serving under its Canadian Director John Humphrey, and Frank Scott of the McGill Law Faculty who explicated the urgency for, and means toward, a Canadian Bill of Rights. Protestant churchmen and the Canadian Council of Churches submitted supportive briefs along with leading civil libertarian associations. In writing his committee's Report, Roebuck powerfully advocated the case for a Bill of Rights:

This is then the very time for Canada to decide the basis upon which this new Nation is founded This is the time to nail the emblems of law, liberty and human rights to our masthead. This is the very moment in which to decide our nationhood, to guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms to all our citizens, and to proclaim our principles to the world.

Senator Roebuck knew, however, that the Quebec Catholic Senators on his committee harbored major misgivings, political and theological, on this project. While this vision appealed deeply to the Canadian social democratic and liberal Left, and to the social conscience of mainline Protestantism, it held much less attraction for Catholicism, especially in Quebec, or and for conservative Protestantism. The “human rights revolution” hailed by such civil libertarian leaders as Frank Scott, John Humphrey, King Gordon, and Arthur Roebuck, directly challenged both Anglo-Canadian national identity grounded in British jurisprudence, common law, and the supremacy of Parliament, and French Canadian political culture, protected by Quebec Catholicism. Early in the Senate committee's deliberations, anxious to accommodate religious opinion and the sensibilities of his Quebec Catholic colleagues, Roebuck had recorded the committee's agreement with the suggestion that any preamble to a Canadian Bill of Rights should make explicit recognition of God as the giver of rights. Senators

resoundingly endorsed the views of the churchmen in presenting a transcendent status for human rights: “Such rights are not created by men, be they ever so numerous, for the benefit of other men, nor are they the gift of governments. They are above the power of men to create” The Report concluded by portraying Canada as “a Christian country” and recommending “that all men give thought to the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man,” so as to further the rule of law and the rights of individuals.

The deliberations and Report of the Roebuck Committee illustrated clearly the continued integration of Canadian Christianity and liberalism, each reinforcing core values of the other. However, despite the enthusiasm for human rights evoked by the committee from influential circles of Canadian Protestantism, civil libertarian associations, liberal and social democratic intellectuals, and labor organizations, the timing of the Senators' Report was inopportune. Within a few days of the conclusion of the committee's work, on June 25, 1950, the Korean War broke out—a war which would see Canadian forces once again in combat, now under the banner of United Nations collective security. These events would help generate extreme forms of anticommunism in the United States, with civil liberties often being trampled in the investigations to discover treason, disloyalty, and “un-American” activities mounted by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the political Right. In Canada, where the fear of communism also ran deep, the projections of Roebuck's committee to elevate the cause of human rights were quietly buried by the St. Laurent Government.

As the decade of the Fifties opened, the hopes for a peaceful world order after such a hard-won victory in a Second World War soon faded in the face of expanding communism in Eastern Europe and then in Asia with the Chinese communist triumph of 1949. To compound the alarms, the USSR successfully tested an atomic bomb in the summer of 1949, ushering in a new and potentially devastating nuclear arms race. The Canadian churches had hoped, after knowledge spread of the

horrific consequences following the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that the uranium of which Canada was the principal supplier could be harnessed for peaceful purposes, and that the Baruch Plan could provide for United Nations control of atomic energy. By the early 1950s, all these hopes had been dashed as the development of the hydrogen bomb confirmed that humanity faced the proliferation of unprecedented weapons of mass destruction. Concurrently, in charting Canada's policy of containment, St. Laurent repeatedly appealed to the churches for their support in defending Christian civilization. For St. Laurent the communist challenge to democratic states not only endangered freedom and peace; it jeopardized "the values and virtues of the civilization of western Christendom of which we are heirs and defenders."¹⁷

This appeal for the churches' support was largely successful. Only small pacifist and leftist factions within the Protestant churches embraced a prophetic mode in denouncing the utter inhumanity of atomic weapons, and calling for total prohibition and unilateral disarmament. United Church radicals were susceptible to the series of Moscow-inspired peace movements, such as the Stockholm Appeal of 1950. Several who adopted this line would be denounced by their churches and removed from their positions. The churches sensed that classic "just war" teaching was largely rendered obsolete by the advent of weapons of mass destruction. After extensive studies, the United and Anglican churches adopted policies of seeking disarmament, but in the interim, settling for a strategy of containment and deterrence.¹⁸ This was put forward by the Anglicans in 1951 in "A Positive Program for Peace" and by the United Church in 1953 as "The Christian and Peace." The St. Laurent Government found Quebec Catholicism even more willing to be recruited in a "crusade" against the old enemy of communism when the Catholic peoples of Eastern Europe were now the victims of communist repression. Pope Pius XII, while acknowledging the radical new dangers presented to humanity by atomic weapons and condemning their use in "aggressive" war, nevertheless, maintained classic "just war" doctrine and the

