

Secularization in English Canada in the 1960s:
Mass Media and the “Problem of History”

by

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ABSTRACT

During the 1960s, Christianity suffered monumental declines in church attendance and participation around the Western world. While overall patterns were similar, the means by which secularization emerged as a force within individual societies was subject to regional idiosyncrasies. Neoliberal Christian thought was common to them all, however. This movement was analogous in many ways to certain other veins of “liberal” Christian thought that have appeared throughout the twentieth century (such as the Social Gospel). What these liberal movements shared was critical doubt about Christianity’s belief in a supernatural God. This had been a result of the advent of the “Problem of History” in the late 1800s, and consisted of the problems posed when attempting to ascertain the historical accuracy of Biblical accounts. Books like John A.T. Robinson’s *Honest to God* (1963) and Pierre Berton’s *The Comfortable Pew* (1965) criticized the anachronistic values of the church in an attempt to bring them up to date with the modern secular world by eliminating Christianity’s dependence on the “religious” premise, or by criticizing its dogmatic reliance on superstitious belief. This thesis examines five print media in Canada during the 1960s in order to illustrate the influence of the Neoliberal movement on the Canadian media. The media involved itself in discussions of religion in Canada directly during the 1960s, and drew heavily from the Neoliberal works that are reviewed in this study, such as those of Robinson and Berton. This study hopes to add to our understanding of secularization by looking at one of the ways in which “liberalism” has affected popular discussions of religion. In so doing, this thesis also argues that liberal criticism may play more of a role in secularization than Canadian historiography currently recognizes.

Supervisor: Dr. Lynne Marks

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Secularization and the Mass Media in Canada

In 1878, E.H. Dewart, editor of the *Christian Guardian* in Canada, proclaimed that “the assailing army of unbelief repudiates all teaching that implies any supernatural power, a spiritual existence whatsoever.”¹ In 1871, Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch theologian, described liberalism as a “mirage, beautiful and seductive, but empty of reality.”² Each was speaking of a trend taking place within their faiths, a theological spirit that spanned the Christian world and had been a reaction to certain Victorian developments, including the publication of Darwin’s books, changing social conditions and the rise of social and historical criticism. Known as “the Problem of History” to theologians, it consisted of the challenges that “modern historical investigations pose for the credibility of traditional religious belief.”³ The historical accuracy of biblical accounts, such as Noah’s Ark or the resurrection of Christ, no longer seemed realistically reliable, and certain members of the Christian faith attempted to create new theologies that treated Scripture as myth, not fact. “Modernism”, or “Liberalism,” the resulting anti-supernaturalist movement within Christianity, was considered by many Christians around the world to be evidence of decline and secularization within the church, mirroring developments within society, and possibly expediting them.

Heralds of Western secularization have been prophesying the imminence of the death of religion in society ever since. Some historians believe that secularization is a process whereby society loses its dependence on supernatural explanations for the

¹ Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 3.

² Berkouwer, G.C., *A Half Century of Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 14.

³ Tilley, Terrence W., *History, Theology & Faith: Dissolving the Modern Problematic* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 9. Darwin’s books: *On the Origin of Species* (1859), *The Descent of Man* (1871).

universe; critics of the secularization thesis maintain that it uses overly narrow definitions of what constitutes “religion” and “Christianity”. Much of the confusion surrounds the details; determining the origins and nature of secularization introduces a complex array of considerations, involving such categories as intellectual, social and political history. On a broad level, it suggests that religion was once ubiquitous, but that due to certain developments in society and thought, it has been slowly usurped by powers like government and forces such as consumerism and mass culture. Secularization has been widely studied using similar approaches, in Canada, the United States and Britain, but has presented historians with interpretive obstacles. What, for example, distinguishes a “religion” from a philosophy, cult, or sect? Semantic problems like this have significant implications for a theory of secularization, and are currently the most important impediments to consensus in the field.

This thesis focuses on secularization in English Protestant Canada. Most Western cultures share analogous changes in popular religiousness over the past century, but perceptible indications of secularization tend to vary within regional boundaries. For the purposes of this investigation, English Canadian provinces are considered as belonging to a unique Christian discourse, distinct from developments in Quebec, the U.S. and Britain. These other cultural regions would otherwise appear to belong to a further, over-arching, Western Christian discourse of secularization which looms in the sociological background, but the features of Canadian Christianity are idiosyncratic enough to warrant a more regional and historical study. The English Canadian provinces have been roughly alike in their religious composition (at least, compared to other nations), and in the resulting predominance of the Anglican, United Church and Methodist traditions

(Methodists, along with Congregationalists and many Pentacostals, combined to create the United Church in 1925). Roman Catholicism has also long been the most populous single Christian group in Canada, but for reasons beyond the scope of this study, has had a different relationship with secularization than Protestantism. This is not intended to be a comparative study, however; highlighting the differences between societies first demands an intensive look at secularization within national borders, a task which is not nearly complete in any event.

What evidence suggests that secularization has occurred in Canada? Between 1871 and 2001, the numbers of Canadian believers affiliated with particular Christian churches changed significantly. Catholics increased from 42% to 43%, Protestants decreased from 56% to 29%, and those of “no religion” increased from negligible to 16% of the national population.⁴ These shifts in rates of affiliation, which appear to have mostly affected Protestants, do not seem to reflect the widespread cultural changes that have accompanied them. The secularization and professionalization of the teaching and social services sectors, the dramatic decrease in attendance at Sunday services, and the disappearance of religion as a popular topic within most forms of mass media and entertainment all point to deeper changes within the structures and belief systems of Canadian society. When and how did these changes occur?

The Late Victorian period and the individual decades of the twentieth century are each characterized by unique developments which can be argued to have collectively contributed to a process of secularization that is linear in its long term-effect, although this process does not preclude an occasional gust of religious renewal or reform along its downward path (often described as the “death throes” of a dying religion). Few decades

⁴ Choquette, Robert, *Canada's Religions* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004), p. 375.

are rivaled in their impact by the developments of the 1960s, however. Between 1965 and 1975, weekly church attendance in Canada dropped from 83 to 61 per cent.⁵ In 1946, 60% of professed Protestants attended church weekly. By 1966, this number had decreased to 33%.⁶ From 1960 to 2000, the percentage of the population affiliated with the United Church dropped from 20% to 9.6%. Canada's three other "mainline" churches suffered similar fates; Anglicans decreased from 13% to 6.9%, Presbyterians from 4% to 1%, and Lutherans from 4% to 2%.⁷ All this occurred after Christianity's auspicious overall experience of growth following World War II, and before theories of secularization began to abound among the Western nations after the 1960s. What could possibly explain this dramatic reversal of fortune for Christianity?

Many thinkers have attempted to connect changes in mass media to changing popular values. Political scientist Robert D. Putnam has investigated the effect of television in American society, arguing that it has reduced the qualities of "trust and confidence". To Putnam, television, which claims about 40% of Americans' free time, has potentially led to declines in "civic participation" and "social trust," and an increase in the "privatization" of public behaviour.⁸ This has been accompanied by an "erosion of confidence" in organized religion, and the perception that modern ministers (particularly television evangelists) are often insincere.

⁵ Grant, J.W., "Postscript: After the Deluge", *Prophets, Priests and Prodigals*, p. 339. In Quebec, the effects were being felt even more acutely, earning the title, "the silent revolution": membership in religious social movements dropped from 30,700 to 300 between 1961 to 1971, and 840 out of 6060 priests left the priesthood between 1962 to 1972. Ecclesiastical orders fell by half, and donations decreased at parishes over the decade, including by an impressive 20% between 1968 and 1969.

⁶ Choquette, p. 366.

⁷ Ibid., p. 375. See Robert D. Putnam's *The Decline of Civil Society : How come? So what?*, (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, 1996). Cited in Schmidt, Leigh Eric, "Trust and Confidence in American Religious History," in Peter W. Williams, ed., *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, (Malden: Blackwell, 1999).

⁸ Ibid..

From 1952 to 1960, the number of television stations in Canada increased from 1 to 47, by which time 75% of Canadian families owned televisions.⁹ In 1961, a wave of “second” stations began to fill in the urban landscape, as corporations discovered that a before-tax profit on television equity could amount to 98.5%. The revolutions of cable and colour in 1965, and then satellite, video and “pay T.V.” further cemented multimedia into the lives of virtually every individual in the English-speaking West. Naturally, these changes impacted the print media, which underwent its own revolutions. In the 1950s, the paperback boom was inspired by companies like Britain’s Penguin Books, while newspapers and magazines also increased in circulation and became more concentrated in the hands of big businesses. Smaller media entities like tabloids and radical magazines (such as the *Clarion*, *Tribune*, and *Citizen* of the 1930s) all but disappeared by the 1950s, casualties of a more competitive marketplace that appeared to gain momentum from the aggregate revolutions in various forms of media.¹⁰ In Canada, MacLean-Hunter publications reigned over Canadian light reading, challenged only by Roy Thomson’s *Saturday Night*, *Liberty* and *Canadian Home Journal* and his daily newspaper empire.¹¹

Can these changes in mass media have influenced the changes in popular religious behaviour? Secularization involves shifts in ideas and behaviour on a wide scale, which requires some means of transmitting these values. “Commonsense alone suggests the most ubiquitous media have always been the press,” says Paul Rutherford, “joined recently by radio and television.”¹² The Gutenberg Bible, the rise of the daily paper, and the appearance of radio and television have all had wide-ranging effects on culture and

⁹ Rutherford, Paul. *The Making of the Canadian Media*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1978), p. 84.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 81, 83.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. ix.

thought, and are generally attributed some role in historical developments like the Reformation and consumer culture. Marshall McLuhan, a Catholic of some conviction, was convinced that the appearance of the telegraph in 1901 signaled the end of a Western Christian hegemony. In his opinion, the “de-Romanization” of Western civilization was made inevitable by the dramatic improvement in speeds of communication, which could only serve to de-centralize the control of information and, therefore, culture. The church would no longer be able to act as the custodian of popular values. McLuhan believed, as many do, that the media was responsible for changing the message of Christianity.¹³ Is this possible? How can we begin to answer such a question?

Obviously, it is impossible to determine the precise impact that mass media may have had on secularization. The task of hypothesizing both the readership of the selected media and the potential effects of the content of the media on the beliefs of these individuals is beyond the scope of this thesis, which does not attempt to construct a deterministic model of the role of media in society (unlike McLuhan). However, it may be possible to determine certain boundaries, or eliminate impossibilities, by looking at the ideas present within popular media. Were there “secularizing” ideas circulating within the media, in the form of liberal criticisms of Christianity? Were there moving defenses of traditional faith, potentially able to counter-act the effects of this mass criticism? As we will see, there are at least some things we can say for sure in these regards.

This thesis examines popular print in Canada during the 1960s. I have chosen to study popular print independently of television and radio as these belong to discrete discourses that have not been affected by some of the processes that will be identified here (such as the control over editing that certain individuals in the print media were able

¹³ McLuhan, Marshall, *The Medium and the Light*, (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd., 1999), p. 57.

to exercise), and are worthy subjects of independent study for their own reasons. The printing presses in Canada have also experienced some peculiarities which could only have been possible in Canada, and coincidentally only possible within Canada's print media. Lastly, printed text is a powerful medium for transporting ideas and is able to deal with topics at length, whereas time-constrained and sound-byte-based entertainment broadcasts are usually too poorly equipped to deal with complex intellectual problems in any real depth. Paul Rutherford, Canada's premier historian of the media, believes that "The press, in effect, created public opinion, the force which came to justify political authority throughout Canada," How did the press inherit such power? "Together, the bourgeoisie readership of the newspaper and the cultural significance of the journalist made the press an agency of legitimation."¹⁴ Even if Rutherford is only partially correct, it is still worth asking how the media was informing the Canadian public about religious issues in the 1960s. To what kind of religious and social commentary might all people in English Canada have had access in the 1960s?

I have chosen some of the most popular and influential periodicals and papers from which to provide a survey of the selected Canadian print media between the years 1960 and 1969. The magazines *MacLean's*, *Saturday Night*, *Chatelaine*, and *Time* (Canadian edition) and the B.C. Newspapers (the *Victoria Times* and *Colonist*, and Vancouver's *Sun* and *Province*) are all examined thoroughly. 1500 articles were selected from the *Globe and Mail*, which offered many thousand more articles involving

¹⁴ Rutherford, p. 31. Rutherford believes that from the outset, the Canadian press was in direct competition with the clergy for the morality of the nation, and that the press' influence even managed to reduce the power of politicians by dividing their power over public debate (p. 31).

Christianity.¹⁵ *Time Magazine* generally had a weekly segment on religion which provided thousands of individual articles, most of which were of general or news-worthy interest, but many of which were far more analytical and informed than the other sources. *MacLean's*, *Saturday Night*, and *Chatelaine* had a much smaller numbers of relevant articles, which were all noticeably more editorial, liberal and opinionated. These sources were selected because they comprised the most popular intra-national reading material in Canada, to which all Canadians could possibly have had access. If the mass media affected popular beliefs across Canada, then these sources would likely have shared some responsibility. The exception is the local B.C. Newspapers, which are presented in contrast to the national media. B.C. is the most “irreligious” of the Canadian provinces, as the work of Lynne Marks demonstrates, and might prove fertile ground for future studies of the relationship between mass media and religion.

The relationship between communication and secularization has been implied and argued many times by historians around the world, but these fields have not been studied together in depth, and only sociologists have thoroughly explored the media on its own.¹⁶ While the fields have been broached independently in Canada, only a limited amount of material has been published, and no combined theories of secularization have emerged. Canada's theorists of communication are well-known, however. Harold Innes and

¹⁵ Articles were obtained using the search function from the Globe and Mail online PDF database. Terms used included: Christianity, Secularization, Christian, Church, Morality, and Religion. These produced many thousands of articles (possibly over 10,000). As a result, I opted to only look at the articles appearing under the search term of “Christianity”, which produced about 1500 articles and comments, and “secularization”, which produced roughly 30. This seemed excusable in light of the tautology in the topics and information contained in the articles. Each article rarely added more insight or unique avenues to the discussions; rather, they tended to draw their arguments from the same, sound-byte based canon of issues, attitudes, events and interests. An examination of the articles under the other headings revealed the same trends, leading me to the conclusion that using the 1500 “Christianity” articles as a guide ought to be sufficient to cover most all of the possible discussions taking place in the media.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. ix. Rutherford finds sociologist Denis McQuail a valuable resource. See, for example, *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communication*, (London: Collier-MacMillan, 1969).

Marshall McLuhan have hypothesized the effects of technology on information, and Paul Rutherford compiled the definitive history of Canadian mass media. In their musings, Marshall and Rutherford have offered some opinions about religion, but historians of religion in Canada have not noticed, nor have they reciprocated. Ramsay Cook's book, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (1985), has come the closest to connecting mass media to social and religious criticism, but falls short of introducing a theory of the media. Effectively, the fields of communication and secularization in Canadian historiography have remained distinct.¹⁷

The study of secularization in Canada, meanwhile, has consisted of the slow process of defining the word itself. "Secularization" is a work in progress. John G. Stackhouse and John Grant are the only two English Canadian historians to have studied the effects of secularization during and after the 1960s, as much of the field has been dedicated to discussing the significance of the actions of the clergy and social elites around the turn of the century and up to the Second World War.¹⁸ This period has been identified as pivotal in a process of secularization, and is currently the contested ground in historiography. Most Canadian historians agree that following this period, and certainly since the drama of the 1960s, some sort of secularization has occurred.¹⁹

¹⁷ Cook, Ramsay, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985). W.H. Kesterton's *A History of Journalism in Canada*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, c1967), was the only other work prior to Rutherford to concentrate on the Canadian media, but focused on journalists and did not comment on the media as a whole.

¹⁸ Stackhouse examines the presence of Evangelical beliefs in Canadian culture in the twentieth century in his work, *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). John Grant will be discussed later, and has studied the signs of Canadian secularization since the 1960s, including declining church attendance and involvement.

¹⁹ This is unlike the U.S., where it is generally agreed that religion does not appear to have suffered serious overall decline, although it may have undergone certain changes. See Jon Butler's *Awash in a Sea of Faith* for a reinterpretation of changes inspired by competition between churches in the Victorian era; in his view, the increased competition led to many adaptations that should not be considered decline, and to which many modern American churches owe their heritage. See also Anne Tave's *Fits, Trances and Visions*; she studies various spiritual, mystical and liberal religious traditions to demonstrate that many

Canadian sociologists, including Reginald Bibby and Roger O'Toole, generally concur that Christianity has experienced consistent declines in participation and belief in Canada since the 1960s, although they also note that there are reasons to believe that secularization may not be an intractable law.²⁰ These sociologists, who are reviewed in more detail below, do not look in the previous decades for the historical roots of these social changes, however. Historians, meanwhile, have looked for the causes of the more recent trend of secularization within the late 1800s and the first half of the 20th century, focusing particularly on the nature of the Social Gospel.

Histories of the early parts of the twentieth century generally refer to evidence like the Canadian censuses of 1901 and 1911. For example, they cite the number of people who stated that they had no religion, which rose from 6,193 to 26,893, indicating that atheism, a taboo in late Victorian Canada, was becoming more acceptable.²¹ Urban population also rose from 37.5% to 45.4% of Canadians, and signs of secularism abounded in the proliferation of mass entertainment, leisure and transient work forces. While church membership in Protestant sects stayed relatively consistent throughout this period, observance of the Sabbath began to fall and churches introduced innovations to their practices in order to regain the interest of their wandering flocks.²² The Social Gospel was the most important of these, and is regarded either as a decisive turning point in the progress of secularization or as a symbolic act of renewal in defiance of

owed their origins to wandering threads of Christian discourses. In so doing, she argues that "scientific" standards may not be set upon religious traditions, essentially taking aim at the idea that there may ever be said to be a sense of a "decline" within a tradition, problematizing the criteria of secularization.

²⁰ O'Toole, Roger, "Religion in Canada: Its Development and Contemporary Situation," (*Social Compass*. Vol. 43 [1], 1996), pp. 119-134.

²¹ Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, p. 11.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

secularization, depending on whether the author prefers liberal or traditional conceptions of Christianity.

Historians who believe that secularization owes some of its origins to events in this era usually point toward changes that took place within the church and among the clergy in response to changing social conditions. Theology, in particular, adopted some interesting innovations in order to avoid the stigma of superstition, or foolish and antiquated cosmology. The challenge at this time surrounded the meaning of theologians' "Problem of History". Theologian Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768) originally constructed the problem of the "historical Jesus", which involved limiting what Christians could say about Jesus to what they could ascertain as historical fact, not merely traditional myth. The resulting tension between "essential" Christian doctrines and the "assured results" of historical investigation "crystallized" in the nineteenth century, creating the problem of "history and faith," or simply the Problem of History.²³

Which words were God's truth and which were humanity's became the question, and theologians, themselves moved by critical doubt, responded by creating "ethical" religious structures that lacked an ingredient of supernatural belief. Canadian historian David Marshall describes it as "the Problem of the nineteenth century," and argues that this trend in theology did not really take hold in Canada until after 1870, when Canadian readers had had a chance to assimilate the implications of the theory of evolution. At this time, theological tracts defending or questioning Christianity on the basis of historical and scientific investigation began to appear *en masse*.²⁴ Historians like Marshall believe

²³ Tilley, p. 10.

²⁴ Marshall, David B., "Canadian Historians, Secularization and the Problem of the Nineteenth Century," *Canadian Historical Studies*, 60 (1993-1994), p. 68. This followed the secularization of the Clergy

that this reaction to modernity, involving the creation of “liberal” theologies that seek to undermine the supernatural foundations of faith, constitutes the “Problem of History,” and is possibly one of the most central causes of secularization.

This theoretical outlook has not been extended to more recent parts of Canadian history, however. Marshall’s framework of the Problem of History covers only the first half of the twentieth century. As we shall see, there is reason to believe that a consideration of the 1960s might shed further light on this issue. Terrence Tilley argues that by this time, the Problem became that of the “historian and the believer”.²⁵ At some point in the middle of the century, the discussion of the Problem of History moved out of the seminaries and into public realm, and a population with increasing exposure to university education lost its faith in religion as never before. This study is designed to investigate the presence of liberal Christian thought within the Canadian mass media in the 1960s, in order to further answer the perplexing question of the impact of the Problem of History: have scientific doubt and social and historical criticism done more to damage Christianity than revolutionize it? To demonstrate how this study can be of value in the historiography, it will first be necessary to briefly review the progression of the secularization debate in order to illustrate how it has consistently managed to overlook the ongoing Problem of History in Canadian Christianity.

Reserves in 1854, which to this point had granted the church 1/7th of the public land of Upper and Lower Canada (since the 1791 Constitutional Act).

Marshall traces the origins of the Problem of History to the Reformation, where the creation of sects led to popularity contests among denominations. By 1850, he argues, immigration had served to pluralize the Canadian landscape enough to ultimately necessitate a sort of social pluralism, resulting in “liberal” forms of Christianity that did not emphasize their supernatural superiority, and ceased, in Marshall’s mind, to be a “religion” as a result. These developments coincided with full professionalization of the teaching industry by 1871, at a time when 88% of Canadians lived in communities with populations under 5,000. Source: Wilson, Donald J., ed., et al., *Canadian Education: A History*, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 291.

²⁵ Tilley, p. 10.