right to use such weapons in self defense.¹⁹ The Canadian Catholic hierarchy fully shared the pope's fervent anti-communism. Indeed, anti-communist attitudes presented the most powerful shared theme in the politics of Canadian Protestantism and Catholicism through this period. St. Laurent would express his gratitude for the unity this brought and "that the relations between Church and State are so helpful in our country," hoping that "future generations should maintain them."²⁰

The churches' role in supporting a policy of containment and deterrence, however, was not without controversy and opposition, especially as the costs and dangers of sustaining the nuclear arms race with the Soviets, and the health hazards of nuclear fall-out from weapons' tests, became more apparent. Soon there would be increasing numbers of defections to the disarmament camp; articulate voices of dissent from official church positions ensured from an early point in the Cold War arms race that the Christian conscience on nuclear weapons remained divided. Even as Canada chose to forego development of its own nuclear weapons, it was willing to sell the necessary uranium to allies. By the early 1960s, with American pressures to place nuclear missiles on Canadian soil and participate in the nuclear systems and strategies of NORAD and NATO, both the United Church and the Anglican Church divided deeply on the nuclear issue. While the official leadership of these churches reaffirmed support for government policies, which after the return of the Liberals in 1962 under Lester Pearson meant accepting American nuclear weapons, neither church could achieve unity on the question. The Protestant conscience, and later the Catholic conscience, was uneasy in affirming a deterrent strategy which relied on American nuclear capacity to keep the peace by threatening a retaliatory response which could endanger the whole of the created order.

Canadian church leaders continued to enjoy open access to political leaders at the Provincial and national levels. For James Mutchmor, the long-term Secretary of the United Church's Board of Evangelism and Social Service and Moderator 1962-64, the Premier of Ontario or the Prime Minister of

Canada remained but a telephone call away. Whether lobbying for temperance, social welfare legislation, or protection of labor, Mutchmor saw the church's role "to be the conscience of the State."²¹ If not all interventions brought success, Mutchmor nevertheless enjoyed major influence and respect in the offices of political leaders. So also in Quebec, the close partnership of church and state continued in the postwar years, as Duplessis and the Union Nationale party governed the Province through the decade until Duplessis' death in 1959, while Roman Catholicism retained its hegemonic religious and cultural status even as progressive forces among the clergy, Catholic intellectuals, and youth movements prepared for a transformation of their church and their Province's political culture.

These were years of major institutional and membership expansion for the Canadian churches which exceeded the expectations of all the major church bureaucracies. The United Church could claim in 1954 to be the fastest growing church in Canada, establishing a new congregation on an average every four days since 1950, while constructing 1500 new churches between 1945 and 1966.²² The major Protestant churches cooperated with evangelical churches in mounting "crusades," welcoming evangelists like Billy Graham and the Canadian mass evangelist, Charles Templeton, even while distancing themselves from the emotional excesses of "fundamentalism." The Anglican Church officially designated 1956 as a "Year of Intensified Evangelism." Sunday schools across the nation burgeoned, often with several sessions needed each Sunday, while the building of thousands of new parish halls drew communities into church facilities on a regular basis. The planning and building of all the new church construction meant that fundraising would preoccupy the churches for years to come, as mortgages accumulated. By the end of the decade, with churches being erected in the expanding new suburban communities across the country, and with middle-class families filling these churches and participating in their array of programs, the spiritual market of mainline Protestantism looked promising for the foreseeable future.²³

For Roman Catholics, these were also years of religious resurgence as virtually all indices of institutional affiliation, participation, and spiritual devotion offered encouragement: Catholic census affiliation grew not only in reflection of high birth rates in Quebec, but also immigration patterns from European Catholic populations. Recruitment of religious—nuns, brothers, priests—remained high. Attendance at mass reached record levels, especially in Quebec where over 90% reported weekly communion. Leading French Canadian prelates, such as Paul-Émile Cardinal Léger, Archbishop of Montreal, enjoyed high status nationally and internationally. Canadian Catholics, especially from Quebec, were heavily engaged in international missions.²⁴ Financial appeals, both for expanding missions and church construction at home met with generous response from the faithful. The appointment as Governor General in 1959 of General Georges Vanier, a devout Catholic, on the recommendation of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, an equally devout Baptist, signified hope for growing religious and ethnic respect.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker had for many years campaigned for the establishment of a Canadian Bill of Rights and, following the landslide victory of the Conservatives in 1958, proceeded with this project. When the Canadian Bill of Rights was legislated in 1960, leaders from all parties (especially Paul Martin Sr. for the Liberals and Justice Minister David Fulton for the Conservatives, both devout Catholics) cooperated in re-articulating the integrated religious and democratic values represented in the statute.²⁵ Its Preamble declared this clearly:

The Parliament of Canada, affirming that the Canadian Nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God, the dignity and worth of the human person and the position of the family in a society of free men and free institutions; Affirming also that men and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded upon respect for moral and spiritual values and the rule of law. . . .²⁶

Several themes stand out in the protracted drafting which led to the Canadian Bill of Rights. It was the politicians, more than church leaders who made submissions, who insisted on the reference to the religious foundations of human rights. A statutory Bill of Rights was also viewed by Conservative leaders as more consistent with British and Canadian constitutional theory on the supremacy of Parliament than would be a constitutionally-entrenched charter of rights opening Canadian jurisprudence to American-style judicial review. And in the sensitive negotiations over the phrasing of the reference to God, leaders from all parties were anxious to consult with representatives of the Canadian Jewish community with which both John Diefenbaker and Paul Martin were well-connected. By ensuring that nothing in the religious reference would be offensive to Jewish leaders, the Bill of Rights signaled Canada's shift from a manifest "Christian democracy" or Christian pluralism, to a more inclusive "religious pluralism" which now manifestly included Jewish Canadians. If there was little yet by way of a consciously articulated theory of pluralism, the term was now being used, and the intention of all the drafters of the Bill of Rights was to affirm a positive religious pluralism, even as Christianity remained privileged in Canadian constitutional law and in public rituals. Finally, constitutional experts such as Bora Laskin of the University of Toronto, Frank Scott and Max Cohen of McGill University, held no place for religious legitimations in their jurisprudence. The latter two embraced a secularized natural law, to be translated into "natural rights" and "fundamental law" in evolving Anglo-American jurisprudence and in Canadian courts.²⁷ Scott later explained that he found the Preamble's reference to the supremacy of God "offensive."²⁸

The Canadian Bill of Rights did not herald a new age of Canadian jurisprudence under the supremacy of God. To be sure, as the decade of the 1960s opened, it would soon be apparent that the seeming religious resurgence of the postwar period was retrenching, and the traditional fusion of religious and democratic values in Canada's constitutional foundations and its Protestant-Catholic

condominium were about to be challenged radically. For the discerning eye, the seeming Canadian religious resurgence of the postwar years rested on fragile foundations. Even the demographics of religious affiliation and expanding church memberships were somewhat illusory, and nearly all the national churches failed to keep up as a percentage of the expanding Canadian population. The growing population itself brought increasing immigrant sectors of the population which were not members of the traditional Canadian churches and were now contributing to the country's growing ethnic and religious diversity and pluralism.²⁹

The first rebellion and challenges to the public functions of religion came in the Province where its hegemony over liberal values was strongest—the Quebec of Premier Duplessis. In 1948 an explosive anticlerical manifesto, “*Refus Global*,” was issued in Montreal by a group of sixteen avant-garde artists, utterly condemning the religious, intellectual, and political culture of the cassocks who dominated life in Quebec, while demanding a “resplendent anarchy” and “an untamed need for liberation” from the Province’s grand *noirceur*. This rebellion was quickly condemned and repressed, but it was a herald of things to come in Québécois culture and politics. The next year saw Duplessis’ form of capitalism challenged by a bitter strike of Catholic unions and workers in the mining town of Asbestos. The strike would be supported by progressive Catholics, including Montreal Archbishop Charbonneau, and a rising band of young Catholic intellectuals, including Pierre Trudeau, who would soon coalesce in the group *Cité Libre* and propound a radical agenda of cultural and liberal political reform for Quebec.