Worldwide, the post-1960's historical investigation of secularization began in earnest with the appearance of such works as Owen Chadwick's classic study, *Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (1975). The work of Hugh MacLeod is also well-known.²⁶ In Canada, the study of secularization began in the 1970s, with the publication of John Webster Grant's *The Church in the Canadian Era*.²⁷ These works were clearly occasioned by the strong indications of secularization that materialized in the 1960s. Prior to Grant's work, histories of religion in Canada had been cautiously optimistic about the church's prospects for the future.

The U.S. has produced authors like James Turner (*Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America*, 1985) and Paul Carter (*The Spiritual Crisis of Gilded Age*, 1971), and has proved to be fertile ground for fashionable theories of secularization that characterize religion as a commodity, tailored to satisfy the specifications of popular demand. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark's *The Churching of America, 1776-1990 : Winners and losers in our religious economy* (1992) and Lawrence Moore's *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (1994) advance the view that secularization is possibly a product of consumer culture, the result of competition between churches for the religious dollar of the country.²⁸ Moore argues that clergy

²⁶ Chadwick, Owen, *Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Some books by Hugh MacLeod: *Piety and Poverty : Working-Class Religion in Berlin, London, and New York, 1870-1914*, (New York : Holmes & Meier, 1996); *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian England : how secular was the working class?*, (Bangor, Gwynedd : Headstart History, c1993); *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914*, (Basingstoke, Hants : Macmillan ; New York : St. Martin's Press, 2000).

Chadwick had studied the dailies in Britain extensively for evidence of their influence on public opinion, and believed that strength of the press was its ability to criticize. Fanaticism in Britain was ridiculed by the liberal press. Chadwick does not believe that the press was a secularizing force, however, as "men were more easily able to buy atheist literature [than the dailies] if they wished," or religious literature if they wished, he says, implying that papers did not have a monopoly over public opinion (p. 41).

²⁷ Grant, J. W., *The Church in the Canadian Era*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1972).

²⁸ Turner, James, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985); Carter, Paul A, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971); also refer to such well-known works as Taves, Ann, *Fits, Trances and*

adjusted their attitudes and their demands of church members in response to the growth of consumer culture, which was less interested in Victorian sermonizing and puritanical lifestyles than community involvement and social stability. Christianity changed as a result of the driving forces of supply and demand. This is a recurring theme in analyses of Christianity, and will be referred to as the market analogy.

It is hard to say how much Canadian historiography owes to other international discussions of secularization; they developed quickly and concurrently, and while Canadian authors occasionally refer to them in passing, they do not draw extensively from foreign literature. In Canada, an exception is the work of Reginald Bibby, who refers regularly to the research of Stark, Finke, and William Bainbridge, often applying their market place analogies to the Canadian context.²⁹ In *Restless Gods*, Bibby argues that while statistical data over the past 30 years indicates that involvement in most religious groups has been steadily declining, in some areas there is something of a “spiritual renaissance”. Many Canadians still believe in God after their own fashions, but they appear, in Bibby’s mind, to desire a different kind of religion, perhaps one that will “be in touch with the spiritual, personal, and social needs and interest of Canadians.”³⁰ Bibby believes that there is hope for Christianity if the churches respond to the current

Visions, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Butler, Jon, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1990); and Hatch, Nathan O., *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

Moore, Lawrence (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Finke, Roger and Stark, Rodney, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992). Other works discussing the market analogy in the U.S. include, Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), who argues that “The religious art of capitalist society reduces traditional religious symbols to the level of the middle class morality”, p. 10; and Schmidt, Leigh Eric, *Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), who also studies the “power of market forces and the semiotics of gifts” to demonstrate how capitalism appropriates religious holidays and affects popular celebration of these holidays through consumerism.

²⁹ William Bainbridge also worked with Rodney Stark on projects similar to those with Roger Finke, such as in “Church and Cult in Canada,” (*Canadian Journal of Sociology* 7, 1982), pp. 351-366; and *The Future of Religion*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

³⁰ *Restless Gods*, (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co., 2002), p. 234.

demands of Canadians, although church reformers have been saying the same thing for over one hundred years. Bibby admits that with the passing of those Canadians currently in their 50s, the prospects for Christianity appear somewhat bleaker, but Bibby has faith that the major religions simply do not “roll over and die,” but shall rather will themselves to persevere in the future.³¹ The sociological investigations of Bibby and Stark concentrate on the nature of society since the 1970s, however, and do not associate current themes with those of the past, as this thesis attempts to do. For the purposes of this investigation, I will draw mainly on the work of Canadian historians who discuss the media and secularization in the Canadian context.

The turn of the century had not been considered important in a definition of secularization until Grant’s *The Church in the Canadian Era* (1972). While many Christian social critics of the early twentieth century regretted the gradual “dissolution” of popular morals, perceived to be the result of secularization, histories of Canadian churches written during the first half of the century generally preferred a “providential” interpretation of the church’s prospects for its future. The church had suffered adversity and setbacks, but in most appraisals, such as in E.H. Oliver’s classic, the *Winning of the Frontier* (1930), the church was still alive and well and set to stage a comeback after the initial gains of consumer culture.³² Throughout the 1920s, depression and years of World

³¹ Ibid., pp. 71, 26. Sociologist Roger O’Toole also discusses the state of religion in Canada since the 1960s in “Religion in Canada,” but also does not investigate the possible historical origins of secularization prior to the 1970s. In his analysis, the decline of general interest in Christainty has been accompanied by a rise in spiritualism and other religions, much as in the work of Bibby, except that growth of spirituality does not appear to counter-balance the losses within traditional varieties of Christainty.

³² Oliver, E.H., *The Winning of the Frontier*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1930), This book represented the first attempt to document a national history of the church consistent with the expectations of academic and secular historiography, according to David Marshall. (Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, p. 13). In it, Oliver examined the various aspects of the country that might be considered “frontiers” (such as Acadia and the Prairies) and demonstrated, as his thesis, that the church was quite alive in areas where “frontiers” could be discerned, and showed a remarkable, revitalizing energy and will to live in the modern world. “Every

War II, Christianity persevered, and evangelicalism even prospered. Religion experienced no crises that rivaled those inspired by Darwin and the 1960s, giving authors little reason to speculate about the reality of secularization.

S.D. Clark's *Church and Sect in Canada* (1948) put forward the premise that religion in practice tended to resemble an entrenchment of territorial beliefs, and not the progress of a united, historically transcendent Christian ethic. To Clark, the formation of the United Church (1925) was one of the most dramatic examples of something like secularization. Competition between churches in a market-place atmosphere had led to an amalgamation designed to increase returns to scale, and led Clark to believe that modern ecumenism was a sign of decline and acquiescence to dominant secular forces.³³ Clark was the first Canadian to analyze the phenomenon of sectarianism, which he regarded as proof that secular society had influenced the nature of Christianity.

While he speaks openly about secularization in his book, he does not use it as a unifying thread in his discussion, nor does he construe it as a black hole into which all religion is tumbling inescapably. He believes that there is an element within society that requires religion, and will always provide a home for it in society, whatever shape the beliefs might take. This explained the continued success of sects, which had the ability to respond to small community markets during a time when the major denominations were suffering from dwindling flocks and resources. Clark believes that immigration, industrialization, war and depression disrupted traditional social relationships, and

Christian worker is something of a Frontiersman", he said, and in his last sentence concluded that the Frontiersman was "winning battles on the frontier" (Oliver, p. 271). There was no discussion, indeed consciousness, of a process of secularization in his book, although one gets the feeling that the book may have been written due to a sense that the church was ailing.

³³ Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, p.14. Clark, S.D., *Church and Sect in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948).

resulted in shortcomings of secular social services, effectively creating an open door of opportunity for humanitarian and community-oriented styles of worship. The “sect” had been an adaptation of religion to these social conditions, and helped to maintain order where the hands of government and the larger churches were failing during the relatively poor interwar and depression years. As a result, public reliance on these smaller religious communities increased.³⁴

Ultimately, Clark does not present an argument in favour of secularization. Faith in human progress had undermined faith in religious fundamentalism, he admits, citing the drift away from religion in the 1920s and thirties.³⁵ The “weakening of puritan mores, secularization of the Sabbath, declining influence of the bible, falling off of church attendance and increasing neglect of family prayers” were all evidence of traditional Christianity’s failing relevance in the modern world. Sects, particularly Evangelical, are his evidence that secularization is not inevitable, and would likely provide the ray of hope for Christianity’s survival in the future. They were succeeding where traditional Christian models were evidently falling out of favour. Sects also had access to new untold amounts of money and alternative means of generating it (from donations and businesses), unlike their Victorian counterparts, and Clark concludes that religion had a fair amount of insurance against secularization heading into the 1950s.³⁶ Clark produced his work just before the post-war boom in religion, a phenomenon that gave historians even more reason to be optimistic about the fate of religion. At this point,

³⁴ Clark, p. 432.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 431.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 433. Clark demonstrates the strength and presence of religion in 1940s Canada by citing the large number of advertisements for evangelistic services in the dailies of the time, and evangelists’ heavy use of the mass media (radio and print) as a new venue for disseminating propaganda.

there did not appear to be a recognition of “secularization” as an intractable force in society, and there would not be for a few more years.

The 1960s produced the “Death of God”, which was the name applied to the media’s interest in the topic of secularization. Articles in papers and magazines, like *Time’s* famous 1966 cover (“Is God Dead?”), addressed the topic of religion in society succinctly and critically, in an effort to determine whether religion’s time had passed, what shape it might take in the future, or what shape it ought to take. It was a phenomenon analogous to the media’s interest in religion after Darwin’s publications, and has not been rivaled by any other decade in its vociferousness. Several manuscripts were published by theologians, journalists and clergy attacking the authoritative and outdated aspects of the church, including Pierre Berton’s projects, *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot* (1965) and *The Comfortable Pew* (1965). These followed the publication of the influential *Honest to God*, by the British bishop, John A.T. Robinson (1963). This movement within Christianity has been referred to as Neoliberalism, and is notable for its direct influence upon the mass media, and its coincidental rise alongside the maturation of the mass media industries.

The Death of God fell into the hands of a new cadre of historians, emerging in the 1950s and 1960s, who according to David Marshall were eager to subsume church history into national narratives,³⁷ To these historians, Christianity had always been uniquely Canadian, a vital and dynamic force in society, until Grant’s *The Church in the Canadian Era* sounded the alarm. He announced that Canadian Christianity would prosper no more as a result of the mass cultural upheavals of the 1960s. This decade had

³⁷ Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, p.15. This marked the end of the church’s monopoly over the writing of its own history in Canada.

involved developments quite unlike the Darwinian and historical crises of the previous century. “Every aspect of church life had come under review” by church authorities during the 1960s, who had been reacting with desperation to stem the draining reserves of youth and interest.³⁸ Many Christian leaders questioned all of its previously sacred assumptions, demonstrating a new respect for different cultures, or possibly an effort to avoid the perception of bigotry.

In his book, Grant outlines the first analysis of the fortunes of Christianity in Canada, providing a general overview of church history since 1867, and for the first time presents a contextualized look at the possible origins and nature of Canadian secularization. From the beginnings of World War I until the end of World War II, he summarizes, Canada remained a predominantly agrarian society, suffering economically. The churches had been suffering as well, and while clergy salaries were often cut during this period, the church retained many social responsibilities, as the government was operating at a reduced capacity. After the return of soldiers in the 1940s, society began to adapt to increasing revenues, new forms of mass media and suburban living. For the first time, secondary education was made compulsory and secondary schools began to grow in number and size. Churches provided necessary social involvement to the otherwise fairly cultureless suburban environment, and church membership grew rapidly as people sought to rebuild their traumatized social structures.³⁹

Grant believes that the revival of church life during this period belied some deeper problems for Christianity. Around 1960, a wave of criticism swept over Christianity and the mass media. It had its roots in the previous decades, however. The

³⁸ Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era*, p. 196.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

relatively mobile and diverse populations of the suburbs had created a demand for less discriminating sectarian tastes, and both clergy and the laity watered down the intensity of their religious fervour in the interests of creating more amicable communities. There was a “silent revolution in church life,” where devoutness was all but abandoned.⁴⁰

Weekday mass was a thing of the past, for example, as churches sought to accommodate suburbanites, who “found it as natural to choose denominations, as they chose banks or grocery chains, for their convenience of location or range of facilities.” Grant introduces the theme of the marketplace; he believes that churches began to reflect the consumer culture in which they were immersed. “The erosion of denominational differences resulted from attempts to meet increasingly similar consumer demands,” he states.⁴¹ In such a model, denominations attempted to create the most appealing product, bowing to the pressures of the market. Nothing was sacred in a market controlled by the consumer; secularization might therefore be described as a result of market forces.

Grant also demonstrates that by 1960, churches had begun to indicate a widespread awareness of the new liberal spirit emerging within their very structures. In 1958, the United Church started to address the increasing amount of relativism within its ranks, and by 1960, began to argue in favour of easing its code of abstention toward liquor, adopting a new policy based on moderation. This had been one of its most jealous and sacred principles, and the relaxation of this attitude, in the opinion of Grant, is evidence of the end of Christianity’s attempts to create the kingdom of heaven on Earth.⁴² The Vatican II Council in 1962 constituted the Catholic reaction to contemporary criticism, and the targets of its liberal reformers were ostensibly the “triumphal” and

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 170.

⁴² Ibid., p. 217.

“juridicial” modes of thought that were becoming less tasteful in an age when confidence in the prospect of absolute truth was diminishing.⁴³

The major grievance within intellectual circles was that orthodox Christian theology was maintained not so much out of nostalgia or inherent value, but as a means of preserving authority. From this basis critics launched campaigns of reform against the more stubborn anachronisms of the church, necessarily calling for a brand new form of Christianity that would guarantee that the last vestiges of antiquated prejudice had been permanently exorcized. Allowing priests to marry, women to have abortions, and even allowing different races to intermarry were the kinds of issues to which some Christians still stood ideologically opposed. It was certainly more important to liberal thinkers to promise the defeat of such discrimination than it was to preserve traditional Christian belief. The Neoliberal creed was created, and stressed the need for a “non-religious” conception of Christianity that would be based in a kind of relativism. Neoliberals believed that one could not determine absolute truths about God, and that to do so amounted to a form of idolatry, as “God” is unknowable to human minds and ineffable to human language. As a result, a theology needed to be developed that allowed changing social values to alter the substance of its apologetics accordingly. This would safeguard, forever more, against tyranny within the Christian tradition. A necessary sacrifice in pursuit of this goal was the abandonment of belief in the divine or supernatural, which only lent support to structures which sought to preserve their authority permanently, and at the expense of social harmony.

The criticisms of Christianity were so widespread that many people were scared into disbelief, believes Grant. Priests resigned and attendance plummeted. Something

⁴³ Ibid., p. 190.

had occurred. “The church was no longer the keeper of the country’s conscience,” as “picturesque and nostalgic religion was uninteresting to a society of planned obsolescence and concern for relevancy.”⁴⁴ The new laity, educated, wealthy and independent, were not looking for the zealotry of late Victorian sermonizing, but they still desired many of the social services that churches provided, such as schooling, counseling, and ceremonies like marriage and funerals. Lay people became much more involved in activities which had previously been reserved for clergy. Preaching and Sunday school teaching fell increasingly under their purview, and anti-clericalism began to fuel the new liberal spirit. Laymen and clergy both seemed keen to bring Christianity out of the hands of the theologians, and onto a local level, the clergy often obliged by creating a new style of worship loosely based on evangelism, whose methods “closely resembled those of the new art of public relations”.⁴⁵

Richard Allen was the first to respond to Grant in *The Social Passion* (1973). He introduced the argument that reform and renewal in the church around the turn of the century had not laid a foundation for secularization, but were developments that amounted to a revitalizing vanguard of social ethics. While no one had yet implied that these had been secularizing developments, Grant’s argument seemed to indicate that liberalization amounted to decline in Christian tradition, a view with which Allen took issue by using the Social Gospel as evidence to the contrary. To Allen, the Social Gospel represented a period in Canadian history where religion lost its “enchantment” with the dubious concept of the divine. While its philosophies may have been “irreligious” in the minds of more traditional Christians, the Social Gospel nonetheless served to revitalize

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 204, 217.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 169.

Christianity in spite of its crisis of authority, and create a “New Theology” that was more at home in a Canadian society in “mid-passage from being jealous of the status of its churches to being comfortably secular.”⁴⁶

Very little work had been done on the Social Gospel in Canada prior to Allen. He borrowed from such texts as K. McNaught’s *A prophet in politics* (1959), and S.M. Lipset’s *Agrarian Socialism, CCF* (1950), as political texts that referred to the Social Gospel were mostly all that were available.⁴⁷ Allen also used texts from Britain and the U.S., drawing from works like Richard Hofstadter’s *Age of Reform*. For his analysis, he relied mainly upon publications that sprung from the movement itself, such as Salem Bland’s *The New Christianity* (1920) and J.E. Hart’s rousing *Wake Up! Montreal! Commercialized Vice and Its Contributors* (1919), and even William Lyon M. King’s *Industry and Humanity* (1918).⁴⁸ As a result, his work may be thought of as the original Canadian synthesis of Social Gospel material.

Allen is convinced that the Social Gospel movements owed their origins to a pan-Atlantic, Protestant, Evangelical culture. He constructs an argument to demonstrate that the Social Gospel should not be considered a departure from tradition (anticipating the work of David Marshall). Similar movements had been occurring in other countries, with religious groups attempting to replace their traditional, more spiritual beliefs with principles of social action. Victorian Evangelicalism was based in a non-dogmatic theology that stressed the need for forgiveness of man, and provided an ideal foundation

⁴⁶ Allen, p. 356.

⁴⁷ Other works include Masters, D.C., *The Winnipeg General Strike* (1950); Sharp, Paul, *The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada* (1948); Morton, W.L., *The Progressive Party in Canada* (1950) and *Manitoba, a History* (1960); Reid, J.H. Stewart, Kenneth McNaught and Harry S. Crowe, *A Source Book of Canadian History* (1959).

⁴⁸ Also Woodsworth, J.S., *My Neighbour* (1911) and *Strangers within Our Gates* (1909).

for a shift in emphasis from dogma to social ethic. German theologian Albert Ritschl and American Social Gospeller Walter Rauschenbusch were the most influential of such thinkers, and provided the evangelical theological underpinnings of the Social Gospel movements in the U.S., Canada and Europe.⁴⁹ Both heavily influenced Canadian Social Gospellers like D.R. Sharpe, who wrote a biography of Rauschenbusch.⁵⁰

Allen believes that evangelicalism combined with liberalism, radicalism and socialism to create the Social Gospel. He argues that toward the beginning of the twentieth century, evangelicalism became more diverse, scattered, and localized (sectarian), making the unifying ethos of Victorian individualism less appropriate, especially in light of the new kinds of social problems emerging in cities.⁵¹ He is not surprised that around the world, evangelicals flocked to the most obvious humanitarian causes in an attempt to remain relevant, and that the forces of socialism combined with an appropriate form of Christianity in response to fears of secularization.⁵² Saving individuals translated well into saving society, and this was the paradigm shift present in the Social Gospel and in the apologetics of Rauschenbusch and Ritschl. Allen concentrates mostly on the work of reformers in his book, including Salem Bland, J.S. Woodsworth, William Irvine, Hugh Dobson, S.D. Chown and William Ivens, demonstrating that the Social Gospel mustered the combined forces of liberalism and radicalism in its efforts to transform theology. These reformers used Evangelicalism as a

⁴⁹ Ibid., p 4. Rauschenbusch, Walter, *The Social Principles of Jesus*, (1916), and *A Theology of the Social Gospel* (1917). Two more internationally influential books of the time were A. Sutherland's *The Kingdom of God and the Problems of Today* (1898) and R.J. Campbell's *The New Theology* (1907). Ritschl wrote in the late 1800s and is considered Rauschenbusch's teacher.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵² Ibid., p. 356. Allen traces the origins of evangelical movements in Canada, which he shows began with the arrival of the British Congregationalists and Baptists, and resulted in the emergence of Methodism as Canada's most influential English denomination (p. 5).

basis for a “New Christianity,” which was designed to fuse a social ethic to Christianity in order to remain relevant in a changing world. In conclusion, he believes that this form of liberalism does not in itself constitute a form of secularization, but rather an attempt to resuscitate religion using traditional principles.

A.B. McKillop, Ramsay Cook, and William Westfall answered Allen in their works, *A Disciplined Intelligence* (1979), *The Regenerators* (1985), and *Two Worlds* (1989), respectively.⁵³ These supported the secularization argument directly, and in the case of Cook, attempted to contradict Allen’s argument that the Social Gospel represented a revival or an attempt to react constructively to contemporary conditions. To Cook, the so-called “regenerators” of the church – the Social Gospellers – had helped to hasten the process of secularization. He dubs this a “supreme irony”. His explicit thesis is to demonstrate that the “religious crisis provoked by Darwinian science and social criticism led religious people to attempt to salvage Christianity by transforming it into an essentially social religion”.⁵⁴ The church must have succumbed to social criticism, believes Cook, since it was obvious in the nature of the Social Gospel that it represented a concession to current intellectual fashion. Cook asks, where was this criticism found? What precipitated this reflex of the church, in the form of the Social Gospel? He looks at Canadian print in the late 1800s (in the forms of dailies, periodicals, and even political cartoons, and religious publications like the *Christian Guardian*) in an

⁵³ McKillop, A.B., *A Disciplined Intelligence: Critical Inquiry and Canadian Thought in the Victorian Era*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979); and Westfall, William, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, (McGill-Queen's University, 1989). Westfall believes that the study of the “sacred” has been removed from Canadian historiography, which is essential to a concept of secularization, and traces the rise of critical inquiry among theologians and academics in Canada. Marshall values Westfall’s work as it shows how the Problem of History (biblical criticism, etc) was at the heart of the church-state controversy of the day, and thereby provides an example of the wide-ranging and secularizing consequences that historical investigation created for Christianity. Marshall, “Canadian Historians,” p. 67.