Also in Quebec, two lengthy court cases were led by Frank Scott against the Duplessis government with full support from Canadian civil libertarians. Two key legal challenges were decided by the Supreme Court: in 1957 the Court ruled the Padlock Act (allowing seizure of properties used by suspected communists) unconstitutional, and in 1959 declared Duplessis’ punitive actions against the

Jehovah's Witness restauranteur, Roncarelli, in violation of civil law, and made the Premier pay damages.³⁰

Churches in Canada and internationally through the 1960s would engage in radical rethinking of theology and mission—most thoroughly and systematically in the deliberations of Vatican II (1962-65), but more radically in Protestant immanentist theologies, welcoming the “secular city,” being “honest to god,” “demythologizing” the faith, and finally heralding the “death of god.” Journalist Pierre Berton's 1965 bestseller book, *The Comfortable Pew*,³¹ broke all Canadian sales records and engaged the mainline Canadian Protestantism in a firestorm of self-criticism and an urgent quest for renewed relevance. Indeed, by brilliantly popularizing the main themes of the radical theologians, Berton captured and projected the agenda of Canadian liberal Protestants for the rest of the twentieth century as they abandoned the old theology, the old curricula, and the old morality in the age of the pill, situation ethics, and mass entertainment. It would be the United Church which would update most radically, adopting a new curriculum for its Sunday schools and as a guide for its general teachings, which thoroughly assimilated critical theological liberalism and shed vestiges of its evangelical past.³²

After the disintegration of the Diefenbaker Government in 1963, Lester Pearson would lead a series of minority Liberal governments ineffectively addressing a rising tide of bewildering issues, scandals, and national malaise. A child of the manse (Methodist, then United Church), the Prime Minister was as sincere a Christian believer as his predecessors, respecting deeply the role of Canadian religious communities in the country's national life. Addressing a conference at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church in 1953, Pearson had advised his audience, “As individuals it is our duty to stand firm on the Christian principles which have been taught in our churches and which in themselves have the key to the solution of every problem—social, personal and political.”³³

After the politically bruising struggle in 1964-65 to agree on a new Canadian flag (devoid of the

Christian symbols in the previous Canadian Ensign and Union Jack), the Pearson government had the happier task of arranging for the year-long celebrations to mark the centennial of Confederation in 1967, and to host the Montreal World's Fair—Expo 67. Here the government and its officials in the Centennial Commission took the initiative in helping churches across Canada participate eagerly in their local communities' centennial celebrations, with appropriate liturgies and prayers to honor the country. The Canadian Corporation on the 1967 World's Exhibition also took the initiative in planning for religious participation in Expo 67. The government and its officials signaled a religiously-positive pluralism in inviting the widening diversity of Canada's ethnic and religious communities in organizing this national spectacle.³⁴ The Centennial Commission started by setting up, funding, and providing administrative and publicity services for a Canadian Interfaith Conference which included representation from the national mainline churches and eventually some 33 faith communities, including Pentecostals, Mormons, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Baha'is.

While the various religious communities were eager to join in the celebrations, the form of participation signaled some confusion and controversy in the evolving nature of pluralism in Canada. The Expo planners pressed for a single religious pavilion, housing all faiths under one roof. The leadership of the national churches wanted a single ecumenical pavilion for Christians, and they declined to embrace the interfaith pluralism first suggested by the Centennial planners. The evangelical Protestant churches equally declined ecumenism and were the first to acquire a site for their own pavilion at Expo, where their Sermons From Science, drawn from the Moody Bible Institute, served principally as a forum for evangelization. The Canadian Jewish community also mounted its own pavilion. Whatever distinctives the churches and other faith communities wished to sustain at Expo, their pavilions turned out to be popular successes and equally signified the positive religious pluralism of the Pearson Liberals in facilitating religious participation in national life—and on terms favored by

the religious communities themselves.

The greatest political challenge faced by the Pearson Liberals came in the form of Quebec nationalism. With Quebec Catholicism freely cooperating in its political disestablishment, the Quebec Liberals' quest to be "*maîtres chez nous*" soon transformed into a nationalist ideology which supplanted the discredited public functions of religion, as previously exploited by Duplessis. Québécois ethnicity, language, and cultural assertion challenged Canada's English hegemony and its federal constitutional structure. The federal Liberals responded with the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-69) which initiated a long process of re-imagining the Canadian nation on the basis of a fairer Anglophone-Francophone partnership. The work and reports of the "Bi and Bi Commission" attempted to redefine Canadian nationhood in terms of ethnicity and language. The former centrality of religion in Canada's national identity, as underlined repeatedly in the Parliamentary committees studying human rights, constitutional issues, and national purpose in the 1940s and 1950s, and in the drafting of the Canadian Bill of Rights, found no place in the recommendations of the Commission. Nor did this theme figure in the submissions made by the churches, which generally affirmed the Liberals' attempt to re-imagine Canadian nationality in terms of linguistic and cultural dualism.³⁵