⁵⁴ Cook, *Regenerators*, p. 4.

effort to find the answer. Within the media, he finds ample criticism of Christianity, and decides that secularization must be an internal process within religion, defined by the loss of spiritual belief in response to criticism.

Cook points to a number of factors leading to a late Victorian surge in distrust of supernatural Christian beliefs. This had been the result of Darwin's works, the advances of science, and historical criticism (also called Higher Criticism, which included the concept of the "historical Jesus"), to which many Christians and theologians responded by conceding the wisdom of more secular attitudes towards creation. These included faith in scientific reality, and the belief that religion is ultimately founded in superstition and fiction. As a result, the Bible could not be considered more than a work of history, and certainly not a divinely revealed and authoritative text. Canadian theologians of the period were still interested in preserving the integrity of Christianity, however, and sought new ways to express their faith that did not flout the laws of science. Proponents of Higher Criticism, such as Nathanael Burwash and George John Blewitt, contended that reason made a more sound basis for theology than scripture. The miraculous nature of scripture and revelation was impossible. Proclaimed one believer, "Because I do not believe in many of the Bible stories, except as legends, that does not affect my faith."⁵⁵ Their arguments percolated through the pages of press throughout the late 1800s; an article in the *Week* in 1887, referring to the Darwinian controversy, read:

"But the controversy has taught us more than this...it has taught us more than ever to welcome science as an ally, to distrust, if not discard, certain dogmas, and not put too literal an interpretation on what most of us reverentially treat, in common with Nature, as a Divine, and in the main, to be spiritually apprehended revelation."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ McKillop, p. 211. George John Blewitt had won the Governor-Generals Gold Medal for philosophy, going on to teach at Victoria College.

⁵⁶ Cook, p. 62.

The Reverend George Jackson, for example, believed that “it is possible to reject the Biblical myths and traditions because they are contradicted by science and philosophy, and yet to retain them as revelations of God’s will in spiritual matters.”⁵⁷ Citing such examples, Cook attempts to demonstrate that secularization is not forced upon Christianity, but is yielded to and actively embraced or fomented by contrite or panicked factions of the religious. The emerging social religion, founded in Evangelical theology, did much to destroy “religious” aspects of Christianity and “water it down” into a hollow religion of the social sciences. The concepts of sin and atonement were replaced with the doctrine of brotherhood. The model of the “historical Jesus” construed Christ as a civic role model and not a supernatural saviour. Interpretation of his words was an obligation that befell believers individually, and was not the exclusive purview of a trained clergy.

Cook contends that regeneration and secularism were therefore connected. “Each of these regenerators accepted a theology which asserted that there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular. That melding of the sacred and the profane was the hallmark of the theological liberalism that underpinned the social gospel.”⁵⁸ Cook does not theorize on the impact of this liberal movement beyond the late Victorian period; he lets the evidence of their “betrayal” stand on its own, a “path blazed by nineteenth century religious liberals [that] led not to the kingdom of God on earth but to the secular city.”⁵⁹ Cook does not focus on Evangelicalism in his work, as secularization transcends denominational boundaries, in his view, and begins in the late 1880s, the product of

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 228.

⁵⁹ Ibid.. In effect, the regenerators represented “a stage on the road to a secular view of man and society.”

social criticism and modernity.

Since Allen, evangelicalism in Canada has been studied extensively by historians like George Rawlyk (*Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, 1997) and Marguerite Van Die (*An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918*, 1989), who further explore its connection to the Social Gospel, along with Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau (*A Full-Orbed Christianity*, 1996).⁶⁰ The underpinnings of the Social Gospel in a pre-existing, Canadian evangelical tradition have been defended vigorously by these authors, who resist Cook's ideas on the basis of their "overly narrow, intellectual definition of evangelicalism".⁶¹ They agree with Allen, viewing the Social Gospel not as a dilution of the Christian spirit, but as a dynamic reappraisal and adjustment to new times, which used evangelicalism as the means to preserve Christianity in an age when its traditional sources of authority had deteriorated. What is clear from these sources is that the disagreement in historiography does not involve issues of methodology. None dispute the declining influence of Christianity today, or the census statistics of 1901 and 1911; the problem involves the place of liberalism in a conception of secularization.

David Marshall attempts to find a place in *Secularizing the Faith* (1992), in which he directly critiques liberal theology around the turn of the century. His study is meant to reveal the many ways in which the church actively dismantled its traditional structure in

⁶⁰ See Michael Gauvreau's, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Rawlyk, G.A., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press); Semple, Neil, *History of Canadian Methodism*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); Van Die, Marguerite, *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press); Van Die, Marguerite, ed., *Religion and Public Life in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁶¹ Christie, Nancy and Gauvreau, Michael, *A Full-Orbed Christianity*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), p. ix.

response to changing social mores. To be sure, says Marshall, secularization consists of social, cultural, and intellectual changes in society, and is a result of such historical forces as “science and critical inquiry, rising standards of living, improvements in medicine and health, better education, mobility, urbanization, leisure time, mass media, and entertainment.”⁶² To these are added changing human values, including the “rise of individualism, a growing sense of personal freedom, and a greater tolerance for diversity.” Marshall argues that these forces were as much a reaction to liberal theology as a cause of it, and that the church’s reaction to these forces may therefore be described as a factor in secularization as well. The deterioration of Christianity involves an internal process, as well as an external one. Churches were forced to ease the requirements of membership, as people were increasingly unwilling to “submit to standards too exacting, responsibilities too demanding, and doctrinese too other-worldly.”⁶³ The “dominant trend in Protestant history from the Victorian era,” as a result, “has been the church accommodating increasingly secular society.”

David Marshall follows Ramsey Cook’s lead, arguing that attempts to modernize the church around the turn of the century backfired and diminished the confidence of its believers. In order to regain the interest of a restless population, the church engaged in a program of reform that watered down its theological content and reduced its integrity as a religious ethic, which had the long-term impact of disenchanting the public and reducing the church’s social influence. This was not an event that took place quickly, but a decay that had ultimately begun in the Reformation and continued slowly, and not uniformly, occasionally gaining energy from certain events or possibly changes in communications’

⁶² Ibid., p. 7.

⁶³ Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, p. 4.

technology. According to David Marshall, secularization was not yet an important concern in the late 1800s, however. The attacks on Christianity had created a crisis of faith, but not yet a convincing display of secularization in society.

The “crisis of plausibility”, or authority, that beset Christianity after Darwin and the social sciences called it into question had instead led some Christians to rethink their religion. The resulting types of liberal Christianity did away with supernatural aspects, cultivating a less threatening and “religious” attitude that was more palatable to the public. They found new ways to make themselves attractive to consumer society, by incorporating mass revivalism, unconventional sermonizing, novel gospel tunes, moral rearmament, light reading (C.W. Gordon), radio evangelism and therapeutic mind cure. They made reference to morality and social justice in place of the words of the Bible. Jesus came to be seen as an unknown historical figure, and not a supernatural fact. “The church’s mission became secularized” as a result of the Social Gospel, its content hollow and based on moral platitudes rather than elegant and enlightened theology.⁶⁴ It was this effect, argues Marshall, that finally destroyed the soul of Christianity in Canada after the 1920s and is the true meaning of secularization.

Secularizing the Faith has come to represent the development of the orthodox view of secularization in Canada. Christie and Gauvreau’s rejoinder to Marshall, *A Full-Orbed Christianity*, takes the point of view that his attitude prefers a Victorian interpretation of the nature of Christianity, and expands on Allen’s argument in defense of the grounding of the Social Gospel in traditional forms of Evangelicalism. Christie and Gauvreau deliberately tackle the issue of liberalism within Christianity, showing that at least in the case of the Social Gospel, it did not amount to a secularizing of the faith

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

from within, but a continuation of the spirit of Evangelicalism, a spirit which has been planted deeply within the grain of Canadian culture since the 1800s.⁶⁵ Focusing on the efforts of the same reformers as Richard Allen (adding Elizabeth Breadon and Beatrice Bridgen), they reinterpret “the conventional view that social reform went through a period of decline between 1918-30” and attempt to show that this period of church history in Canada was very lively and constructive, not characteristic of decline.⁶⁶

Leading up to World War I, an urban housing boom had been ushered in by the urban progressivism of business and labour. This turned out to be a failure, creating low standards of living, and leaving a vacuum in social leadership that the church then moved to occupy.⁶⁷ *Full-Orbed* also describes the 1920s in Canada as a “political wasteland”, where the church was essentially handed the task of looking after individual communities.⁶⁸ After this point (beginning in the 1930s), “mature central state planning” took over the social sphere (alongside the birth of the CBC and the rise of the radio), and demand for social support groups like the Social Gospel began to decline, leading in part to its disappearance. Up to this point, however, it had found new means for Christianity to succeed in spite of its crisis of authority, and had provided a new foundation for theology that was more democratic than the old, as Allen argues.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ *Full-Orbed*, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*. To Christie and Gauvreau, the creation of the Methodist Church Department of Evangelism in 1902 had been a Protestant recognition of the need to shift its emphasis from theology to social action. The evangelical experience was believed by reformers (like Woodsworth) to be the most effective means of reaching the people, stressing a “direct emotional experience.” The New Evangelism relied on the doctrine of sin and salvation to justify the attitudes of Social Gospel, which was why more traditional ministers were approached for recruitment in the Social Gospel movement. The reforms, which dispensed with the outdated Victorian sermonizing, invigorated the church and led to what Christie and Gauvreau describe as a “resurgence”. The reformers challenged the assumption that the integrity of the church could only be maintained through “intellectualism”, or that social evangelicalism was equivalent to secular thought as a result of dispensing with dogma and theology. *Full-Orbed* reminds us that the Methodist and Presbyterian

As a thesis, *Full-Orbed* received luke-warm reviews; it described the activities of a very small minority of radical clergy as a revival and tended to ignore that the bulk of Canadian Christians were not moved by the Social Gospel. In an effort to generate an alternative explanation for secularization, in light of their belief that liberal theologies like the Social Gospel do not represent decline, Christie and Gauvreau also contend that secularization must therefore be the result of the onset of consumer culture, which they argue only arrived with the television in 1949.⁷⁰ As James Opp points out, the “obsession with disproving secularization produces curious assumptions about consumer culture,” and ignores the interest in mail-order catalogues and baseball during the earlier parts of the century, for example.⁷¹ The Social Gospel did not really provide a long-standing foundation for a new and more democratic type of Christianity, as *Full-Orbed* suggests, but rather, disappeared in a matter of years.⁷²

The entire field of secularization in Canada is not defined by this disagreement, however; it merely represents Canadian religious historiography’s most contentious aspect. In *A Profusion of Spires* (1988), John Webster Grant points out that liberal trends in Christianity were embraced as much by Ontarian evangelicals and other ostensibly conservative churches as “radical” reformers and that secularization was not a result of corruption and liberalization within the church, but depended first and foremost on

churches of 1900 to 1930 still believed that they were trying to Christianize society, they simply did not require the elitist style of introspection which Victorian theology espoused.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁷¹ Opp, James W., “Revivals and Religion: Recent Work on the History of Protestantism in Canada”, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, (Summer, 1997), p. 189.

⁷² Susan Curtis Purdue’s review, “A Full-Orbed Christianity,” (*Canadian Historical Review*. Vol. 78, Number 2 June 1997) claims that in trying to prove that the Social gospel laid the foundation the coming of the welfare state, Christie and Gauvreau do not demonstrate that this movement left a lasting imprint of Protestantism on Canadian society, or that Protestantism at this time was as culturally central as they suggest. They do not consider forms of popular culture, such as fashion, dance and theatre, for example, and the landscape that they do examine is predominantly rural and political.

conditions in popular society.⁷³ Lynne Marks examines popular social behaviour around the turn of the twentieth century in “small town” Ontario and British Columbia. While most authors remain concerned about the effects of secularization on church structure, Marks takes a different path, looking at patterns of irreligiousness and leisure in town-sized communities. She studies the effects of class and gender on identity and religion and uses a much more quantitative approach than other authors, attempting to determine whether factors like marriage are significant in understanding patterns of religious observance. It is an effective approach that does not fall into the trap of the Marshall/*Full-Orbed* conundrum.⁷⁴

John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (*Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, 1993) and John Grant (“Postscript: After the Deluge”) are the only Canadian historians to attempt to describe the status of religion in Canada since the 1960s. Stackhouse concentrates on Evangelicals, which he finds interesting as the only sector of Christianity which does not appear to be experiencing decline in Canada.⁷⁵ Evangelicalism would seem to be the one force in North American society that is highly resistant to the pressures of secularization. It is also the only force that is not subject to Marshall’s law of secularization, or the incursions of liberal theology. Marshall indicates in his book that the denominations which he believes have suffered from the effects of secularization include such mainline churches as the United, Presbyterian and Methodist, upon which he decides that the effects of liberal theology have had the most impact.

⁷³ Grant, John Webster, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p xi. Also Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, p.17.

⁷⁴ Marks, Lynne. *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth Century Small-Town Ontario*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), and Marks, Lynne, “A Godless Province? A Gender, Family, Race and Class Analysis of Non-Belief in British Columbia, 1901”, Paper given at Canadian Families Project Workshop, August, 1999, Victoria, B.C..

⁷⁵ For a more detailed description of Evangelicalism in Canada, please refer to Appendix A.

Do theologies which emphasize a more “secular”, “liberal”, or “atheist” philosophy represent a decline in Christianity, or a legitimate shift in beliefs in response to changing social mores? Historians like David Marshall and Nancy Christie have attempted to answer this question in relation to the liberal Social Gospel, taking opposing views, but neither have followed the liberal currents in theology that have consistently accompanied social signs of secularization beyond the 1930s. What is the nature of the relationship between Christian liberalism and secularization during the period spanning the late 1800s, up to at least the 1970s?

This thesis will add to the discussion of Canadian secularization by examining the Neoliberal discourse of the 1960s, arguing that the Neoliberal movement was the modern fulfillment of a tradition within Canadian Protestantism that has roots at least in the era of Darwin. Founded in “non-religious” theology, it was the product of the same “Problem of History” that has afflicted theologians in every age since the late Victorian. I hope to demonstrate that liberalism must be considered a force within Christianity that transcends any particular decade, and deserves more attention as a result of the great potential to affect the social and theological worlds that its persistent influence has had.

This thesis will demonstrate that the content of the mass media in Canada in the 1960s was informed directly by this ongoing liberal discourse within Christianity, and that the mass media even played an important role in the Neoliberal movement. Much of the print media, including newspapers like the *Globe and Mail* and magazines like *MacLean's* and *Saturday Night*, were concentrated in the hands of a few publishers and were outspokenly critical of Christianity. A fairly regular cast of journalists like Pierre Berton, Eileen Morris, William Nichols, June Callwood and Arnold Edinborough

produced long chains of articles which systematically approached the topic of Christianity from nearly every critical angle (including attitudes towards birth control, marriage and divorce, abortion, and other religions), and did so throughout the limited selection of popular Canadian reading material. Due to the concentration of the media in their hands, these authors were literally able to command the attitudes of popular print in Canada, to the point where print appeared to be waging a campaign to transform older, more conservative Christian beliefs into more contemporary and politically correct ones. Conservative responses to these criticisms of traditional Christianity were basically non-existent; how much this is due to editing is impossible to know, although it must be taken into consideration.

In Chapter 2, I will look at the most important works of liberal theology produced in the 1960s, both in Canada and beyond. These include works like John A. Robinson's *Honest to God* and Pierre Berton's *A Comfortable Pew*. These informed the mass media, which in turn informed the public. I will trace the origins of this Neoliberal movement through the years that followed the Social Gospel, becoming its modern successor to the Problem of History. Through this process I will link publications emerging from various sectors within Christianity, and demonstrate that proponents of liberalism in the 1960s were in communication with each other, and in pursuit of similar goals, in spite of the differences they may have had over the finer points of their apologetics. This created the phenomenon of Neoliberalism, which consisted of the combined energies of almost all of the liberal theologians of the time.

In Chapter 3, I examine the media sources mentioned above, which draw heavily from the liberal Christian discourse discussed in Chapter 2. The multiple works of

Christian theology produced during this time barely had a readership outside of educated and religious circles – except for within such media as *Saturday Night* and *MacLean's*, which were interested in exhibiting criticisms of Christianity in the form of Neoliberal arguments. Proponents of this movement had mostly come from the more educated and mobile classes, much as in the case of the Social Gospel reformers. The average lay person was removed from discussions of Neoliberal theology by quite a wide margin as a result, as Grant shows us.⁷⁶ Effectively, the mass media acted as the only real purveyor of Neoliberal theology to the public. If the ideas of the Neoliberal movement had any effect on secularization in Canada, it would have been thanks to the efforts of the media.

I will look at the specific criticisms the media sources offered of Christianity, the responses these criticisms drew, and the individual people who were responsible for much of the dialogue. Through this process I intend to prove that the Neoliberal movement found its way from the pens of liberal Christian theologians to the pages of *MacLean's* magazine through the mutual sympathies of liberal-minded editorialists. The mass media in Canada in the 1960s attempted to actively foment a form of secularization, using liberal Christianity as a means of “watering down” traditional forms of popular Christianity. This was a program that was likely engaged in consciously by editors, authors and publishers like Arnold Edinborough and Pierre Berton, who between them shared the task of editing much of Canada’s light reading.

If Canadian media affected Canadian belief, then so did these people. While critics of the secularization thesis argue that liberalism is not a form of decline, accusing proponents of “unwittingly aligning themselves with Victorian preachers,” I argue that these critics unwittingly align themselves with Neoliberal theologians and the tradition of

⁷⁶ Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era*, p. 200.

liberal Christianity, whose effects on popular belief should not be taken for granted as being regenerative.⁷⁷ I use the media in the 1960s to demonstrate that liberal Christianity lived another bright day after the passing of the Social Gospel. The popularity of liberal Christianity in the media of the 1960s may have reflected the social and religious changes of the decade, but in all likelihood it may also have helped to legitimize certain forms of unbelief, creating another important chapter in the history of secularization in Canada. If this scenario has some legitimacy, then the liberal movements of the past deserve more consideration when examining secularization in any period.

⁷⁷ *Full-Orbed*, p. 5.

Liberal Theology

This chapter will discuss the most significant works of “theology” featured in the Canadian mass media during the 1960s. These books, for reasons that will become apparent, provided the majority of the force behind not only the Neoliberal thrust within the media, but also within Christianity. John Robinson’s *Honest to God* (1963), Harvey Cox’s *Secular City* (1965) and Charles Davis’ *A Question of Conscience* (1968) were all treated as seminal Neoliberal texts by theologians and cited consistently throughout the movement. The Canadian books, Berton’s *The Comfortable Pew* (1965) and the United Church’s *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot* (1965), were known only to the Canadian media, but were potentially more important in the Canadian context than the other texts, although they had been reactions to Robinson’s book. While there are differences between the ways in which the more quintessentially Canadian sources (*MacLean’s*, *Chatelaine* and *Saturday Night*) treated the material from the ways *Time* (directed by its American syndicate) and the *Globe* dealt with the material, this thesis will demonstrate that the Canadian media’s interest in subjecting Christianity to a liberal critique was inseparable from the international Christian liberal movement that created these books and served to provoke the interests of the media worldwide.

The media was fairly thorough in its handling of Neoliberalism, listing most significant works of theology of the twentieth century (let alone the 1960s), but it was thorough only in aggregate, and it would have been necessary for the average reader to look hard to find all of the religious data available during this period.⁷⁸ The vast majority

⁷⁸ However, if individuals only read the *Time* magazine religion segment every other month or so, they would have been able to consider themselves somewhat informed on the subtler happenings in world theology. The other media sources did not even begin to approach *Time’s* thoroughness and thoughtfulness

of texts were introduced by name only, a very limited number of times, and predominantly only once. Appendix B provides a list of the titles which I found mentioned in the media, although it is not exhaustive. The five books I focus on here received the overwhelming majority of media attention; this is why they were selected. While the Canadian books would not have been considered to be part of the Neoliberal movement within international theological circles, and appeared to be interesting only to Canadians, this chapter contends that they were direct offshoots of the 1960s liberal impetus in Christianity that produced the other works.

The five works discussed here were chosen because they represent the most publicized and most important selections handled by the media not only in Canada, but also in the U.S. and Britain.⁷⁹ The only other religious text to receive exposure comparable to the selected works was Hugh Schonfield's *Passover Plot* (1965), a successful British book which presented a portrait of an un-supernatural Jesus, and hypothesized what kind of mortal man would have believed himself the son of God.⁸⁰ The next most publicized book by Canadian authors was probably Gregory Baum's *The Credibility of the Church Today: A Response to Charles Davis* (1968), which was noticed by the *Globe* and *Saturday Night*, although not dealt with nearly as extensively as the other sources.

about issues and events in the religious world, and were more obviously moved by the appearance of *Honest to God*.