The efforts of the Pearson Liberals to re-imagine Canadian nationhood in terms of bilingualism and biculturalism soon proved inadequate, critiqued roundly by aboriginal and other non-Anglophone, non-Francophone ethnic communities, burgeoning as a result of immigration patterns. With the displacement of religion from its former partnership with liberal ideology in defining Canadian national identity, by the late 1960s Canada was on the verge of several decades of radical re-imaginings which would witness transformative change in its constitution, jurisprudence and, not least, in the public functions of religion. Indeed, the defining elements of Canadian pluralism would shift from religion to language and ethnicity, as multiculturalism supplanted biculturalism in a new quest for national

identity, purpose, and unity. Simultaneously, Canadian legislators embraced the protection of human rights as the fundamental legitimator of renewed governmental authority and purpose, as Human Rights Commissions and Tribunals would soon proliferate nationally and provincially. By the time that religious questions would return to the renewed Canadian constitutional discourse directed by Pierre Trudeau as Justice Minister and then Prime Minister after 1968, Canadian public life and rhetoric would be in process of rapid de-Christianization, while jurisprudence and constitutional theory were searching for new, non-religious foundations.

The decades of the 1960s-1980s were transformative in the history of the Canadian state and in the history of Canadian churches and in the relationship of these institutions. The changing relationship saw the churches lose most of their former public functions, priestly and pastoral, as religion was differentiated in political culture and privatized in civil society. Concurrently, census, polling, and church statistics all indicated declining affiliations for mainline churches, retrenching memberships and attendance, and recessing belief in God, while the numbers of those claiming to have “no religion” rose dramatically. Faced with theological and strategic choices of accommodating or resisting the cultural and moral shifting in Canadian society, the United Church led the way with an accommodationist strategy of affirming the liberal agenda of removing religion from its formerly privileged role in politics and jurisprudence, while adopting a prophetic role in pressing for social justice and liberation from religious constraints in the realm of family life and sexual morality. The Anglicans would follow this strategy but more slowly and reluctantly, while Catholics and evangelical Christians would be drawn into unprecedented new forms of cooperation in resisting many of the changes heralded in such fields as sexual ethics, marriage and family law, and abortion legislation.

The Canadian experience forms part of a process of cultural and legal transformation shared with all industrialized societies and, in Canada's case, heavily influenced by Britain and America. From

Britain came the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report (1957) that criminality and morality should be separated in such matters as homosexuality and prostitution, and that the state should confine itself to the proscription and punishment of behavior that was manifestly harmful to society, while protecting the freedom of the individual, even if the choices indulged socially harmless “sinning.” These themes found a sympathetic hearing in liberal Canadian quarters and legal elites. Concurrently, from America the traditional cooperation of politics and religion was most clearly challenged by a series of Supreme Court decisions which asserted a strict wall of separation between church and state in matters of public education and other public services. In fact, many American religious coalitions adopted critical prophetic roles in the civil rights movement and then in anti-war protest against American intervention in Vietnam.

In Canada, the legal transitions had the added drama of coinciding with the making of a new constitution—a project which focused in large measure on the protection of human rights. The Canadian constitutional drama, moreover, was driven by a philosopher-king, Pierre Trudeau, who, as Prime Minister after 1968, made the constitutional entrenchment of a Charter of Rights his own political mission, seeing it through to success in the constitutional settlement of 1982. Trudeau, trained in Quebec’s elite Collège Jean-de-Brebeuf, had been drawn to the corporatist and separatist extreme of 1930’s Catholicism. Liberated from this personal *noirceur* after graduate studies abroad following the war, notably at Harvard, Trudeau absorbed the principal themes of Anglo-American liberalism and fused them with a continuing, but thoroughly privatized and modernized Catholicism.³⁶ It was the genius of Trudeau’s politics to project updated themes of classic liberal ideology, brilliantly indigenized for Canadian appeal: federalism and bilingualism to confront the separatist aspirations of Quebec nationalism; multicultural pluralism to accommodate and contain ethnic assertion and ideological conflict; civil libertarianism to enshrine protection for individual rights and counter “tribalism” in a

revised constitution; participatory democracy to expand citizenship in shaping a just society; and secularism to disentangle a modernized Canadian legal order from its traditional religious norms and constraints. Each of these themes resonated with Canadian mass culture by the latter half of the “Sixties,” and appealed especially to academic, artistic, legal, and media elites, offering renewed government purpose and legitimization while concurrently rejuvenating the Liberal Party.