⁷⁹ The international books received attention on a scale comparable to the Canadian ones in the Canadian media, and these together comprise the selection of books that received this degree of publicity in Canada. Outside of Canada, the three international books might still be said to be the most important of their kind, but other texts, such as some by Richard Rubenstein – a Judaic theologian, and author of books like *After Auschwitz* – and *The Passover Plot* by Schonfield also began to claim more of the media's interest. The Canadian books were unheard of outside of Canada.

⁸⁰ Dr. Schonfield was a famous critic of Christianity during the 50s and 60s, who wrote various treatises in an attempt to demonstrate that superstitious Christian beliefs were founded in historical myth, not fact. This was characteristic of the liberal writings emerging in this period.

The most important text dealt with here is *Honest to God*, written in 1963 by British Bishop John A. T. Robinson.⁸¹ The book sold more copies – 350,000 were printed in the first year – than any other serious work of theology before or since.⁸² These were distributed among the English speaking countries, and three years after its publication, it had sold nearly one million copies. By itself, this book reached large numbers of people, and combined with the dramatic reaction it elicited from the press, it earned as much exposure as a significant media event. It was dealt with in depth or in reference to the state of Christianity in Canada in every source examined here but in the B.C. newspapers, and except in the case of *Chatelaine*, it was dealt with multiple times.

The other texts discussed in this chapter were not nearly as successful as *Honest to God*. Harvey Cox's *Secular City* (1965) was an influential theological work that was read most likely only by the truly curious. It was mentioned in *Time*'s Religion segment on numerous occasions, but appeared in the other sources only occasionally. Charles Davis' *A Question of Conscience* (1967) was also cited many times by *Time*, and a few times by the *Globe*, and its publication accompanied the author's public resignation from the Catholic church (Davis had been a priest and leading theologian). This was a well-publicized event in Britain, largely by Davis' design (Davis called his own press conference to explain his reasons for resigning), but received only limited exposure in Canada. It was often cited by other thinkers within the Neoliberal movement, however, who recognized Davis' resignation as an historically significant event, in part because Davis attributed his resignation to publications like *Honest to God*.

⁸¹ Robinson, John A. T., *Honest to God*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963).

⁸² Robinson, John A.T., and Edwards, David L., *The Honest to God Debate*, (London: SCM Press, 1963), p. 7.

The Canadian books, *The Comfortable Pew* (1965) and *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot* (1965), were only mentioned within the Canadian media and did not receive attention in the other books. They had been written by and for Canadians, more specifically by Canadian press figures, and were obviously not widely regarded as theological literature by the rest of the worldwide community. In the Canadian media, however, *The Comfortable Pew* generated an impressive reaction, generating commentary that lasted over a year. It was mentioned consistently in conjunction with *Honest to God*. *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot* was less conspicuous, but was cited alongside Berton's book in *Saturday Night*, *MacLean's* and the *Globe*.

Can these books be considered "mass" media as a result of their media exposure, if not by virtue of their publication? The ideas contained in these books circulated within the mass media, in any event; whether the books themselves are "mass" media is a moot point, since their concepts were being used to inform the public, and this is our concern. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that Berton and Robinson helped to shape the features of Canada's media in the 1960s. Not only were their ideas circulated, but they also influenced the journalists and publishers who wrote about them (Berton was able to write about himself!). I believe that these books must all be considered as belonging to the domain of the mass media. Apart from informing reporters, they also sold in large enough numbers to create a more direct impact, and succeeded in their intention of addressing the general population, which is a defining aspect of mass media. As agents which therefore possibly influenced society, these books must be judged as possible

factors in secularization. This, by extension, would lead to the conclusion that the mass media is a force in the process of secularization as well.⁸³

In this thesis, I use Richard Coleman's definition of Neoliberal, which he contrasts with Evangelicals in *Issues of Theological Conflict: Evangelicals and Liberals* (1980). He believes that these two terms, though problematic, describe two historically discernable traditions that help us to understand contemporary Christianity.⁸⁴ While the reasons for this divide involve factors like education, age, income, and race, "one feels there is a deeper divide", he states. Coleman observes that there have been two main themes in American culture since the 1800s: one "religious and confessional with its home in the church, and the other scientific and humanistic, with its home in academe."⁸⁵ His context is the United States, where this contrast is much sharper than in Canada, where moderate Christian traditions have created a far different religious environment. Nonetheless, I believe that the distinction is valid in both countries, because of the wide-ranging effects that the 'Yin' and 'Yang' of conservatism and liberalism have had in international Christianity, and because processes as complicated as secularization depend

⁸³ What defines "mass" readership? It is an important consideration when investigating whether "mass media" has had an impact on secularization. In 1950, the readership of *Chatelaine* numbered 374,000, and *MacLean's* circulation was at 404,000. By 1961, Canadian consumption of consumer magazines was at 5.7 million. This grew to 16.2 million by 1975 (Rutherford, p. 82, 88). Canada's population, by way of comparison, totaled 13,648,000 in 1951, 18,238,000 in 1961, 21,568,000 in 1971 and 23,450,000 in 1975. Source: Government of Canada website (Statistics Canada, Vital statistics, Population and Growth Components). Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2005. <http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/demo03.htm>.

Newspapers, meanwhile, "covered their markets like a blanket" during the 1960s, making their product more appealing by incorporating "razzle dazzle" journalism in order to compete with television. While newspaper increases in circulation slowed permanently after the introduction of television, their growth continued nonetheless, and all forms of media likewise prospered from the growth of the media market in the 1960s. Industries of all kinds found a new voice in the media's expanding dimensions, and religion, in particular, engaged in public self-examination through the publication of large numbers of theological and religious tracts. For a list of religious publications cited in the media during the 1960s, please refer to Appendix B.

⁸⁴ Richard J., Coleman, *Issues of Theological Conflict: Evangelicals and Liberals*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), p. 39.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*.

on broader trends than denominational jealousies. Neoliberals and evangelicals have created the appearance of two poles within Christianity, or at least within its rhetorical religious landscape, one positive, one negative, by which individual believers are repulsed or attracted.

The conservative side of Christianity, represented by Evangelical creeds (and their subset, Fundamentalism), is discussed briefly in Appendix A as a contrast to the reaction that the Problem of History has generated among the liberal-minded. Evangelicalism parts paths with liberals specifically over the meaning of this problem, usually ignoring it altogether. The conservative element of Christianity has also been symbolized around the world by the Vatican, which was also a target for liberals, although the perception in Canada and the U.S. has been that fundamentalist Protestant creeds have probably been more culpable regarding issues of intolerance. The Vatican has also recognized the criticisms of liberals, and made efforts to respond to them with encyclicals (*Mater et Magistra*, 1961) and Vatican II (1962 - 1965), while conservative Evangelical sects mostly appeared to rebuff the intellectual challenges. This thesis is concerned with liberals, who use historical doubt to challenge the authority of scripture. By examining the various thinkers who have contributed to its ongoing tradition, the following discussion will demonstrate that since Darwin's *Origins* (1859), the progression of the liberal debate within Christianity has been a direct response to this Problem of History.

Many of the theologians which this thesis considers to be part of the Neoliberal movement would not have regarded each other as belonging to the same spirit of Christianity, however. John Webster Grant, for instance, agrees that liberal Christianity

served to undermine faith in the 60s, a thesis which he defends in his virtually comprehensive summary of the orthodox interpretation of secularization, *The Church in the Canadian Era*. Although Grant argues that liberalism in this context is equivalent to decline, he does not extend his analysis of liberalism throughout the century, nor does he describe the liberal movements emerging within Christianity during the 1960s as a unified front. He identifies discrete branches of liberal theological attitudes among the seminaries of the time, deciding that the paths chosen by thinkers like Harvey Cox and John Robinson did not necessarily represent a cooperative vanguard of liberalism in Christianity.⁸⁶

While Grant is correct in many ways, this thesis argues that the main lines of distinction in Canada nonetheless remain between conservative/evangelical ideas and those of the more liberal denominations, which would consist of Marshall's "mainstream" denominations. If liberalism affected popular belief, it probably matters little how individual theologians disputed the details, in which the media took little interest in any case. Neoliberalism would have had to have emerged as a general force, a result of the combined efforts of all of its thinkers, and amplified by the coverage of journalists. Some Canadian theologians, like Catholic Gregory Baum, did create isolated defenses of the importance of some traditional Christian beliefs (Baum vigorously defends the need to believe in a supernatural God), but these elites were few in number, obscure, and inconsequential compared to the presence and authority of evangelical congregations and the pervasive influence of Neoliberalism. Baum's book barely made it to the mass media, and no other Canadian theologian attained this level of recognition.

⁸⁶ Grant does not distinguish between Evangelical, conservative and liberal. His narrative of secularization does not contain a resistant strain of Christianity; liberalism is the inevitable onset of secular culture, much as in the work of Marshall.

G. C. Berkouwer's book, *A Half Century of Theology*, is a definitive source on the progression of the liberal debate ("ethical theology") within Christianity from 1920-1970. Berkouwer identifies several traditions which built on each other, beginning with "Old Modernism," the original reaction to Higher Criticism and the progenitor of modern liberal movements. Berkouwer believes that Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck were among its most influential European theologians during the late nineteenth century, who studied "every means that science and culture [made] available for a better understanding of God's truth in general revelation," and "the psychological and historical conditions under which revelation, inspiration, incarnation, and regeneration took place."⁸⁷ These ideas also informed the ideologies of Canadian Social Gospellers.

According to McKillop, George M. Grant, John Watson, George Blewitt and S. D. Chown provided most of the theological leadership of the Social Gospel in Canada between 1890 and 1914.⁸⁸ "We must fight the battles of today instead of recalling the wars of our forefathers," said Grant, "Gospel does not mean the repetition of doctrinal formulas, but the proclamation of the ever-living message of the love of God." The "Living Word" was one of the calling cards of the Social Gospel, which justified a departure from tradition by declaring the tradition dead or dying. The Social Gospel was more concerned with finding a new message of social action than with disproving the existence of God, but nonetheless, the Problem of History echoed in their words. In *The New Christianity* (1920), for example, Canadian theologian and Social Gospeller Salem Bland called for a new conceptualization of Christianity that respected what is

⁸⁷ Berkouwer, p. 15. Berkouwer believes that these thinkers differed from Ritschl and Rauschenbusch insofar as they belonged to the higher reaches of Reformed theology, ensconced in European universities, and were not dedicated to programs of social regeneration. Otherwise, their theologies were both derivatives of the same liberal skepticism.

⁸⁸ McKillop, p. 217.

historically conditioned, meaning that dogma “is subject to the same influences as fashion and the changing social order.” He believed Christianity was better off as a democratic religion, and attempted to demonstrate apologetically that this was not inconsistent with the intellectual traditions of the faith.⁸⁹ The new age would be best served by a new kind of social Christianity in response to the Problem of History, was Bland’s thinking, and that of other Social Gospellers. As he told the Methodist Conference of 1914, “theology is a very secondary consideration in the Christian life.”⁹⁰ Like Old Modernism, Social Gospellers relied on reason to guide their actions. “Where our reason coincides with the Bible,” an instructor at Victoria College taught, “the Bible. Where our reason does not coincide with the Bible, our Reason.”⁹¹

The transformation of ethical theology into the variety of Christianity known as Neoliberal began after the introduction of the “ideology critique” to the practice of writing Christian history in the 1920s. Thinkers like Richard Niebuhr and Karl Barth, echoing their counterparts in secular academia, began to agree that even reason was as suspect as superstition, embracing a postmodern distrust of narratives of progress, and its corollary, a vigilance against subconscious motivations hidden within our sacred narrative structures. Their critique recognized that any so-called “truths” which we may ascribe to the past are only further inventions of humans, equally as presumptuous as

⁸⁹ Allen, p. 152. Bland suggests that the roots of democracy in Christianity lie in the Universities of the 12th and 13th centuries, for example, or in the Reformation, the politics of the 1800s, and possibly even in the words of Christ.

⁹⁰ McKillop, p.223. In an excellent display of the kind of apologetics upon which the Social Gospel relied, Grant stated that “The relation of religion to the secular is the relation of the law of life to all the work of life,” in reference to the place of Social Gospel in society. “This law of life is not a catechism, not a dogma, but a spiritual power or influence. Its relation to the secular is not arbitrary, but natural; not static, but dynamical...freedom is the condition of its healthful action,” (p. 219). This style of liberal rhetoric could easily have been inaccessible to the average Canadian, and foreshadowed the even more intricate language and thought of the later Neoliberals.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 209.

religious “truth”.⁹² As a result, the liberal movement within Christianity began to move past Old Modernism’s faith in science, which was seen as overly optimistic about the promise that human reason held for humanity. The newer brand of liberalism emerging in the 1920s tended to assert “love,” not reason, as the new basis of theology, in keeping with the growing worldwide academic trend of respecting human fallibility by imposing unattainable restrictions on what we may consider to be “truth.”

“True” liberalism, or one which stressed the complete historicization of scripture, was in many ways an inevitable result of this theological path. Karl Barth introduced this revolution within theological circles in the 1920s by championing the mythological nature of Biblical anecdotes, and attempting to generate new and irreversible hermeneutics that fully appreciated “the infinite difference between God and man.”⁹³ Berkouwer charts the growth of the discussion among thinkers like Pannenberg, Bonhoeffer, Bultmann, Rahner and Küng, detailing the more nuanced issues that arose in theological circles as a consequence of subjecting belief to literal interpretation. To the resulting movement within Christianity, Coleman gives the name Neoliberalism. Descended from the Social Gospel (or “Old” Liberalism), he claims that the liberals of the twentieth century generally share qualities like 1) a fastidious search for “truth”, 2) a “zeal for relevance”, and 3) an acceptance of the “critical-Historical approach” to interpreting the Bible.⁹⁴ This chapter will demonstrate that the most important religious publications of the 1960s possessed these same qualities.

⁹² Tilley, p. 15. And possibly the same thing. Tilley quotes Niebuhr, “Your rendering is not the only historically true one, but a useful perspective, not the final ‘objective’ truth about times past.” “Perhaps History has no place among the sciences,” agrees Foucault, in an illustration of the parallel trend developing in academia and theologia. *Order of Things* (New York: Routledge, 1966), p. 400.

⁹³ McKillop, p. 40.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49. Two examples of Old Liberalism’s seminal texts include Rauschenbusch’s *A Theology of Social Gospel* and J. Gresham Machen’s *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923).

From its beginnings in the 1920s until its climax in the 1960s, Neoliberalism saw itself as a reaction to the untenable “religious hypothesis”, as it is often called, or the superstitious belief in God, and was led by the efforts of the major theologians, Karl Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The general Neoliberal prescription for Christianity was the abandonment of its “religious premise” altogether. This was necessary for its survival in our modern world, which would not tolerate mythical public beliefs much longer as a result of its more edified character. Neoliberal works commonly represented these attitudes: a critical-historical view of Jesus and the church; an antipathy towards supernaturalism; a lack of faith in progress, science, and objective knowledge; recourse to linguistic deconstruction; a new theology loosely based on “love” or revolution; the characterization of opponents as closed-minded and afraid of change; and the need for change in church structure, which was currently a guardian of the status quo as a result of its constitution, saturated as it was by “big business” and middle-class complacency. All of these categories were initially identified together by Robinson, and while they had been addressed individually by critics in the past, had not been assembled into a broad portrait of reform until Robinson combined the insights of Bonhoeffer with the social complaints of the time.

The publication of *Honest to God* (1963) brought the Neoliberal thinkers within Christianity together, effectively inspiring the 1960s Neoliberal movement both in theology and the media. The most important development of this movement is its complete rejection of the supernatural aspect of religion. It considers a “true religious experience” to be something of a “psychological trick”.⁹⁵ It does not believe in the manifestation of a supernatural spirit with which a believer can communicate. This is

⁹⁵ Robinson, John A. T., *Honest to God*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 21.

supported by the evidence that all such popular beliefs appear to be inventions of history. Christian theologians are therefore “wrestling today with the questions put on the agenda a half-century ago,” says Berkouwer, and Neoliberalism must represent the maturation of the Problem of History within Christianity.⁹⁶ Christie and Gauvreau would like Canadians to believe that the Social Gospel represented a unique and successful attempt to revitalize traditional Christianity; this ignores the influence of the Problem of History, which existed before, during, and after the Social Gospel.

Robinson retraces his own steps in developing his attitude towards the church in *Honest to God*, providing us with an insider’s look at the rate at which such ideas gained currency within Christianity. His Neoliberal view of the church, which he describes in his introductory chapter entitled, “Reluctant Revolution”, began to take shape after he read a collection of Paul Tillich’s sermons in *The Shaking of the Foundations* (1949).⁹⁷ Tillich portrayed the supernatural God as a projection of our fantasies.⁹⁸ Next came Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “Christianity without religion”, in the famous *Letters and Papers from Prison* (1953). He was the first to articulate a need for the “non-religious” hypothesis. People could live without concepts such as sin and salvation; these were the trappings of a less mature age of humanity.⁹⁹ God was “deliberately calling” people to abandon these ways, Bonhoeffer reasoned, and begin to look after themselves. Lastly, Robinson mentions an essay that created an “explosion” after it was published in 1941 (but not translated into English until 1953), which was Bultmann’s “New Testament and

⁹⁶ Berkouwer, p. 9.

⁹⁷ Robinson., *Honest to God*, p. 61. In one essay, Tillich argues that God is not “out there” (as a person in the cosmos), but is the depth of our being. It is what people take seriously without reservation. “He who knows about depth knows about God.”

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Theology”. “When he spoke of the ‘mythological’ element in the New Testament,” says Robinson of Bultmann, “he was really referring to all the language which seeks to characterize the Gospel history as more than bare history like any other history,” by which he meant, Christianity ought not to consider the allegedly historical events of the Bible to be sacred truths, but unreliable second-hand accounts.¹⁰⁰ Robinson describes these theologians as men who broke through the “theological circle”, bravely relating theology to the “real world”.¹⁰¹ The first stage of this nascent religion, Robinson decided, was to get it “out of the world of the professional theologians and into that of the intelligent thinking churchman”, which was exactly what he did.

Honest to God

In his book, Robinson argues “that there is a growing gulf between the traditional orthodox supernaturalism in which our faith has been framed and the categories which the ‘lay’ world (for want of a better term) finds meaningful today.”¹⁰² He quotes Prof. Julian Huxley, who says “It will soon be as impossible for an intelligent, educated man or woman to believe in a God as it is now to believe that the earth is flat, that flies can be spontaneously generated, that disease is divine punishment, or that death is always due to witchcraft.”¹⁰³ The dualism inherent in religion and supernaturalism is no longer required to explain the world, as we can rely on science and secular institutions, which are able to resolve most of our pressing issues.¹⁰⁴ Robinson believes that religion still has a place in this world however; human beings need guidance when dealing with the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

greater questions, such as those involving life, death and guilt.¹⁰⁵ His work is an attempt to “radically recast” Christianity into a form that will guarantee its longevity in an age defined by less forgiving expectations of belief systems. In so doing, he hopes to “overcome the tragic separation of the sexes, of the generations, of the nations, of the races and even the utter strangeness between man and nature.”¹⁰⁶

Robinson’s critique begins with Christianity’s power to maintain its outdated beliefs, which relies on supernatural revelation as a source of perpetual authority. He quotes Bonhoeffer: “The old formulas continue to be used...They preserve what may be meaningful to one generation but meaningless to the next.”¹⁰⁷ Robinson’s solution

“is a kind of humorous self-effacing secrecy of devotion and hope, which finds no counterpart in the visible world, nothing in symbol or gesture by which it may be fully reflected and expressed...Nevertheless, it is there, and the simplicities of the gospel, the call to be humble, and unostentatious in prayer, never using naked power, but always service and sacrifice, are both its sustenance and its preservative.”¹⁰⁸

The new liturgy should be based in openness, Robinson concludes, as the “parabolic character of the ethical sayings of Jesus” should not be taken as “either literal injunctions for any situation or as universal principles for every situation.”¹⁰⁹ “To demythologize is not to dispense with all myth or symbol,” however; “it is to cut our dependence upon one particular mythology – of what Tillich calls the ‘superworld of divine objects – which is in peril of becoming a source of incredulity rather than an aid to faith.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

Robinson quotes Prof. R. Gregor Smith, who states that “the old doctrine of transcendence is nothing more than an assertion of an outmoded view of the world.”¹¹¹ Religion itself appears to be a sociological phenomenon that is nothing more than the mythologizing of one’s perception of reality. Bultmann agrees, and argues that the mythology of religion is “simply the cosmology of a pre-scientific age”.¹¹² Miracles, prayer, saints, communion and all the other antiquated trappings of superstitious Christian language had to be discarded before the world could “come of age”. Bonhoeffer describes this demythologizing process as the will of God, written as it is on the wall of human kind’s fate, and manifest in the demands of our modern society.

What could be the role of the church “in a religionless world,” then, Bonhoeffer asks? “In what way are we...not conceiving of ourselves religiously as specially favoured, but as wholly belonging to the world?”¹¹³ Robinson tries to imagine how God can be conceived of in a non-religious fashion in order to answer this question. It is a perplexing challenge. Is the idea of God inherently idolatrous?¹¹⁴ “If an old man in the sky did exist, he would surely be the devil,” Robinson cites John Wren-Lewis, who judged that the Christianity which had evolved over the centuries was perhaps more evil and anti-Christian than atheism.¹¹⁵ Its idolatrous and static conception of God is dangerous to “intelligent faith,” he argued.¹¹⁶ Robinson does not want to “change” the

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 44.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 34. “What we call Christianity has always been a pattern – perhaps a true pattern – of religion,” adds Bonhoeffer (123).

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 135.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

Christian doctrine of God, however, but attempt to preserve it and prevent its disappearance in the new age by updating its outmoded character.¹¹⁷

Robinson's solution involves founding a new doctrine based on love. Because Christ was completely devoted to others, Robinson rationalizes, he must have been love. Love is the cure to the woes of theology and the modern world, especially given that humanity's current crisis is an existential one. He quotes Tillich: "love alone can transform itself according to the concrete demands of every individual and social situation without losing its eternity and dignity and unconditional validity."¹¹⁸

Robinson has more to say in his book, but these are some of the essential Neoliberal attitudes found in the other sources, encapsulated as they were for the first time as part of a unified discourse available in print, and designed for mass consumption. The hermeneutic of love, the historical Jesus, social justice and irreligious Christianity are themes that he touches upon. These basic themes served to unite the discourse, as was clear in other authors' tributes to Robinson. The point of Neoliberalism, it seemed, was to free Christians everywhere from the demands of orthodox belief, which were seen as preventing Christians from adapting to the present age. The main target in this process was the supernatural belief in divine authority, which ratified unchanging beliefs.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 44. Although his understanding of "change" might not have resonated with all other Christians.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 115. Tillich believes that "...our feelings of meaninglessness, emptiness, doubt and cynicism – all [are] expressions of despair, of our separation from the roots and meaning of our life. Sin in its most profound sense, sin as despair, abounds among us... Simply accept the fact that you are accepted. If that happens to us, we experience grace. In that moment, grace conquers sin, and reconciliation bridges the gulf of estrangement. And nothing is demanded of this experience, no religious or moral or intellectual presupposition, nothing but *acceptance*." 80, 81.

Robinson gives us a practical example of his theory in his book, removing the "religious" element in prayer. The goal of prayer, speaking to God directly, is made non-religious by unconditionally loving one's neighbour. We must worship our neighbours with the humility with which superstitious Christianity requires we approach God. Only love has a "built-in moral compass" that allows us to intuit the deepest needs of others. Dogmatic beliefs are unnecessary when we use this purely emotional moral indicator.

The Secular City

The next book, *The Secular City*, by Harvard Divinity College professor Harvey Cox, was a text directed more at theologians. It was held aloft as something of a milestone in theology, presumably because it tackled the essential premise of the nature of modern cities and their relationship to secularization. Cox sees the secular city as the world's deliverance, which he describes as an "historical process which removes adolescent illusion".¹¹⁹ Secularization is a development characterized by the maturing of humanity, and its assumption of responsibility for itself.¹²⁰ "Freed from illusion", we can hear the call of social justice and improve our "social and cultural arrangements".¹²¹ The new city speaks to us; it tells us where it needs healing. The centre of the city is in conflict with the suburbs, there are haves and have-nots, and ethnic, racial and political tensions. Emancipation of the oppressed is the underlying theme of our modern salvation.¹²²

Cox is convinced that a person who needs to fit all available facts into a stable view of the universe is basically insecure. Each problem needs to be confronted individually as it arises; this will protect us against bias. God, in the words of Paul, holds all things together, so it is not necessary for us to worry ourselves. Our new society is highly mobile, he observes. "Guardians of the status quo have always opposed mobility", he charges, as change, an inevitable consequence of mobility, always leads to

¹¹⁹ Cox, Harvey, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in the Theological Perspective*, (Toronto: Collier-MacMillan Canada Ltd., 1965), p. 105.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 116. Cox likes the idea that urbanized society values a new morality based on pragmatism, but adds that the danger inherent in any social agenda is when there is a "catastrophic narrowing of the idea of usefulness and thus of worth to the purposes and programs one's own group considers important." (p. 59) He argues that pragmatism is a beneficial idea of "truth", as it conforms to what is necessary under the circumstances, and is consistent with an old Hebrew hermeneutic, the Old Testament concept 'emeth', which signified something that could be "counted on", or was dependable (citing Van Peursen).

more change. He points out that it is easy to perceive class prejudices behind many religious values.¹²³

What is necessary is a theology of revolution. Theology needs a framework through which it can adjust to ongoing changes in social value systems.¹²⁴ This will allow Christianity to survive the inevitable shifts in popular beliefs. Leaving a view of history open-ended, free of traditional Christian dogma, would allow people to live without imposed meaning. A new theology should use a symbolic order like “the coming kingdom”, a process where the arrival of God is constantly unfolding.¹²⁵ The “grammar” of the gospel ought not to be imperative, but stress an awareness of what is occurring, and intent upon changing values as social developments indicate.¹²⁶ He criticizes Western laxness for allowing the symbolic God of Israel to merge culturally with the distinct ideas of Aristotle and Plato. “It has resulted in a doctrine of God in the era of the secular city which forces men like Camus to choose between God and human freedom,” he says.¹²⁷ “God,” he quotes Proudhon in no uncertain terms, “is the evil”; Proudhon saw history as a battle between God and Man, with man fighting for his freedom.¹²⁸

Cox recommends that the church act as a healer in society, and as a herald which announces new truths emerging from the matrix of society. The church can act as an “avant-garde”, indicating the proper direction for the humanitarian evolution of the social

¹²³ Ibid., p. 45, 47. Cox concurs with Bonhoeffer’s prediction of an impending “non religious” age (although in the 1990s, he admits that Bonhoeffer had been wrong about this prediction – see Conclusion). In order to behave properly, we need another God; “Secular Man” finds the old one confusing, as words cannot describe the God of the Bible (p.211). It becomes a political issue, Cox admits. We must answer whether God is real or just a “rich and imaginative way man has invented of speaking about himself.” (p. 212) Every man must decide for himself, he declares. Resistance to these liberal ideas, Cox charges in another section, can only stem from feeling threatened (p. 137).

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 93.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 100. God’s coming can consist of the very “sweeping aside of values” itself, and nothing else. A new eschatology should describe a process of realization, or an ongoing process of discovery (p. 98).

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 62.

order, always looking for the new signs of God's constantly unfolding revelation. This is how it will avoid its own inherent pitfalls, which arise when it begins to create or perpetuate truths on its own.¹²⁹ The image of the cross can be replaced with the image of the exodus, which symbolizes the moment when freedom from bondage begins.¹³⁰ Cox therefore creates a new hermeneutic, or apologetic, which is grounded in the democratic spirit of the city, citing many of the Neoliberal themes present in *Honest to God*.

A Question of Conscience

Public resignations also became a trend among liberal clergy in the 1960s, and Charles Davis (*A Question of Conscience*) was the most notable of these next to Bishop James Pike of California, both of whom left their orders to get married. Davis had been a "theologian of repute", and editor of the *Clergy Review* in Britain, and called his own press conference when he publicly resigned. He did so to make a strong symbolic gesture, as he believed that to that point, the media had not presented an accurate portrayal of the church. Davis wished to correct this.¹³¹ This book was meant to explain his departure more fully than the tabloids, and received a great deal of attention in the British press. It received less, but still significant, attention in all of the other media sources cited in this thesis. Published in 1968, it represented the last popular Neoliberal work to command media interest on the scale of the other books.

In his book, Davis challenges the basis of authority within the church, accusing it of forcing him to make a painful and unnecessary choice between his vocation and his

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 114.

¹³¹ Davis, Charles. *A Question of Conscience*. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), p. 14. Bishop James Pike made extraordinary and deliberate use of the mass media to criticize Christianity, and even appeared on the cover of *Time* as a result of his outspoken efforts. He will be discussed more in Chapter 3.

marriage. He constructs a model of “open” and “closed” personality types that he believes are at the heart of the current schism in Christianity. Davis describes the “closed” type as individuals who “refuse to go beyond themselves”. “They find even belief in other men difficult and jib at the mutual trust and readiness to commit oneself to others it involves. They prefer cynicism and remain distrustful and skeptical wherever they are not the masters.” In contrast, the open person avoids the obscurantism and dogmatism that characterize Christian philosophy. To be open to truth is to be open to all questions.¹³²

Davis believes that Christianity must be completely reborn in order to assure its freedom, as current Catholic intellectual circles show little of the “openness and love that derive from inner freedom”.¹³³ The evils of systems cannot be blamed on individuals, but it is necessary for individuals to take responsibility.¹³⁴ The net result of the current church structure is that it stifles “love”, preventing members’ needs from being met.¹³⁵ Davis believes that love is a better guide than reason when it comes to thinking about reform.¹³⁶ Reason by itself cannot lead to trustworthy principles. Faith is what lies beyond our comprehension, and reason does not require faith in order to function – therefore, his contention is that there is little need to combine the two.¹³⁷ Faith requires openness to love, which is accepting of all people “irrespective of race, class or sex,” and allows us to “enter into interpersonal communion with them.”¹³⁸ Reason is the source of dogmatic apologetics, and results in false confidence about one’s beliefs.

¹³² Ibid., p. 50.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 20.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 76.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

Davis accuses the church of using the “word” only for the purposes of preserving authority. “Occasionally the manipulation of language to hide truth and protect the prestige of authority reaches the point of absurdity,” he says.¹³⁹ He uses the Pope’s vacillation over the issue of birth control as an example, and shows how the Vatican makes false claims to continuity within its tradition while visibly modifying its position. Davis recommends that the church adopt an openness to new questions, an absence of “hyperbole and honorific rhetoric”, and clear language in order to rid itself of this kind of corruption.¹⁴⁰ Davis therefore touches on the Neoliberal dimensions of language, openness, love and oppression, and begins with many of the same premises as Robinson when criticizing Christianity.¹⁴¹

The Comfortable Pew

In Canada, the Anglican Church decided to commission a report on the status of its churches on the heels of the publication of *Honest to God*, and obviously directly in response to it. Pierre Berton was hired for the job, and *The Comfortable Pew* was the result, followed closely by the United Church’s *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot* (1965), which touched on identical complaints (as it was the United Church’s contribution to the same Neoliberal discourse). The latter was authored by a collection of media personalities,

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁴⁰ The Pope often appeared more relaxed in his public views on birth control, and made gestures towards changes in doctrine, but in the end only ratified the traditional Catholic stance on birth control. This all took place during the 1960s, and ended with the publication of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 after the 1966 Vatican commission on birth control made its (both liberal and conservative) recommendations.

Davis quotes *The Grave of God* (Fr. Adolfs, 1967), which compared the Catholic church to the Sophists with whom Plato did battle. Plato charged the Sophists with “corruption of the word”, which is sacred and necessary for human existence. They manipulated the word, which was no longer being used to convey truth, but to control people like objects. The word became a weapon. Fresh, living language is the “expression of a social structure open to truth”. The efforts to rid Catholicism of Latin are “part of the effort to win freedom”.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 66. Robinson stresses the same themes as Davis in his book, including the hermeneutic of love; the inability of reason to solve the problems of theology; the abuse of authority for the preservation of its power; the historically conditioned character of faith; etc.; what might be described as the litany of Neoliberalism.

including Pierre Berton, Arnold Edinborough and June Callwood. The Canadian books are notable for being written solely by media figures, as opposed to clergy, although they were prefaced by ministers.

By the time *The Comfortable Pew* was published, some 700,000 copies of *Honest to God* had been printed.¹⁴² Berton describes it as a reasonable book, whose point is that humanity is giving up fairy on tales like the “Father in the sky” and creating a belief system that is grounded more in reality. If Robinson’s book has done anything, says Berton, it has “pointed out to the church the great hunger that its communicants have for a reinterpretation of the Bible.”¹⁴³ Theologians cannot communicate to the congregations through current church structures, while people are evidently very interested in reading this material. The problem appears to be that the new theology is unappealing to the more complacent clergy, says Berton. He is shocked that some people, even clergy, still believe in such fairy tales as Adam and Eve, in light of what we have learned from science. The New Testament stories must be subjected to scrutiny in order to help rid people of these superstitious hang-ups. *The Comfortable Pew* criticizes the church’s hypocritical stances towards social issues (like war), and is deeply accusatory of its prejudice, middle class structure and outdated styles of worship. Berton is very conscious of the social ramifications of dogmatic belief, and specifically ties religious belief to prejudice in his book. In order to get rid of prejudice, Berton believes, it must be necessary to purge Christianity of religiousness.

Berton looks at Gordon Allport’s *The Nature of Prejudice*, which demonstrated that religious people were more prejudiced, as a rule. Berton amends Allport’s theory,

¹⁴² *Honest to God*, p. 120.

¹⁴³ *Comfortable Pew*, p. 122.

arguing that there are two types of people in the church, and that these types can be correlated in relation to a discussion of prejudice. A person is either at church because he wishes to be part of an “in-group”, or because he chooses to be in a church out of free will and a desire to believe in a religion. Those who “blindly accept their parent’s religion” are more likely to be prejudiced than those who “shopped” for their religion, Berton deduces.¹⁴⁴ We are left to infer whom he is placing in these categories. He also refers to a 1963 poll which demonstrated that priests’ personal values generally reflect those of their communities. Burton explains that the more successful the church, the more it has to lose from maintaining unpopular beliefs.¹⁴⁵ Ministers are therefore forced to conform by church authorities, and are also selected for their personality types, which accounts for the results of the poll.¹⁴⁶ This proves that the preservation of the church establishment has become its end, believes Berton, although he does not provide profiles of clergy from specific denominations to support his claims.¹⁴⁷

Berton prescribes reforms that include everything from church structure to church language. Words like “immanent”, “sanctification”, “witness”, and “atonement” have become obscure and irrelevant jargon. He quotes Tillich; “such words must be reborn”. Priests and witchdoctors “use the mysteries of their language” to impart an air of authority and guarantee the preservation of tradition.¹⁴⁸ The idea that only trained experts can understand the deeper mysteries of Christianity is “the height of arrogance in an age

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 84. He points out that religious prejudice runs so deep in society that atheists are even less likely to get a job in the 1960s. “It sometimes seems as if the atheist has fewer rights today in the United States than the Negro.”(p. 86) “One beats the negro to feel white,” he explains analogically; this is the nature of prejudice. When we hurt others to make ourselves feel strong, we are sick.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 107.

of universal education and electronic mass media,”¹⁴⁹ Old, sanctimonious symbols like the cross, the key visible feature of the Christian *langue*, could also use replacement. He helpfully suggests a negro in an electric chair.¹⁵⁰ The form of sermons is also suspect, on account of its symbolic sanctimoniousness. The church ought to make its sermons more interesting and lively, but is trapped in a Puritan reverence.¹⁵¹

From its criticisms of outdated Christianity, to the adoption of love hermeneutics, Berton’s book was meant to be the Canadian equivalent of *Honest to God*. He concludes that the church must fight the good fight, win or lose, using a hockey analogy: if a hockey team plays cleanly and loses, it looks much better than when it plays dirty.¹⁵² And what is lost, if you take away the traditional, intimidating pulpit, the Bible stories, and “God”? Whatever might be lost, love, and not rigid principles, is what is left. Love is “the force that has been dissipated by ‘religion’,” and the only real force that is concerned with the welfare of others.¹⁵³

Why the is Sea is Boiling Hot

Why the is Sea is Boiling Hot is a short collection of essays that includes contributions from Pierre Berton, Michael Barkaway, Arnold Edinborough, June Callwood, Joan Hollobon and Eric Nicol. This was the last popular Neoliberal book to be published in Canada. The essays in *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot* are consistent with the views of the other authors; they criticize the church for being behind the times (Berton), being big business (Barkaway), for the stagnated role of the clergy (Edinborough), the

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 106. Perhaps a play would be better than a sermon, he offers.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 141. Burton argues that it might even be a good idea to get rid of the mediator between man and God, the priest. Professional interpreters of theology create a barrier between people and public possession of religious tradition.

church's confining, traditional social and gender roles (Callwood), and its language (Hollobon).

In his essay, Berton does not introduce any new material; he summarizes his familiar views, charging the church with negligence. He accuses it of being a follower, not a leader, in such issues as capital punishment, birth control, nuclear armament, racial conflict, business ethics and the sexual revolt. He believes that this is the result of the church's tendency to adopt common beliefs systems and not uphold a standard based on more enlightened morality.¹⁵⁴

Michael Barkaway was well-known in broadcasting, and was the editor and publisher of the *Financial Times* of Canada. He describes the church as big business, and illustrates this using the United Church, which had over one million members and a net income of around \$60 million. "If we step back occasionally from our familiar routine of 'raising money for the church' and ask what the church is really in aid of, I think the big business aspect comes into better perspective," he says.¹⁵⁵ For example, The United Church's budget was \$11 million in 1964. \$2.5 million went to "home missions", which supported the already 'over-churched' rural areas and certain operations in the virtually 'unchurched' urban ones. \$2.8 million was allocated to overseas relief and missions. The claims of the needy, he summarizes, were worth less than 1/10th of what was used to operate local congregations. He cites Dr. Heuss, rector of New York's Trinity parish, who says that modern churches, which do not resemble their historical counterparts,

¹⁵⁴ *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot: A Symposium on the Church and the World*, (Toronto: Church Publishing House, 1965), p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

“are remarkable for their achievement in organization and fund-raising. They are unique in mistaking their promotional activity for religious accomplishment.”¹⁵⁶

Arnold Edinborough was the editor and publisher of *Saturday Night* magazine, and wrote a piece about the proper role of the clergy. A minister “should be able to interpret his faith in such a way that it makes a positive contribution to the solving of personal problems rather than just providing a moralistic frame of reference which merely categorizes them.”¹⁵⁷ He recommends that priests be given more training in psychology and politics, and less classical education, which should be reserved for specialists.¹⁵⁸

June Callwood’s contribution describes the modern church as an institution that belongs to the “in-group.” “The keynote, instead of universal brotherhood,” she believes, “often is money.”¹⁵⁹ Committees, group meetings and fund-raising occupy the time of the local congregations, and not worthier causes.¹⁶⁰ Callwood summarizes her rather cynical impression of contemporary church life in a few words:

“Within the framework of United Church membership are all the elements familiar to up-to-date secular organizations: the small ruling group, usually middle-aged and affluent, which efficiently retains power year-after-year; the complainers and the disenchanted, most of whom are voluble about the failures of those in authority; a bemused, loyal or timid segment which supports those in authority, and, finally, the great mass of

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 18. “Sometimes I think that the church’s present emphasis on professional, set-apart clergy is, in fact, inimical to the faith as preached and practiced in the first century,” says Edinborough, who admits to not being a scholar of Christianity.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 21. She states, “The church seems to have withdrawn itself fastidiously from legitimate concerns: the treatment of drug addicts, sexual offenders and young criminals; Medicare; divorce and birth control laws, sex education, illegitimacy, venereal disease; politics and human rights; discrimination against the mentally ill; helpless disturbed teen-agers, distraught adults, despairing old people; baby-beating; the looming confrontation of whites and colors; hunger and humiliation on Indian reserves and Eskimo villages.” (p. 24).

members who are disinclined by reasons of apathy or frustration to form any strong opinions at all.”¹⁶¹

United Church women, for example, have “slipped back to a corseted existence”.¹⁶² She quotes one wife, who complained that women’s chief service is ‘still kitchen duty’. The current ruling elite of the church, meanwhile, “take a majestic attitude toward church-work. They enjoy decision making and heading a task-force for a specific event, but they are not drawn to the drudgery of hum-drum, repetitious chores,” which they delegate to their flock. Callwood believes that “church work doesn’t seem broadly enough defined to attract more than a minority of Christians,” in spite of its erstwhile popularity among the large, middle class denominations.¹⁶³

Joan Hollobon, a *Globe* reporter, wrote the article “Digging the Lingo”. She begins with a definition of “LINGO: language, especially language rendered slightly unintelligible by a particular expression or pronunciation; a dialect.”¹⁶⁴ The churches persist with their outdated lingo, she argues, in spite of an increasingly uncomprehending audience. “The intellectual is unlikely to be reached by a holy roller hymn, while to the less brainy the higher reaches of theology might seem like good clean fun, but about as relevant to his life and actual problems as medieval speculation on the number of angels who could be comfortably accommodated on a pinhead”. She believes that

“The church’s jargon, its technical terms like grace, salvation, redemption, atonement, simply have no meaning to...many perfectly intelligent people today who are religiously illiterate. That the church persists in talking to [them] in these terms seems to the outsider as offensive as it is incomprehensible.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 28. “The only conviction [these beliefs] carry is of the arrogance of the preacher who dares to speak for God.” While “The churches resent being seen as big business, as wealthy middle class

She mentions Robinson, agreeing that “the last thing the church exists to be is an organization for the religious. Its charter is to be a servant of the world.” In reality, this had become an empty façade, and the church’s true purpose had become the institutionalization of traditions, including language, and the reverence of “the institution rather than the end it was designed for.”¹⁶⁶

Summary

This summary of the texts discussed here demonstrates that they all belonged to the same movement, inspired by Robinson. They were all heavily critical of the church regarding such issues as language, intolerance, superstition, and the preservation of power. They generally recommended a remedial sort of “love”-based replacement hermeneutic, founded on non-dogmatic principles and capable of changing with the times (democratically). These attributes are consistent with those outlined earlier, belonging to the liberal Christian thread that has existed throughout the twentieth century. The Problem of History, after inducing modernism (*cf.* liberalism) in theology in the middle of the 1800s, flowed through various theological moments like Old Modernism and the Social Gospel into the more sophisticated Neoliberal deconstruction inspired by Barth and Bonhoeffer, and was in turn presented to the public by Robinson. In the next chapter, we will see how this liberal discourse came to inform the mass media in Canada during the 1960s.

competitive organizations interested in money, self-aggrandizement and membership,” what do they do, she asks? Buy new carpets, buildings, and décor, “detailed to the last dollar”.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Chapter 3

Canadian Media

This chapter provides a detailed survey of the discussions of religion that took place within the Canadian media from January 1960 to December 1969. There was a marked point in the decade where the sources – *MacLean's*, *Time* (Canadian edition), *Chatelaine*, *Saturday Night*, *Globe and Mail*, and the B.C. newspapers – appeared to assume a self-conscious position within a recognizable discourse. Each medium opened the decade with rather aimless commentary on social and religious issues, but soon after Vatican II and the publication of *Honest to God*, the debate united various complaints about traditional values into an intertwined discussion that became self-aware and referred primarily to the works discussed in the previous chapter. Reporting styles varied by source, although overall they covered identical themes. In Canada, the debate reached its height with the printing of *The Comfortable Pew* (1965), and trailed off slowly in the following years of the decade.