When the project to modernize Canadian law and liberate it from its religious framework addressed itself first to divorce legislation, Trudeau as Justice Minister instructed Parliament in 1967 on the cardinal themes of the new jurisprudence and pluralism.

We are now living in a social climate in which people are beginning to realize, perhaps for the first time in the history of this country, that we are not entitled to impose the concepts which belong to a sacred society upon a civil or profane society. The concepts of the civil society in which we live are pluralistic, and I think this parliament realizes that it would be a mistake for us to try to legislate into this society concepts which belong to a theological or sacred order.³⁷

That the rights and freedoms of the individual would provide the animus for a comprehensive modernization and liberalization of Canadian law was evident not only in Trudeau's approach to the issue of divorce law, but also in the initiatives he undertook in a coterie of other “morality” issues, such as lotteries, birth control, homosexuality, and abortion—all of which contained potentially explosive intersections of religious and legal principles. After legal study of several of these issues within the Justice Department, and comprehensive public hearings on the issues of birth control and abortion conducted by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, Trudeau combined these “morality” issues with a series of other changes in the criminal law code into an Omnibus Bill which was given first reading in the Commons in late 1967.

By the time the Omnibus Bill was passed in 1969, Trudeau had captured the leadership of the Liberal Party and led it to electoral triumph in 1968, assisted by the seductive, if transient, appeal of “Trudeaumania.” However, if Trudeau's charisma and progressive agenda won him the first Liberal majority government since 1953, his trenchant federalism sparked revolutionary violence, kidnapping, and murder from the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ). Trudeau's invocation of the War Measures Act in October 1970 to suppress separatist terrorism in Quebec both demonstrated the perceived fragility of state authority and shocked civil libertarians that one of their own would go so far.

A friend and protégé of Canada's leading civil libertarian, Frank Scott, Trudeau had advocated a constitutionally-entrenched charter of rights from the late 1950s; it would be this “magnificent obsession” which would inspire Trudeau and the Liberals through the economic and political crises of the 1970s, as the Parti Québécois under René Lévesque gained Provincial power in 1976 and fought an unsuccessful referendum on “sovereignty-association” in 1980. Re-elected in 1980 after a brief retirement, Trudeau appealed to Quebec federalists with the promise of patriating the constitution from Britain and including in it a constitutionally-entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms—a project Trudeau carried out in 1982 after over a year of complex and Machiavellian political maneuvering in federal-provincial relations.

As this drama of national reconstruction unfolded with the impassioned debate in Committee and Parliament on challenges mobilized by guardians of provincial rights, civil libertarian, aboriginal, and women's groups, to the Government's surprise, religious issues emerged powerfully as well. Christian lobbyists joined with Conservative Party leaders to criticize the “Godlessness” of the Liberals' proposed Charter. What is perhaps most noteworthy for our purposes regarding the religious dimensions of the constitutional debate is that whereas the mainline Protestant submissions and witnesses gave support to the Charter project, concentrating on justice issues with little concern for

protection of religious freedom or religious grounding for human rights, it was the Catholics and the evangelical Protestants, represented effectively by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, who pressed the government most resolutely on these issues. According to the caucus briefings prepared by David Smith, Liberal Deputy House Leader, it was the rising demographics of evangelical Protestantism and its convergence with Catholicism in theology and politics which convinced a reluctant Trudeau and his Justice Minister, Jean Chrétien, to include a religious referent in the Preamble to the Charter: “Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.” Previously, Trudeau criticized the Conservatives as “hypocritical and detestable” for playing politics with God, claiming that they were inspired more by fear of the electorate than fear of God. Although Trudeau thought “it was strange, so long after the Middle Ages that some politicians felt obliged to mention God in a constitution which is, after all, a secular and not a spiritual document,” he also genuflected to the electorate, claiming now it was his personal preference to include the reference. Privately, Trudeau told the Liberal caucus he didn’t think “God gives a damn whether he was in the constitution or not.”³⁸ The Liberals were confronted with an unprecedented mass media and letter-writing mobilization of conservative Christians, supported by the Conservative Party. Canadians demonstrated once again that they wanted God in their constitution.