This chapter will review the progression of the Neoliberal debate within the media, linking the material within the sources to each other and the works in Chapter 2. This connection is undeniable; Robinson and Berton were universally honoured as movement icons in each source (except the B.C. newspapers). Before the works of these authors, critiques of the church had usually been concerned with the middle class bias of the denominational churches, and the promotion of liberal, secular values in society.¹⁶⁷ After the publication of the Neoliberal books, journalists began to draw upon the

¹⁶⁷ These articles used some reasoning that drew from Christian discourse independently of Neoliberal thinking. Mostly, they used “secular” arguments that espoused society’s need to become freer, more democratic, and unattached to unrealistic expectations of personal behaviour (citing abortion and contraception, for example).

theological discourse contained within in order to buttress their claims against Christianity and appeal to the Christian public using theologians of its own faith. After a detailed look at the theological and social issues raised by these Neoliberal thinkers, the media sources then appeared to lose interest in the topic of religion. This is a cycle that is discernable within each of the sources discussed here.

A result of the gradual awakening of the Neoliberal movement was the organization and reduction of its principles to series of measured complaints regarding traditional beliefs in society. Proponents honed and refined their arguments, referring to each other and to theologians, creating a discourse which had not existed in the early years of the decade, as this chapter will demonstrate. This was a process begun by Robinson, who had been the first author to combine the efforts of men like Bonhoeffer and Barth into a polished and organized package of specific concerns, designed, by his own admission, for mass consumption.¹⁶⁸ The point of Robinson's book had been to introduce the Neoliberal movement to the public, which was largely unaware of these theological developments. Robinson himself had to research and put them together into this product, designed to be accessible to the average reader. As we will see, his book did indeed finally give shape to ideas for which people (like Pierre Berton) appeared to have been waiting. The formless discomfort floating among the enlightened public was given a clear and resounding voice, and quickly turned into a media chorus.

The media became the venue within which proponents of Neoliberalism discussed their beliefs on a wide scale. One could describe the Neoliberal movement as a conversation that took place between people like Berton, Robinson and Callwood within the framework of the mass media. While Berton may never have known Robinson

¹⁶⁸ *Honest to God Debate*, p. 8.

personally, Berton referred to his work consistently. In this fashion, a process was created in the media whereby liberal activists discussed their ideas *en masse*, internationally, without need for personal meetings. The media provided the forum within which the movement was able to sound out its ideas in plain view of the public.

The range of topics covered in the sources can be reduced to a few convenient categories of analysis: Marriage and divorce; celibacy and sex; contraception; ecumenism; Judaism; secularization; racial and gender equality; alternative religions (including Eastern religions, drugs and meditation); the impact of science and psychology; war; human rights, and issues of economic parity. Each of these issues was related to religion in some way, and was addressed by each of the texts in Chapter 2 in their own fashion.¹⁶⁹ One of the major functions of each of these books was indeed to respond to each of these categories summarily, as these were the issues that had prompted the authors to take issue with traditional Christianity in the first place. This chapter will demonstrate that reporters shaped their own discussions around those of the texts, dividing them into similar thematic categories. By challenging the sources of authority within Christianity, liberals hoped to be able to affect values in society and rid it of what they considered to be the obnoxious legacies of bigotry.¹⁷⁰ That Christianity appeared responsible for at least some (if not all) of the intolerance in society was justification enough to mandate the dismantling of its theological heritage. Traditional and

¹⁶⁹ For example, divorce laws were considered oppressive by some (as the sources will demonstrate), as were traditional Christian mores regarding sex and contraception. These were probably some of the most important social concerns of the day. Chapter 2 summarizes many of the ways in which the selected books dealt with these issues.

¹⁷⁰ This is especially clear in the case of Burton, who co-opts Neoliberal arguments to challenge various mores regarding sex and racism, and is not friendly to Christianity (as the last chapter illustrated). It is clear that he is not so much a believer in a Neoliberal Christianity as he is an activist for liberal rights within society, who approaches Christianity as a potential wolf in sheep's clothing by using Neoliberal arguments to persuade Christians to adopt a more tolerant social stance. Many of the commentators discussed in this paper have similar dispositions.

superstitious values could be sacrificed in the interests of a free society, and journalists sought liberal allies among the devout in their quest to transform Christian thought.

Each source approached these topics with its own style and level of interest. In the case of *MacLean's* and *Chatelaine*, the ideas were presented as it occurred to journalists to deal with them, although eventually they managed to tackle most of the issues of the period. *Saturday Night*, by contrast, was particularly deliberate in its organization of the material. Rev. William Nichols (the Vancouver editor of the magazine, and the head of the Religious Studies Department at the University of British Columbia) generated a comprehensive series of articles, which dealt with each specific issue on a case-by-case basis. Nichols' Religion segment almost seemed carefully planned, sequentially and methodically covering the various facets of the 1960s discourse. *Time* was by far the richest source of information relating to developments in the religious world, and the most impartial, although it dealt with the Neoliberal movement in far more detail than the other sources, due to the magazine's focus on current events. The B.C. newspapers are perhaps noteworthy for their complete lack of interest in the topic of religion, occasionally referring to the "religion in schools" debate but never dealing with it or any other controversial religious topic at any length. Whether this is unique to B.C. is unknown, as local papers from other provinces were not examined. The data is not surprising in light of this province's more secular reputation, however. The B.C. media also serves to highlight, in a limited fashion, the degree to which the national media was influenced by the interests of specific editors.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ For one of the few studies on patterns of religiousness in B.C., see Marks, Lynne, "A Godless Province? A Gender, Family, Race and Class Analysis of Non-Belief in British Columbia, 1901." Tina Block also studies rates of religious participation in B.C. between 1950 and 1970, subjecting them to gendered

The *Globe* was more balanced, presenting editorial views from both sides (something *Time* did not do), although again the newsworthiness of Neoliberalism and the general bias of the Canadian press served to downplay conservative reactions. The conservative reactions to the liberal criticisms will be discussed, but aside from F.H. Wilkinson, an Anglican Bishop of Toronto, and a dedicated contributor to the *Globe*, these were only present in the form of letters to the editors. Few letters to the editors on the topic of religion appeared anywhere other than the *Globe*. The sections in magazines reserved for subscriber comment also had reactions (*Chatelaine* had a number of conservative views in its “Last Word” section, found at the back of every issue), but generally, such responses were confined to a few lines. Critics were unable to respond to criticisms with comprehensiveness, and were not featured prominently. Reader response sections on page 42 were hardly as eye-catching as decorated magazine jackets reading, “Is God Dead?” Combined with the already understated presence of conservative theology, this made the voices of conservatives appear nearly silent in the media, while the more shocking Neoliberal creeds seemed more newsworthy, and often found spots in the News section, sometimes on page one.

The origins of the media’s interest in Christianity in the 1960s are difficult to determine. Timing may well have had something to do with the reaction to *Honest to God* that swept all forms of mass media on several continents. It drew energy from growing social awareness and civil rights movements, which were only beginning to hit their stride in the early 1960s.¹⁷² These were led in part by many religious figures (for

analysis and employing oral interviews in an effort to answer why this province is particularly secular. (Block, doctoral thesis in progress, University of Victoria).

¹⁷² The Neoliberal Christian principles mirrored values growing independently among the populations and communications industries of many Western nations. Journalists and editorialists undertook a

example, Rev. Martin Luther King), people who have generally been found in the foreground of social justice movements throughout the twentieth century (like the Social Gospel). This coincided with the ecumenical efforts of Protestants and Roman Catholics around the world in the early 1960s. There were many articles on ecumenism in 1960, in part a reaction to the World Council of Churches plan for a meeting.¹⁷³ It would be its first since 1954, where the topic had also been ecumenism. Meanwhile, Eugene Blake's "Proposal", a plan to unite various Protestant denominations in the U.S., earned a few spreads in *Time*, starting in December of 1960.¹⁷⁴ Blake was highly praised by many reformers (such as Archbishop James Pike) and elicited an overwhelming media response.

The World Council ended in December of 1961. It had been the largest meeting of Protestant denominational representatives since the Council of Trent (1545-1563), and had sought to address the modern concerns which all conservative Christian groups appeared to be facing, with limited success.¹⁷⁵ Ostensibly a tough act to follow, the announcement that Vatican II would commence in 1962 managed to steal much of its

comprehensive review and criticism of all government and social institutions, of which religion was only one aspect (Rutherford, p. 98). "The media was a confused mixture of criticism, dissent, and utopianism which led the 60s down strange pathways in an effort to engineer a good society," says Rutherford (p. 110). He is not sure what inspired this social criticism; aside from the obvious proliferation in society of secular beliefs, he thinks that television may have scared social analysts into deeper introspection. Rutherford also blames the professionalization of journalism, which followed the increasing numbers of graduates flowing out of universities in the 1950s. This first wave of professionalization was followed by a "second stage of concern for ethics and a struggle for power" in the 1960s (pp. 98, 117). Eventually, the desire for profit outweighed the media's concern for social criticism, and by the 1970s, journalism turned to crime, scandal and human interest to arouse reader interest.

¹⁷³ *Time*, 5 Nov. 1960, p. 53.

¹⁷⁴ Namely, to unite the Methodist, Episcopal, United and United Presbyterian Churches of the U.S. *Time*, 26 May 1961, p. 49.

¹⁷⁵ Roman Catholics and Orthodox were invited, but did not attend. Here the issues of secularization, ecumenism and reform were addressed. The World Council was to the Protestant world what Vatican II would be to Catholics: a reaction to the new modernity that coincided with the growth of television and liberal values. Refer to the section on *Time* in this chapter for more information regarding this event, also covered in detail in *Time*, 8 Dec. 1961, p. 60.

thunder. Roman Catholics were also striving for clarification and reform in their beliefs, and this would be the first synod held in several centuries. These momentous events took place in quick succession, fixing the eyes of the media and public on religion just in time for *Honest to God*, which had also been a reaction to these events, presumably. It was a fateful decade for religion, where a myriad of forces combined and released, attempting to make sense out of the world, secularism, and religion.

While the forces of conservatism, with patience, ultimately served to undermine these movements within the church, in the media the movement must have exhausted its energy for others reasons.¹⁷⁶ Of the over fifty published works of theology discussed within the sources during this period, virtually none of them defended traditional, controversial evangelical, Victorian, or puritan beliefs.¹⁷⁷ It is a notable statistic, especially when the clamouring liberal voices insisted that they were alone amongst congregations and that they were up against intractable, pervasive forces of history that maintained a hold not only on the church, but also on society. Indeed, they appeared to be telling the truth. As Coleman and Grant point out, those who published critiques of problems within church structures were mostly Bishops and high-ranking clergy and theologians. Their comments fueled the liberal enthusiasts of the media, whose knowledge of Christianity was often not deep, while their feelings about social issues were. Why the movement may have failed is the topic of another discussion; suffice it to say that Neoliberalism, as a distinct entity (*à la* Robinson), has definitely passed from the

¹⁷⁶ The media's attraction to Neoliberalism climaxed in 1965-66 and all but disappeared by 1968. During this time, the media undertook extensive investigation of Christianity, with few rejoinders from defenders of traditional values to give them pause. This seems to indicate that, whatever the reasons for the decline in interest in Neoliberalism, that it was more likely the result of exhaustion than resistance.

¹⁷⁷ See Appendix.

both the pages of the media and the concerns of theologians, although liberalism within Christianity remains.

The rest of this chapter will explore the ways the selected print media sources discussed religion in this period. They will be presented individually and chronologically to illustrate the influence of Robinson's book, the growing interest in Neoliberalism in the middle of the decade and the eventual disappearance of religious articles towards the end of the 1960s. All of the articles pertaining to religion in *MacLean's*, *Saturday Night* and *Chatelaine* are also catalogued in three tables at the end of this chapter, which are useful for visualizing the lifecycle of Neoliberalism within the media. They clearly highlight the recurring themes and authors, and will be used alongside the discussion of the sources. The titles of articles which came the closest to addressing the issue of religion in the early years of the decade are also included to accentuate the impact that Robinson's book clearly had in 1963; the headings and subject matter of each of the selected sources changed noticeably after its publication. The themes of the *Globe* and *Time* are summarized by year in this chapter, as there were too many articles to list comprehensively, but the examples given are indicative of most of the discussion that would have been occurring in the media. These summaries may be considered strongly, if not completely, representative of the debates taking place during the 1960s. There were some conservative responses, most of which are accounted for here, and the emphasis on these responses here may be considered disproportionate. It must be understood that Neoliberal material utterly dominated the mass media during this time; it was difficult to find any conservative defenses, save the ones found in the reader

comment sections, which were not very informative, as they generally only consisted of a few (usually dramatic) lines.¹⁷⁸

Time Magazine (Canadian Edition)

Time's content concentrated overwhelmingly on the U.S. and the world. In spite of being the Canadian edition, there was scant reference to Canadian developments to be found in its religion section (*The Comfortable Pew* and *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot* were never mentioned). Its focus and tone changed somewhat following the publication of Robinson's and Cox's books, rarely failing to discuss at least one Neoliberal work in a month, which was in keeping with the volume of tracts being published. Due to its consistency in reporting religious news as a matter of policy, like the *Globe*, there was no noticeable change in the numbers of articles being printed as a result of the Neoliberals' arrival, however.¹⁷⁹ The Religion segment eventually began to appear less frequently by 1968. Eventually, the Canadian edition of *Time* was terminated altogether by an act of Parliament in 1976.

Time in 1960 was packed with articles about Billy Graham's visits to Africa, works by theologians, and general interest pieces on aspects of Christianity. There were articles discussing Jung, Barth, and the debunking of Christianity, and one provided a biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer after the publication of *The Theory of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*.¹⁸⁰ *Time's* religious writers were very knowledgeable and followed religious

¹⁷⁸ They were perhaps telling in some ways; the conservative tone was usually one of indignance with liberal charges, although this is hardly surprising.

¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, religious articles only ever appeared inside the Religion segment – including cover stories – and never in the headline section, which precluded changes in format in response to the publication of *Honest to God* and the other books.

¹⁸⁰ 9 May, p. 65. The article outlined his famous book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, in which Bonhoeffer described what he thought was the true essence of Christianity, which involved assuming the burden of the cross without inventing a doctrinal system. By engaging fully in the world and its real problems, people throw themselves to the mercy of God, and suffer as he does in a world that is Godless, he argued.

and theological matters closely in their regular segments, covering everything from portraits of obscure priests and theologians to the remodeling of old churches in various countries. As a result, the magazine demonstrated a greater understanding than other sources of the state of theology and of the rising “religionless” movement within Christianity at the time. It did not, however, appear to be more favourable to Christianity, only more interested. In fact, *Time* concentrated on the problem of Neoliberalism increasingly throughout the decade, becoming the most informative source on its developments. If individuals had read only *Time* during this period, they would have had good reason to consider themselves well-informed on most, if not all, of the pressing issues in Christianity.

In 1961, *Time* began to demonstrate a clear consciousness of the desire for reform coming from many quarters of Christianity, whereas in 1960, the topic had been broached with only a dim appreciation of its significance. The number of articles that described new views of theology rose dramatically (including the first describing the “New Religion”), alongside articles that discussed multiple church mergers in the U.S., and the meetings of various denominations, who were holding many assemblies in attempts to define their individual doctrines.¹⁸¹ This was a common reaction to the uncertainty that institutional churches of the time were experiencing. Either pressure to explain denominational beliefs had been mounting among churches, or awareness of this pressure had been increasing. More likely both had been occurring.

¹⁸¹ 20 Jan., p. 42. The term “ecumania” was coined to describe the attitude of many churches at the time. In *Time*, many articles reported on these movements. For example: The Presbyterian General Assembly voted to support Blake’s Proposal, 2 June, p. 62. Episcopalians were having trouble accepting Blake’s Proposal, 23 June, p.36. The United church was created from the Evangelical and Reformed Churches, 7 July, p. 31. Episcopalians agree on what it means to be Episcopalian. Baptism, church attendance, communion and confirmation were among the principles. Oct. 4, p. 64. Baptists attempted to define their religion, 27 Oct., p.46. The Russian Orthodox Church entered the World Council, 1Dec., p. 75.

The explosion of theological and ecumenical activity around the world in 1961 livened up the religion segment of *Time* considerably. Blake's Proposal was explained in two large pieces in 1961, and a review of the World Council sessions appeared in December.¹⁸² There were also several pieces on the creation of the *New English Bible*, a project of Charles H. Dodd's, another eminent British theologian.¹⁸³ This new bible was designed to be translated into contemporary English vernacular to improve its accessibility, and was a good example of attempts being made by the church to accommodate modernity. It received many positive reviews.

The first article introducing reformer Bishop Pike materialized in 1961, as well.¹⁸⁴ Archbishop Pike of California was possibly the best-known and most outspoken North American Neoliberal critic of Christianity, authoring *A Time for Christian Candor* and *If This be Heresy*. A profile of Bishop Pike was the cover story of *Time* magazine in November of 1966. It was Pike's contention that the Bible was basically myth. He argued that theology and apologetics had been an attempt by Greek thinkers of the fourth century to interpret revelation in a logical fashion. Bishop Pike gave them credit for doing a good job, but believed that it was time for humanity to accept that the Bible was not historical fact. Events such as Gabriel speaking to Mary, the virgin birth, and the Holy Trinity were merely superstition and should be respected for their symbolic resonance only, although not discarded. These words were later echoed by Robinson.

¹⁸² *Time*, 17 Feb., p. 62 and 26 May, p. 48. Also 29 Sep, p. 57, with a look at the Episcopalian general convention and their discussion of the proposal. As discussed in an earlier footnote, Blake's Proposal sought to merge some of the largest denominations in the U.S. - the Methodist, Episcopal, United and United Presbyterian Churches. Combined with the ecumenical activity occurring at the World Council and within Protestant denominations around the world, these phenomena created a pseudo-movement referred to as "ecumania".

¹⁸³ *Time*, 13 Jan., p. 54; 24 Mar., p. 43; 7 Apr, p. 57. Dodd's criteria for the new language was that it was to be dignified, and avoid using expressions that will pass with time while remaining faithful to the nuances of the original text.

¹⁸⁴ 24 Feb., p. 57.

Pike was also one of the original architects of the Blake Proposal, and his name would appear in *Time* frequently.

Time also offered its first critique of the uninviting style of sermon and worship in modern churches, anticipating the popular Neoliberal argument. The 7 April 1961 issue explained that Protestant faiths, which once represented a great diversity, appeared to be “homogenizing”. They were becoming “organizational churches” that were not concerned so much with doctrine but with activities, such as nurseries and softball, and the strength of the institutional organization of the church itself. As a consequence, inner-city, low-income groups were left out. This “new” ministry had been infused with an existential despair, the article read, which had led to a sort of “cheap grace” (the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer). Churches concentrated on middle-class-oriented “committee work”, which represented the style of salvation through works, and left the more profound truths of the Bible unexplored.

The final articles of 1961 summarized the accomplishments of the most recent World Council, which produced the Reports on Service, Witness and Unity. These reports voiced the concerns of Christians everywhere; every major denomination had sent representatives to the Council except the Vatican, whose interest in ecumenism would begin with Vatican II.¹⁸⁵ Even the Orthodox Church joined the Council in 1961, a

¹⁸⁵ The reports identified many problems within current church structure. Postwar religious revivals were accused of being too “bland and homogenized”, taking place mostly in middle class areas and adopting a theme of community involvement and social activity. “The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed.” Churches everywhere were slowly emptying, as dogmas that once elicited much discussion in Protestant churches were now forgotten or irrelevant.

The documents prescribed greater involvement by the lay and an emphasis on creating a constructive and democratic personality for the church, which had been too uninvolved in the major social problems of the day. The Apr. 8 article also identified certain suspected causes of secularization, such as Freud, Marxism, the “idolatry” of science, the resentment that Christianity has generated as a result of appearing to be the religion of a particular and oppressive race, and the rise of “national” religions, such as Buddhism and Islam.

gesture as revolutionary as reunion with the Catholic Church itself, which was tabled the next year at Vatican II. At Vatican II, the same issues would be addressed from a Catholic point of view, completing the circle of events. These collective affairs augured the presence of a bona fide movement, and linked the sundry criticisms of Christianity into an identifiable trend. *Time's* layout and coverage changed little as a result of the events, unlike other sources in Canada, and it maintained its detached approach to discussing religion, generally offering few recommendations or predictions when considering the status of Christianity. As mentioned in the introduction, up to this point, the condemnations of the church generally targeted its "middle class complacency," its stance towards certain social issues, and ecumenism. With the arrival of Robinson's book, however, many articles started appearing, which linked the ideas of Bonhoeffer and Barth to the "Death of God," and the criticisms of the church to its theological structure.¹⁸⁶

Time's most famous contribution to the discussion was its "Is God Dead?" issue of April 1966. The article observed that while Christianity had so far managed to survive the gradual incursion of secular values in society, a small group of "radicals" maintained that Christianity must accept God's death and find a way to survive without him. The old, Nietzschean interpretation of God's death had meant that man had usurped God in supremacy. The new argument, based more in the linguistic turn, believed that God in the image of man, occupying a throne "in the sky", was dead. Religion now needed to create an idea of God that would be emotionally and intellectually compelling and

¹⁸⁶ For example, "Objections to Christian Beliefs," 6 March 1964, p. 50, asks if God is personal or divine, and whether the "Cambridge Theologians" (implying Robinson) have been destroying the faith they are trying to rebuild. "Atheism in Our Time," 5 July 1963, p.34, by contrast, discussed Christian atheism and the psychological nature of belief, but not in reference to any of the major Neotheologians.

satisfying, in the light of his non-existence. This was the call which the Death-of-God theologians answered.

What had changed with the advent of the Death-of-God argument, the article argued, was its insistence that no person could state anything with certainty about God, as any certainty would have to amount to a form of idolatry. Reason was no longer useful in attempting to decipher God's nature, given that language did not have access to absolute reality. The old logical foundation of God's existence, Thomas Aquinas' "prime mover" argument (*cf.* there cannot be an infinite regression of causes for the universe), was no longer convincing. "We are proceeding to a time of no religion at all", Bonhoeffer wrote, indicating that religion itself was under invincible scrutiny.¹⁸⁷ The article offers differing interpretations of the personality of God to demonstrate the point that belief in God is subjective; "God is dressed in white and sits on a throne"; "God is a ghost in space"; "God is a cop-out"; "God is all that I cannot understand"; "It is the voice which says, 'It's not good enough'," quoted the article of several celebrities.¹⁸⁸ Many important thinkers of the world were happier to believe that God did not exist. Claude Levi-Strauss, for example, wrote that he was content to live the rest of his life without concrete explanations for the nature of the universe, an attitude that would gain increasing

¹⁸⁷ *Time*, 7 April 1961, p. 57.

¹⁸⁸ P. 62. The article also offers a brief narrative of religion itself, pointing out that the only attempt to create monotheism before Christ belonged to an Egyptian heretic, Amenophis IV, who declared that Aten was the only true God among the many in Egypt. The other Gods of history have largely been portrayed as subject to the whims of fate themselves (not above a certain kind of law, perhaps), and to the plots of other Gods. The Hebrew God Yahweh (meaning, "I am who I am", or "He causes to be" – untranslatable) may have originally been a tribal God in a society with many others, the article argues; after all, the Bible is full of accounts of worshipping false Gods. It is even likely that Moses himself may have believed in many Gods. The Judaic conception of God maintained that while he was beyond comprehension, he possessed human qualities and at times spoke to people (p. 62). The arrival of Jesus demanded a reconceptualization of the nature of this God, and Christianity co-opted the forces of Greek metaphysics in order to create harmony out of this chaos. The Middle Ages then introduced the intense contemplation of qualities such as omnipotence, immutability, and perfection.

currency in contemporary intellectual fashion. The philosophy that spoke of pleasure as something evil would not last forever (referring to attitudes toward sex), and overconfidence in belief of a God that is ultimately unknowable would eventually destroy the church, predicted the article.¹⁸⁹

This represented the height of the Neoliberal discourse in *Time*. The Religion section began appearing less often by 1968 and 1969, skipping months at a time, while previously it had failed to appear in issues only occasionally. Its contribution to the Neoliberal movement was its interest and understanding, if not promotion. Unlike in the other sources, the authors and editors appeared relatively unmoved by the theological struggle. *Time* also exemplifies an important difference between Canadian and American media; it was not subject to the same controlling interests, and as a result, did not deal with the information in the same fashion, which is to be expected, but nonetheless serves as a strong comparison when discussing the activities of Canadian media icons, like those of *MacLean's* and *Saturday Night*. Whatever the controlling interests of *Time* had in mind, this source ended up directly informing at least one of the most prolific Canadian sources, *Saturday Night*, as a result of the depth of investigation its journalists undertook.

Saturday Night

Saturday Night paid little interest in the topic of religion in the first three years of the 1960s, until it was inspired to create a "Religion" segment similar to that of *Time*.

This was the year that *Saturday Night* changed to a monthly instead of bi-weekly format,

¹⁸⁹ The article states that there are four options available to theologians today: 1) Stop talking about God for a time; 2) Remain true to the word of the Bible; 3) create an updated image of God; and 4) search for the secret clues which point to a transcendent meaning in life, which does not necessarily have to be "religious" in disposition. The article's feeling was that it has become pointless to talk about "God", however. For example, Jesus could be held aloft as a spiritual role model, without the need for belief in an omnipotent God. The author admits that this attitude creates other problems, however; if there is no God, what makes Jesus a better choice than Buddha or Camus? In reaction to these unanswerable problems, many Christians simply choose to retain their orthodox beliefs, he concludes.

and made some editorial changes, adjusting its tone from a matter-of-fact business and political magazine (a legacy of the Canadian spirit of reporting in the 1950s), to a magazine of rather more liberal social interests.¹⁹⁰ It was clearly aiming at an educated middle and upper class demographic similar to that of *Time*, and borrowed from its format and content. The two distinct corporate styles resulted in vastly different attitudes, however. *Time* was characteristically cool and aloof, while *Saturday Night*, under the editorship of Nicholls, was clearly passionate about its topic, and summarized the Neoliberal debate in no uncertain terms during his run of carefully orchestrated, topical discussions of Christianity. Nicholls exhibited the most methodical, investigative and critical approach of all of the authors during the decade. He was the sole writer to contribute to the religious section of *Saturday Night* throughout the 1960s, although the magazine featured occasional religious pieces by other authors, like Arnold Edinborough (also an editor of the magazine).

Nicholls was an outspoken advocate of the “Death of God” theology, and gave lectures and speeches on the topic at universities. Until 1963, however, *Saturday Night* did not print a single article involving discussion of Christianity. Two articles in 1960 dealt with divorce, but did not mention religion by name, offering a secular argument in favor of divorce instead.¹⁹¹ “Apparently 10 minutes of adultery is seen as worse than 3 years of desertion or a lifetime of cruelty,” one writer wrote accusingly of the divorce law, which was seen as outdated, although its link to Christianity was omitted. Eileen Morris, who would become a contributor to *Chatelaine* later in the decade, added in 1961

¹⁹⁰ “For the liberal-minded highbrow,” Rutherford, p. 81.

¹⁹¹ Davidson, J.A., “Our Squalid Handling of Divorce”, 9 Jan, p. 36.

that “We need a department of marriage.”¹⁹² It could educate people on how to live responsibly, and deal with premarital issues and the economic facts of life. Canada had no “imaginative program of health legislation.” With the erosion of kin groups, there was increasing need for practical home assistance, she argued. There was no direct reference to religious discourse in her article, nor would there be until the first *Religion* segment appeared in October of 1963.

Nicholls gradually warmed to the Neoliberal arguments after the publication of *Honest to God*, and explored its various facets over the course of the next few years, sharing his learning with his readership. He was the only Canadian editor who was also a theologian, although he appeared to be engaged in learning about the Neoliberal movement himself. He began with discussions of Billy Graham and religious curricula in universities, and gradually undertook the exploration of Death of God theologians after the publication of *The Comfortable Pew*. His first article on “The New Theology” appeared in late 1965, after which point Nicholls began to pay closer attention to Neoliberal theologians, finally discussing them as a group (including Cox, Alitzer, Bonhoeffer, et al.) in February of 1966.¹⁹³ He did indeed grow sympathetic to their cause, citing Paul Van Buren’s *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* as the “best of the movement so far.”¹⁹⁴ He hoped that Christian “atheism” had a future, and believed that its “mystical turn” towards the unknowability of God was a promising enticement for Christians looking for a theological change.

In a September article of the same year, he accused the institution of the church of trying to “muzzle” its critics, both within the church and without (Vatican II, in his mind,

¹⁹² 1 April 1961, p. 44. “Point Of View”

¹⁹³ Pp. 27 and 34, respectively. Nicholls also referred to Cox again in a March 1968 article, p. 51.

¹⁹⁴ Feb. 1966, p. 35.

had been a good example of the inner curia ignoring the pleas of liberal reformers).¹⁹⁵ This explained the resignations of clergy like Rev. Alan Jackson and Rev. Ernest Harrison (who also wrote for *MacLean's*). Throughout the rest of the decade, Nicholls continued to accuse church structures of authoritarianism and stubbornness.¹⁹⁶ In his 1967 article "The Death of the Church," he predicted that the church of the future would have to be "secure enough in its spirit to be open to the winds of change."¹⁹⁷

Table 1 catalogues the entire selection of *Saturday Night* articles dealing with religion during the 1960s. Note that the section did not begin until after the publication of *Honest to God* (reviewed in the second month after the section was created, in Nicholl's third religious article). The number of articles increased again after the printing of *The Comfortable Pew* (1965), maintaining this level until the end of 1966, halving its output in 1967 and trailing off in the last two years, until the section stopped appearing.

Table 1 lists the topics of religious discussion that appeared after 1961. The articles are too numerous to discuss in detail, but topics generally included themes like, Zen Buddhism; hallucinogenics; the corruption of power; "The Death of the Church"; "Did God die at Auschwitz?"; "The Underground Church"; "The Pill and Papal Authority". The topics chosen by Nicholls, even the headings, recur throughout all of the cited media, as the rest of this chapter will demonstrate. This, and the points at which Nicholls clearly borrows from *Time* magazine, reveal that various media sources were referring to each other as well as the sources in Chapter 2.

¹⁹⁵ "Muzzling the Critics", p. 59.

¹⁹⁶ For example, in his article "Corruption Through Power," in which he accuses clergy of identifying themselves with their offices, (Jan. 1967, p. 32); and "The Troubled English Catholics," in which Nicholls describes the Anglican church as corrupt as a result of its attitude towards allowing clergy to marry. (Apr. 1967 p. 43).

¹⁹⁷ June 1967, p. 51.

Nicholls drew directly from *Time*'s extensive series throughout the decade, following its lead, borrowing its material and crystallizing its lengthy reporting into distilled facets of the argument. Table 1 indicates articles that were very likely modeled after specific *Time* pieces. This is not to say Nicholls plagiarized most of his material; *Time* ran many pieces on each topic, each of which was derived from the goings on throughout the religious world, and Nicholls made it his task to reduce all of the contemporary issues surrounding Christianity into thematic chunks, often using *Time*'s research to complement his own. Only in the case of certain articles was his borrowing more apparent. For example, *The Passover Plot* and *The Underground Church* were books that reflected particular aspects of Neoliberalism, and both *Time* and subsequently Nicholls used their publication as an excuse to discuss their concerns. *Time* reviewed Schonfield's *The Passover Plot*, 10 Dec. 1965, using the opportunity to discuss the "historical Jesus," which was the topic of the book.¹⁹⁸ Nicholls did as well three months later. *The Underground Church*, by Rev. Layton P. Zimmer, described the small religious movements appearing around the U.S., which involved groups of believers engaging in religious worship in the privacy of their own homes in order to avoid the stifling dogma of current church structures. *Time* used its publication to examine its issues in a March, 1968 article; Nicholls created a similar article in February of the following year.

Nicholls rarely avoided the Neoliberal debate in his thirty-five articles; only two did not appear to in some fashion address "the issues". The final *Saturday Night* issue of the decade, Dec. 1969, was entitled "What happened in the 1960s". Curiously, in light of

¹⁹⁸ Schonfield's explicit purpose had been to debunk the "fairy dust" of religion by portraying Christ as a mortal man, p. 58.

the dedicated concern of at least two of the editors of the magazine, this issue mentioned none of the religious events that had transpired during the decade.

MacLean's

MacLean's authors, consisting of the pantheon of Canadian literati – Pierre Berton, Mordecai Richler, Peter Gzowski (who liked to write the sports section), David Suzuki, June Callwood, etc. – were decidedly the most activist in their approach to the topic of religion. Nicholls had been direct, but he was a man whose faith had been shaken as a result of his interest in Neoliberalism, and he merely seemed keen to share his insights with the world as they occurred to him, or after reading them in *Time*.

MacLean's authors spared Christianity little in their attacks, and were the most critical, even angry, in tone. The number of articles was not extensive, but the authors covered their material in more depth than *Chatelaine* and even *Saturday Night*, and were able to cover most Neoliberal concerns in fewer articles. In the early years of the decade, *MacLean's* was already busily challenging traditional beliefs, opening with three articles on religion in 1960, all of which expressed a psychological pain, the result of persistent, oppressive and outdated values in society. As Table 2 shows, this rhetoric toned down considerably in 1961 and 1962, but in 1963 the drive found renewed vigour, although there was no mention of *Honest to God* until 1964. This was followed by a steady stream of articles until 1966, when *MacLean's* lost interest in the topic of religion completely.

The three *MacLean's* articles of 1960 were liberal critiques of Christianity, but could not properly be called Neoliberal as a result of their lack of recourse to an international discourse. The authors appeared to be commenting spontaneously on the topic of religion, not following a trend or the lead of theologians. The first was an article

on the unfairness of mores regarding sex and marriage, and the resulting oppression of women.¹⁹⁹ Rev. W.E. Mann wrote another piece in July entitled “Our churches are damning the wrong kinds of sin”, and summarily criticized the church on its poor record in dealing with human rights issues of all kinds.²⁰⁰ In December, Stuart Rosenberg accused organized religion of existing only to preserve organized religion, in an article responding to the claim that churches were experiencing a revival.²⁰¹ He suggested that an ecumenical movement might open the door to yet more institutional oppression and recommended that the World Council take on a democratic style similar to that of the U.N.

In 1961, Grace Lane, an editorialist who had had enough of people who were “eager to blame the church for the failures of individuals,” wrote the sole article of the decade dedicated to defending the church. Lane was obviously responding to a feeling that was felt to be widespread, and not reacting to any particular documents.²⁰² She did not directly cite any other source, but merely offered a response to an implied critical attitude emanating from society itself. Responding to these criticisms, Grace argues that one should be from the church to criticize it. While the church could not be considered blameless (generally speaking), it can aspire, and fail, like any human being. However, it does not seem to matter what the church does, Lane argues. If it is pietistic, it is called

¹⁹⁹ Callaghan, Morley, “For the Sake of Argument: why single out sex as the only real road to sin?”, *MacLean's*, 2 Jan., p. 6. For The Sake of Argument was a common editorial section at the end of each issue.

²⁰⁰ *MacLean's*, 16 July, p.7.

²⁰¹ “The Religious Revival that Doesn't Exist”, *MacLean's*, 3 Dec., p. 10. Rosenberg was tired of hearing that we were in the midst of a religious revival, which simply did not exist. While many people claimed to be part of the church, there was little real “action,” in particular to resolve social ills, he stated. Theologians aimed to pacify the disheartened liberal intellectuals, while priests focus on entertaining a leisure-minded middle class. “It disturbs those that are already disturbed, or comforts those already comfortable”, p. 77.

²⁰² Lane, Grace, “Stop blaming the church for other people's failures”, *MacLean's*, 3 June, p. 8.

unrealistic and irrelevant. If it is socially active, it is told to keep to itself. If it is moral, it is “puritan”. If not, it is secular. The church sends many young people to college, creates large numbers of humanitarian projects, is more involved with communities than anything else, has “more fun” and dedicates more time to children and young people than other groups, responds Lane to the charges of decline and arrogance in the church.

In 1962 there were two interest pieces on the church. Peter Gzowski wrote a report about a Cardinal in Quebec, and another discussed the insular nature of the Pentecostal church.²⁰³ While the latter was not critical in tone, it drew attention to some controversial values (women were supposed to be silent partners in Pentecostalism, for example). It did not make reference to a general discourse and seemed, like the other articles of the time, to be a human interest story. In 1963, however, *MacLean's* published articles that were clearly conscious of their presence within an ongoing debate. Leslie K. Tarr wrote, “Let’s Throw the Bible out of Schools”, and two more articles that year called for reform in the church. In his first article, Tarr, a Baptist minister, asked whether the state of religion was so weak that it needed to prey on “captive children”.²⁰⁴ His second editorial accused the traditional, inoffensive, dry style of sermons of driving people away from church, and called for a return of “hellfire” to the pulpit.²⁰⁵ Sermons had lost their sense of poetic justice, said Tarr, and this had resulted in a diminished sense of Christian responsibility.

²⁰³ “The Cardinal and his Critics”, *MacLean's*, 3 July 1962, p. 13. Ferry, Anthony, “Oh Sing It, You Precious Pentecostal People!”, *MacLean's*, 3 Nov. 1962, p. 3. The emotional and “ultrafundamentalist” sect specializes in evangelism (“brinkmanship”), he says. They believe only in the Bible and while women are involved and even integral, they are silent.

²⁰⁴ Tarr, Leslie K., “Let’s Throw the Bible out of Schools”, *MacLean's*, 26 Jan 1963.

²⁰⁵ *MacLean's*, 1 June, p. 24. For the Sake of Argument.

The next article in succession was written by Rev. A.C. Forrest, another favourite of *MacLean's*. In "The New Drive for Church Unity", he discussed the complex ecumenical movement, which was struggling to regain some of the church's lost popularity through banding together. "Discontinuity in its message" had hurt the church's mission in this world, and ecumenism was to be the salve. He cautioned that the church would have to be tolerant in its anticipated "return", in a world where population had been rising and the influence of religion had been diminishing.²⁰⁶

In his last article, "The Case Against Christian Unity", Tarr reflected upon the foreboding that such ecumenism engendered in certain liberals. He admitted that it may seem silly to oppose it, "but he did". A critic of the church appeared to have reason to support the World Council's ecumenical movement, as its character was a democratic one, dedicated to wresting dogma and authority out of the hands of the establishment. However, few people were really devoted to the mission of ecumenism, Tarr argued. Church unions would probably stifle individual voices and "make an ideal of conformity". The policy of the movement was to remove denominational differences, and this could result in platitudes and a lifeless ministry. Personal spiritual development did not appear to be taken seriously in the quest for unity, either. The author simply found himself in accordance with whatever beliefs a particular denomination chose to adopt; Tarr did not require an ecumenical compromise to feel a connection to other faiths.²⁰⁷

1963 ended with, "Why One Jew Does not Want to be Accepted", an article that offered a rare argument in defense of inequality: liberals do more damage than bigots,

²⁰⁶ *MacLean's*, 6 July, p.14.

²⁰⁷ *MacLean's*, 5 Oct., p. 30.

David Lewis Stein asserts, and want to “accept different groups out of existence,” forgetting social distinctions that are at the heart of community identities. There was no comment on Christianity, however.²⁰⁸ While 1963 featured many incisive articles on the topic of religion, none of them yet exhibited an awareness of Robinson or Neoliberalism. 1964 featured three articles; “Schlep in the United Church”, by Robert Fulford, and “A Protestant Minister Reports on Pope Paul”, by A.C. Forrest, who complained that Vatican II demonstrated that while most bishops were progressives, conservatives still ruled the curia and prevented the fulfillment of democratic goals.²⁰⁹ Only the last article of the year, “Today’s Religion: Is Anybody Listening,” involving the editor of *MacLean’s*, Borden Spears, interviewing three clergy members on the status of Christianity – Leslie K. Tarr (see above), John M. Wilkie, and Ernest W. Harrison (who also contributed to *MacLean’s*) – discussed the emergence of Neoliberalism.²¹⁰

In the article, this group addresses why both Judaism and Christianity were “losing statistically,” and tries to imagine the various shortcomings of Christianity that might be responsible.²¹¹ “Mired in fourth century imagery” (the time of the Nicene Fathers, and Augustine), concepts like the Trinity probably do more to hurt the church than help it in the modern era, they decide. Religion ought to provide humanity, which is essentially lonely, with comfort. This was the first reference to the founding premises of Neoliberalism, one year after Nicholls began to express an interest. *MacLean’s* had demonstrated a comparable will to engage in an examination of Christianity up to this

²⁰⁸ 2 Dec., p. 14.

²⁰⁹ 8 Feb., p. 22 and 7 Mar., p. 22 respectively. Fulford dislikes the suburbanization of religion, believing that the United Church is not “united”, but just another church., and needs a new cause.

²¹⁰ 2 Dec. 1964, p. 14. Harrison also wrote, *Let God Go Free* (1965), a book in which he argues that the Christian conception of God is founded in an outdated cosmology.

²¹¹ They do not theorize why Judaism appears to be suffering the same fate as Christianity. “Probably more Christians are becoming Jews than the reverse,” the piece states in reference.

point, but without the benefit of Neoliberal theology. Following this article, *MacLean's* discussion would never stray from the movement. Ironically, only 6 more related articles were produced after this point, as *MacLean's* interest in religion began to taper after the publication of Berton's book.