* * * * *

What can be concluded from this? At first glance, the inclusion of the reference to God represented a signal success for the evangelical Christian lobbyists. Catholics also had received assurances during the constitutional debates that the Charter would not endanger the guarantees of the British North America Act (1867) to confessional public schools, nor broker the way to more liberalized abortion. The constitutional reference to God, however, did not mean that the deeper cultural

and political tides of privatizing religion had been reversed or that the traditional public functions of religion in Canadian political history had been restored. The constitutional reference had come as a result of tactical political calculations, not from any conversion on the part of Trudeau or the Liberals to the philosophical or theological convictions expressed by Conservative leaders, let alone by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. If Trudeau's desire to remove theology from politics had suffered a temporary reverse, the Charter itself would serve to launch a new era of secularist pluralism in Canadian jurisprudence. Indeed, similar to the patterns of jurisprudence through the post-1960s decades in Britain and the United States, the Canadian church-state relationship would be transformed as the Christian religion would see the state largely divest itself of religion's traditional priestly functions of legitimating government authority and law, and its pastoral functions in guarding family and sexual morality.

The declining mainline Protestant denominations have for the most part acquiesced in the removal of religion from its formerly privileged standing and functions in public life, while searching unsuccessfully for renewed salience in prophetic support for justice issues and the extension of human rights, even when this meant surrendering classic religious teachings on morality issues. As in America, it has been the evangelical Protestants and Catholics, together with leaders from Judaism and other world religions, who from the 1980s have resisted most determinedly the exclusion of public religion by the courts and legislatures of Canada and have mobilized politically to regain voices in the public square. But social conservatism in Canada achieved much less influence than the American religious right of the 1980s; Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (1984-93) and Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (1993-2003) remained inattentive or hostile to public religion, as compared with the United States President Ronald Reagan. Meanwhile it has been the courts, interpreting the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which have largely supplanted the churches as "the

conscience of the state,” as Canada has evolved from its traditional Christian pluralism, through the religious pluralism of the 1950s and the Confederation centenary, to the secularist pluralism which now exercises liberal ideological hegemony in the country’s political culture.

Does the historical evidence and data we have for Canada confirm the classic secularization thesis as in Europe, or the de-secularization pattern as in America and much of rest of the world?³⁹ Certainly the differentiation of public religious functions seems beyond dispute in Canada, viewed both from the perspective of governments and the national churches, along with the privatization of faith, as in Europe. As well, census and polling data show a continuing increase in those claiming to have “no religion,” some 16% in the 2001 census. Those attending religious services on a regular basis remain comparatively diminished, in the low 20% by the end of the twentieth century. Membership statistics for the liberal Protestant mainline church continue to decline, increasingly approaching non-sustainable levels. Most elites in academia, education, professions, unions, media, and the corporate world exhibit secularist values. If these indicators suggest a European pattern of secularization, there is also counter-trend data. Belief in God remains high at over 80%, indicating perhaps a privatized “belief without belonging” phenomenon. But conservative Protestant churches continue to exhibit substantial growth compared to liberal denominations and surpass the latter in total regular attendance at religious services. Aside from the decimation of Catholicism in Quebec, in the rest of Canada it remains much healthier than liberal Protestantism, not least because of major infusions of immigrants from global south Catholic countries. Nevertheless, if these indicators suggest an American pattern of religious endurance, the absence in Canada of an American style religious right suggests that the Canadian pattern of secularization will continue to resemble more the European experience. Certainly this seems to be the perception of the Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, which eschews any affinity with religious social conservatism.

Footnotes

¹ See José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994), ch. 2, for definitions of public and private religions.

² *Ibid.*, Casanova, 3-10 and ch. 1, for critical uses of secularization theory.

³ For the Parliamentary prayers, see Arthur Beauchesne, *Canada's Parliament Building: the Senate and House of Commons* (Ottawa, 1947), 61; and Norman Ward, "Prayers in the Commons," 32:2 *Dalhousie Review* (1952-53); 140-43.

⁴ See Marguerite Van Die, ed., *Religion and Public Life in Canada: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Toronto, 2001), Parts 1-3.

⁵ See Fernand Dumont, Jean Hamelin and Jean-Paul Montminy, eds., *Idéologies au Canada Français, 1930-1939* (Québec, 1978).

⁶ Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28* (Toronto, 1971).

⁷ Charles Thomas Sinclair Faulkner, "For a Christian Civilization: The Churches and Canada's War Effort," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1975.

⁸ See George Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal, 1997).

⁹ *Les Droits de L'Homme et la Loi Naturelle* (New York, 1942).

¹⁰ See Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970* (Montreal, 2005).

¹¹ "A Report of the Commission on Church, Nation and World Order," Presented to the Eleventh General Council, The United Church of Canada, London, Ontario, 1944 (Toronto, 1944).

¹² Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1941, 1943). Niebuhr's earlier classic, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study of Ethics and Politics* (New York, 1932), would also have been familiar to members of the Commission. See Kevin Flatt, "The Survival and Decline of the Evangelical Identity of the United Church of Canada 1930-1971,"

PhD diss. McMaster University, 2008, ch. 2.

¹³ *United Church Observer*, 1 July 1945, 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 1 Oct. 1945, 1. See also Mutchmor, *The Memoirs of James Ralph Mutchmor* (Toronto, 1965), 142.

¹⁵ Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto, 1985).

¹⁶ Detailed argumentation and references for the following paragraphs can be found in the author's "Between War and Peace: Politics, Religion and Human Rights in Early Cold War Canada 1945-1950," in *Religion and the Cold War*, ed. Dianne Kirby (London, 2003), 163-87, and "Entering the Age of Human Rights: Politics, Religion, and Canadian Liberalism: 1945-1950," *Canadian Historical Review*, 85:3 (Sept. 2004), 451-79.

¹⁷ St. Laurent, speeches of 11 June and 11 Nov. 1948. Reprinted in R. A. Mackay, ed., *Canadian Foreign Policy, 1945-1954: Selected Speeches and Documents* (Toronto, 1971), 184-91.

¹⁸ Details on the churches' discussions and positions on this topic can be found in Gayle Thrift, "The Bible and the A-Bomb: Canadian Protestant Churches in the Cold War Era, 1945-1968," PhD diss., University of Calgary, 2005.

¹⁹ Pope Pius XII, "The Threat of ABC Warfare, Address to the Peoples Assembled in St. Peter's Square, April 18, 1954," in *Catholic Peacemakers: A Documentary History*, ed. Ronald G. Musto (New York, 1996), 369.

²⁰ St. Laurent to T. L. Church, 14 March 1949. St. Laurent Papers, vol. 70, File, "Religion - General - 1948-49."

²¹ Mutchmor, 137-38, 142-43, 147, 156.

²² Editorial, "Who Is Slipping?" *United Church Observer*, vol. 16, no. 5 (May 1, 1954): 4. For details

of United Church expansion, see John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era* (Vancouver, 1998, ©1972), 161.

²³Grant, ch. 8.

²⁴Terrence Murphy, ed., *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* (Toronto, 1996), 240-42.

²⁵See the author's "Writing the Canadian Bill Of Rights: Religion, Politics, and the Challenge of Pluralism, 1957-1960," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 192 (Dec. 2004), 1-22.

²⁶Canadian Bill of Rights: An Act for the Recognition and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (S.C. 1960, c.44).

²⁷Special Committee, 22-50; 360-97.

²⁸Scott to Michael Pitfield, 6 Aug. 1980, cited in Djwa, 434.

²⁹ For an overview of the de-Christianization of Canada since the 1950s, see Mark Noll, "What Happened to Christian Canada?" *Church History* 75:2 (June 2006).

³⁰*Ibid.* 251-55; Sandra Djwa, *The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F. R. Scott* (Toronto, 1987), ch. 18.

³¹ Toronto, 1965.

³²See Flatt, chs. 3-5. For an explanatory overview of Canadian religious change see Mark Noll, "What Happened to Christian Canada?" *Church History*, 74 (June 2006), 245-73.

³³"An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson," delivered at the Yorkminster Baptist Church, Toronto, March 25, 1953. Lester B. Pearson Papers, NAC, MG 26/N9/7.

³⁴See Gary Miedema, *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebrations, and the Remaking of Canada in the 1960s* (Montreal, 2005).

³⁵*Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (Ottawa, 1967-70), Book VI.

³⁶John English, *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau*, vol. 1, 1919-1968; *Just Watch Me: The Life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau*, vol. 2, 1968-2000 (Toronto, 2006-09).

³⁷Canada, *House of Commons, Debates*, Dec. 5, 1967, p. 5083.

³⁸ Author's interview with the Honourable David Smith, Liberal Deputy House leader, Feb. 22, 1982.

³⁹ This concluding paragraph draws on data from the 2001 Canadian census; the Ipsos-Reid polls of 1993 and 2003; George Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?: In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (Montreal, 1996); and Reginald Bibby, *Restless Churches: How Canada's Churches Can Contribute to the Emerging Religious Renaissance* (Toronto, 2004).

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