The Comfortable Pew earned an extensive 6 Feb. 1965 critique by the Rev. A.C. Forrest, who took exception to Berton's work.²¹² "For more than a year," he stated, "we have been expecting a sort of Canadian version of A.T. Robinson's *Honest to God* ... Well, Berton's *The Comfortable Pew* is not that... It is, I believe, *Honest to Berton*." *The Comfortable Pew* was not about the pew, but the pulpit, designed to make clergy uncomfortable with its "persistent sniping." The lengthy review was also favourable in many ways, and summarized Berton's ideas fairly comprehensively. Forrest was critical of Berton's work, but not because of its Neoliberal principles, which he supported. He disliked Berton's attitude towards the clergy, which was overly accusatory. He also cited Berton's confession that he was prone to overgeneralizing, which Berton justified by indicating that he was speaking about "majority attitudes and actions," not minorities.²¹³ The only other article to deal with religion that year was "The Changing Mass", by Joan Latchford, which discussed the liberalization of the structure of mass. In 1958, for example, the Pope allowed "dialogue" during mass, a move designed to allow more participation by the laity.

1966 saw the "last blast" of *MacLean's* concern for proselytizing. June Callwood wrote "Is God Obsolete", and "The 'Changeless' Church Changes," two lengthy articles

²¹² Pp. 16, 17, 32, 33.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

detailing the entire Neoliberal discourse, from Bonhoeffer to Vatican II.²¹⁴ The Rev E.W. Harrison (referred to in other articles mentioned in this chapter, as a prominent clergyman who resigned for political reasons) also wrote “The New Morality,” and Thomas Allen wrote “The New Moralists,” discussing “cool” clergy who had taken to playing rock music and challenging certain sexual mores to order to encourage more involvement by Canadian youth.²¹⁵ This concluded *MacLean’s* coverage of religion for the decade, as 1967, 1968, and 1969 were bereft of discussion.

The Globe and Mail

The *Globe* began its run in the 1960s with a fairly balanced selection of material; people of all points of view were allowed to express themselves regularly in sections or series of topical reader comment forums, dealing with such issues as “Religion in schools”, “Capital Punishment” or “Religion in Society”, which often appeared in the segment, “Canadians and their Religion”. There was little in the way of directed criticism of the church in 1960; there were interest pieces about Africa (especially South Africa), China and Russia and their experiences with missionaries, apartheid and Christianity. These reflected predictable media opinions, but there was little in the way of a palpable antipathy toward Christianity. Interestingly, Khrushchev’s criticisms of Christianity were often quoted, but this was as pointed as such criticisms got. If they were intended by journalists to serve a critical function, it did not appear to be part of an identifiable trend.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ 6 Aug., p. 7 and 20 Aug., p. 20.

²¹⁵ 1 Oct., p. 22.

²¹⁶ Nikita Khrushchev was the Chairman of Council of Ministers (Prime Minister) of the Soviet Union, 1957-64. 11 Feb., p. 6 Russians complained of English Imperialists, and accused Christianity losing credibility in the world. 31 March, p.1, Khrushchev is recorded as deriding Christianity. He was consistently outspoken against Christianity, rarely missing an opportunity to attack it in a sound bite,

While an 11 Oct. 1960 article called for Christianity to lose its “medievalisms”, and a segment on Christmas gave a fairly colourful historicization of the various ways in which it has been celebrated over the years (creating a feel of implicit historico-criticism), critiques became more interesting to journalists in 1961.²¹⁷ Possibly spurred by events like the World Council, or maybe encouraged by the lively reactions to its forums, a series of *Globe* sections materialized, dealing with the tension between religion and science and the increasingly heated topic of religion in schools. Its tone changed noticeably after the printing of the first prominent piece of criticism, on 3 Feb. (p. 7). “The Place of Religion in Society” was written by Jewish Toronto Lawyer, Sydney Harris, who argued that Canada was no longer a Christian country and that when Christianity was taught in schools, it often reflected only a segment of Christianity, and was open to exploitation as a result. He also contested the view that Judaism is an inferior faith, and believed that respect demanded that religion be kept out of schools.

This “Religion in Schools” debate started a steady stream of comment and counter comment, while 1960 had seen little of this repartee. Nearly weekly or bi-weekly segments in February, March, April, May and June featured this discussion, which finally slowed and continued at a reduced pace for the rest of the decade.²¹⁸ Its success led to

which was duly noted by journalists. 1 Dec., p. 2 The *Globe* reported a Moscow broadcast that accused Christianity of being a wellspring of ignorance.

²¹⁷ P. 7, and 23 Dec., p. 7, respectively.

²¹⁸ Dates and pages include, 18, 20, 22, 28, Feb. (all p. 6); 6 (p.5), 24, 31 March (p. 6); 14, 24, 26, 28 April (p. 6); 11, 12 May and 6 June (all p. 6). Religion in schools was a heated debate during the 1960s, particularly in the more populous Ontario. The teaching of religion in schools had fallen under the purview of provincial legislation since Egerton Ryerson’s School Act of 1846. This Act allowed for the instruction of non-denominational Christianity in schools across Canada. In 1944, Ontario amended this law, making a provision that allowed religious education to be incorporated as part of a normal curriculum. This law remained relatively unchallenged until the 1960s, when the Ontario government finally called a commission in 1966 to investigate the increasing opposition to the teaching of religion and schools. The MacKay report of 1968 recommended that it be removed. Its recommendations were not instituted. Source: “Education About Religion in Ontario Public Schools”, [Ontario Ministry of Education Website](#), maintained by the Government of Ontario, © [Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2005](#).

another forum presenting readers' opinions regarding the compatibility of science and religion in five segments in each of July and August.²¹⁹ Both of these discussions evolved within a climate of intense rumination on the topic of religion in the *Globe*, and reflected points of view from "both" sides. The opinions regarding religion in schools generated little consensus or inventive reasoning; generally, complaints revolved around a lack of respect for other religions, and defenses emphasized the importance of engendering morality among youth. "The Place of Religion in Society, II" was printed 2 March (p. 7), and acted as sort of chair for the debate, adducing the refrain, "teach, don't preach", which was by far the most common attitude among critics. Christianity ought to be taught, if at all, as a topic of history only. Eventually, social consensus dictated that the teaching of religion was simply better off *as* history.²²⁰

In 1963, the publication of *Honest to God* earned a 25 May spread in *The Globe Magazine*, alongside an article by the esteemed Robinson himself, who largely summarized his work. Reviews were written in the *Globe* on June 8 and 20.²²¹ Reginald Stackhouse, a professor of religion, wrote the latter, and commented that while Robinson was really only repeating what people had been saying for one hundred years, his

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curriculum/religion/religioe.html> (6 July 2005).

²¹⁹ 20, 21, 25, 28, 31 July, p.6; and 2, 8, 9, 15, 26 August, p. 6. The "science and religion" segment debated their compatibility. Examples of opinions include; "There is no truth to the claim the science cannot teach morality; it teaches humility," (20 July); "They must be compatible; a soul without reason is scarcely worth saving," (21 July); "They are not compatible; the conflict is between fundamentalists on both sides," (25 July); "Nothing can be learned from science," (28 July); " 'Religionists' fail to consider that criminality might be the result of sickness, not sin," (31 July); "Science and religion are both myth," (2 Aug.); "At best, religion shows a lack of humility; dogma can only keep people divided," (2 Aug.).

²²⁰ Some examples of opinions include: 24 March, p. 6, a reader compares religion in schools to Nazi indoctrination; 31 March, p. 6, a reader asks, why can't parents handle the job of teaching religion to their children? Reasons for preserving religion in schools included: teaching the Golden Rule (20 Feb., p. 6); teaching the Bible never hurt anyone (18 Feb., p. 6); need Christianity in society to fight the communists (18 March, p. 6); and one comment suggesting that the "New Christianity" is acceptable to teach in schools (4 April, p. 6). Other arguments against included: The world is now pluralistic (14 April, p. 6); "Teach, don't Preach" (28 April, p. 6); we should be free to choose our beliefs ourselves (28 Feb., p. 6); Christianity is not the only moral code (20 Feb., p. 6).

²²¹ Pp. 6, 15 respectively.

innovation involved more of a dismantling of “religion” than ever previously imagined. Stackhouse closed, “What is new in it is not true; what is true in it is not new”, and predicted that it would not form the sound basis of a new religion. The Archbishop of Canterbury agreed in a page one article of 15 August.²²²

The presence of *Honest to God* in the *Globe* was understated prior to the publication of Berton’s book. United Church Minister J.A. Davidson (Syndenham) may have been the only writer who seemed to be both aware of a Neoliberal movement and dedicated to its cause following *Honest to God*’s release. In his 14 March article of 1963 (prior to *Honest to God*), his complaints mirrored those being expressed in *MacLean’s* at the time. These included the middle class complacency of the church, which resulted in a “religion of the ulterior motive”. “Ease and comfortableness seem to mark contemporary religious conviction,” where adherents are more interested in services like counseling, community involvement, Sunday School (which served to prevent children from becoming “criminals”), and career advancement (comparing community churches to something like Free Masons). This creates a “cheap faith at bargain basement prices”, where the last thing that fuels the soul of its members is any true sort of religiousness. “Faith embraced for ulterior motives not really faith at all,” he declares.²²³ This article stood in contrast to Davidson’s piece of 7 Nov. 1964, in which he quotes Robinson directly, asking, can a reasonable and intelligent person believe in God? Like him, Davidson concluded that we must approach the topic of God with humility, as creating

²²² The other review felt that the book “had some good ideas”, but was “a little pretentious”.

²²³ Also on that day, another minister editorialized that the Bible was “the most dangerous book”, and could be used to uphold nearly any dogma or moral as a result of its ambiguousness (another common criticism). Professor Patrick Corbett (University of Sussex) expanded on this theme, describing the Christian doctrine as wide enough to justify anything, and accused the Presidents of Portugal (Salazar) and R.S.A. (Vorster) of bigotry, putting “favoured doctrines before the future of mankind”. 23 Oct. 1967, p. 5.

static descriptions amounted to idolatry, integrating Robinson's ideas into his own programme of persuasion. Davidson, at least, exhibited the same pattern as the other sources, while the rest of the *Globe's* reporting changed little after *Honest to God*.

No sooner had Berton's book hit the shelves in 1965 than the *Globe* changed its tune, however. It was overcome by a critical mind-set, initiating wide-ranging discussions on secularization and liberalism. A 5 Jan., p. 4 review summarized Berton's fundamental assertions and founding premise, that modern people "no longer need to cling to the daddy on the cloud." Christianity must be reformed to "slash" through the dogma, myth and hypocrisy. On 9 Jan., another article blamed the inherent flaws of the church for its current hardships. More clerics were suffering breakdowns, more people were leaving the church, and fewer were joining as a result of its outdated structure. This paralleled developments in Italy and France, the article stated. Celibacy, it argued, was the major cause. Clergy needed to find a more "effective way to communicate Christianity in an increasingly indifferent world."²²⁴

Davidson reflected that 1965 was "a very good year" for Christianity in an article of 1 Jan. 1966. Many publications had been sold, although the author states that not all of the criticisms they contained had been "applied constructively". He refers to Berton, *Why the Sea is Boiling Hot*, Robinson and Cox in succession.²²⁵ 1965 had seen the release of the *Principles of Union*, for example, which discussed the terms of an ecumenical merger that was to take place between the Canadian Anglican and United churches, but never did. Coincidentally, Albert Schweitzer, Paul Tillich and Martin Buber – three of the best-known theologians of the century – all died. *Time* and *Globe*

²²⁴ P. 18.

²²⁵ Robinson wrote the *New Reformation* in 1965, a much less successful book. Davidson describes Burton's book as an "audacious job of whistle blowing at Canada's Protestant religious establishment".

had both paid homage to these figures during this year and used the opportunity to reflect on the state of Christianity. Vatican II also ended in December of 1965, and these collective signs of activity and interest made Davidson optimistic about the new year, in spite of the current signs of secularization. He finished his article with the thought,

“Some church leaders are inclined to blame the critics, both outsiders and insiders, for this apparent decline. But it seems more probable that the criticism is more symptom than cause. Perhaps it is just that the churches are beginning to strip down institutionally in order to get on with the real work to which they are called.”

On 15 Jan. 1966, another article reviewed the “God is Dead Jury”, a movement led by the notable theologian Thomas Alitzer, who described himself as a Christian atheist. The piece quoted several theologians and ministers that generally agreed with statements like “A god who is remote and unconcerned about this world is dead,” (Rev. R.J. Hord), and without attempting to pass a verdict on the status of Christianity, reiterated many common Neoliberal attitudes. Marin E. Marty commented that the movement knows “that we in the West and in the world are passing through an epochal religious crisis; they see the old falling apart and want to be part of the new.” Says the article,

“The point at issue, it appears, is that the God of the traditional institutional form is dead because the conventional ecclesiastical language and the theological categories in which He is described have become meaningless.”²²⁶

This drew a response; in a readers’ forum dedicated to this issue, ten Anglican ministers from Peterborough lodged a complaint against the belief that the Trinity is false, or scientifically impossible, stating that this is not a reinterpretation of scripture, but

²²⁶ P. 42. In this quote, Alitzer may as well be paraphrasing Robinson: “It is not possible for any responsible person to think that we can any longer know or experience God in nature, in history, in the economic or political areas, or in anything which is genuinely modern, whether in thought or in experience.”

a rejection of it.²²⁷ Another reader commented that the tragedy of the church today lay in the public perception of its misdeeds, and ignorance of the virtues which many found within the Christian heritage.²²⁸ On 4 June, a reader complained that it was now fashionable to say that God is dead (p.09), while a commentary on the 25th asserted that “God is alive”, but is threatened by atheist Christianity, a “lack of fidelity among Christians”, and current forms of unbelief (“cynical secularism”).²²⁹

The beginning of 1967 saw the resignation of Charles Davis from the Catholic Church, and an article detailing his reasons. Primarily, he had left to get married, but his grievance was a result of deeper issues in a church that “sacrificed truth and personal rights for the preservation of authority,” which had resulted in a secularizing “irrelevance of fostering a Christian life.”²³⁰ Editorials throughout the year continued the line of thought, stressing the need for “understandable religion,” not sixteenth century dogma, and claiming that much of the opposition came not from the pulpit, but the pew itself.²³¹ Another article depicted Christianity as the religion of the “white man”, and a culture of exploiters, and another observed that there appeared to be a growing distrust of religion in general among the young.²³²

By 1968, the *Globe* was already exhibiting less interest, and discussions of liberal theology trailed off, returning to the religion in schools question. There was a noticeable drop in editorials and letters to the editor, possibly a result of the decrease in dramatic

²²⁷ 7 Feb., p. 6.

²²⁸ 21 May, p. 9.

²²⁹ P. 6.

²³⁰ 6 Jan., p. 7. Another Davis piece appeared, 8 March, p.6, repeating his reasons.

²³¹ 22 Aug., p. 05.

²³² 6 Dec., p. 32 and 23 Dec., p. 10.

examples of rift within the church. The most important symbolic event of the year that might have prompted more discussion, the death of Karl Barth in December, did not.

Finally, in 1969, the *Globe* paused to reflect on the past decade, with the added dimension of the Mackay report, which advised the government to abandon the teaching of religion in schools.²³³ More statistics began to emerge among the discussions, as signs of secularization became more noticeable; there were both positive and negative signs to be found, however. While United Church membership was dropping by an average of 3000 per year (2 April, p. 6), an Ontario survey still found that out of 21,000 women interviewed, 82% still thought religion was vital to the education of their children (27 Nov., p. 6), and another article observed that Christmas mass was still attended by the same numbers of people as ever (27 Dec., p. 27). Meanwhile, fewer articles questioned why this was so; the topic of secularization seemed to be becoming more the object of idle curiosity than the contested ground of society.

Over the course of the decade, the Neoliberal spirit lived and died a life between the lines of *Globe*. The absence of conservative defense had been due in part of a lack of response from which to draw. Combined with the temporary, enthusiastic zeal that Robinson mobilized, the discussion of religion in the 1960s found itself informed far more by the liberal spirit. The sense was pervasive, although the tone of *Globe* reporters was not hateful toward Christianity, while some of the material under review appeared to be. Only J.A. Davidson and F.H. Wilkinson, both men of the cloth, directly engaged in the two sides of the argument on an ongoing basis. Wilkinson had been prescient in 1961 when he mused,

²³³ One reader commented that MacKay had merely recommended replacing religion with “secular rationalism,” a religion in its own right. 24 Feb., p. 6.

“That disbelief is a guarantee that the evidence has been fully examined, or that doubt is a special symptom of intelligence, or that the Christian Faith is disproved of scientific humanism, may be presumed to be an attitude of prejudice or just ignorance of the facts.”²³⁴

Wilkinson explained the growth of this new attitude, stating that “Human nature is such that people want to be in the majority, even if they have a mistaken notion of what the majority thinks or believes.” The growing antipathy toward Christianity had clearly been tangible long before the arrival of *Honest to God*. Its presence in the Canadian media for a brief duration during the mid-1960s, alongside increasing signs of secularization, almost seemed more like an epitaph than a revolution.

Chatelaine

Chatelaine had been the last to enter the debate in the 1960s. Table 3 lists all of the articles pertaining to religion written during the decade, almost half of which appeared in 1966. Up to 1965, *Chatelaine* maintained a focus on liberal women’s issues, delivered in a tenor of light and enjoyable reading. Articles which came the closest to adducing the topic of religion, or social issues that might pertain to discussions of traditional social values, included, “Married women, you are fools to take a job” (the only anti-liberal article, as such); “All Canadians are Equal, Except Women”; “Are Women Second-Class voters?”; and “What makes a Woman Unhappy?”²³⁵ This again serves to underline that religion only emerged as a popular topic in the media during the middle of the decade, after the publication of other Neoliberal works and articles. Until 1965, there had been only one article involving religion, entitled “Let’s abolish the church bazaar”.²³⁶ It was written by Eileen Morris, a regular contributor. She took issue with the gendered

²³⁴ 12 Dec., p. 9.

²³⁵ Appearing in *Chatelaine*, Anita A. Birt, Jan. 1960, p. 12; Newman, Christina McCall, Feb. 1962, p. 34; Newman, Christina McCall, June, p. 27; and Mead, Dr. Margaret, Mar. 1960, p. 25, respectively.

²³⁶ *Chatelaine*, Sep. 1962, p. 24.

division of labour within church activities in this article. Women were wasting talent “selling pots” to each other when perfectly worthy causes were being left unattended, in keeping with the accusation that church interests had become too mundane and middle class. Eileen Morris also wrote an article in November of 1960 entitled, “We’re telling our children too much about sex.” “Not that anyone wants a return to Victorian prudishness”, she adds, as “That is for religion.”²³⁷ Another article asked, “What’s it like to be married to Pierre Berton?”, but did not discuss religion.²³⁸ A piece in December of 1961 entitled “Canadians at worship” was merely a pictorial that paid no attention to social issues.

This lack of curiosity suddenly changed in 1965 with “What Makes a Minister Quit his Church?” and “The Sunday School Revolution: How they’re teaching our children the New Religion”.²³⁹ The first article was a lengthy look at Rev. Frank E. Bell that explained the ideological differences which had caused him to leave the priesthood. The event had made the Canadian news. Bell cited the receding influence of the church; “Either the ministry is failing the people, or the people are failing the ministry”. Why else would books like *The Comfortable Pew* and *Honest to God* be on the best-seller list, he asked? “Salvation does not lie in peeling your potatoes, or in singing the same old doxology at the same point in the service, year in, year out,” he explained. Bell favoured a democratic format to determine the will of congregations, who complained of being treated “like children in a school.” The author referred to Peter Berger’s book, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, and cited his belief that religious institutions no longer produced

²³⁷ P. 22.

²³⁸ Robert, Marika, *Chatelaine*, Dec. 1961, p. 36.

²³⁹ Gillen, Molly, July, p. 19., and Morris, Eileen, Nov., p. 37.

their own values. The institutional church instead “ratifies and sanctifies the values prevalent in the general community”.²⁴⁰

Eileen Morris’ next piece, “The Sunday School Revolution”, discussed the impact of new resources on Sunday School teaching. New theology and new psychology had transformed lessons from dull catechisms to a “liberal view of the Bible”.²⁴¹ It was about time they stopped insulting the intelligence of young people, she argued. The Bible was not historical truth, but full of religious symbols that point towards the “truth of man”. In the story of Moses, for example, the parting of the Red Sea was more likely the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. She also cited Bonhoeffer’s “religionless” Christianity. It ended with the Jewish saying: “Limit not thy children to thine own ideas. They are born in a different time.”²⁴²

In 1966, a piece by Helen Hicks, entitled, “Why I Got Out of Church Work”, parroted Morris’s earlier piece and complained about the talent being wasted by churches in their current regime of church work. Women were its backbone, and it was “becoming tiresome”.²⁴³ They had individual talents and interests, and the church would do well to “economize energies” and cater to the preferences of the congregation.

Chatelaine’s most explicit Neoliberal article, “The New Morality,” by Rev. George W. Paul, appeared in 1967.²⁴⁴ The New Morality was a term popularized by *Honest to God*, the article informs us, for whom charity, not chastity, was the new virtue. It emphasized “love more than law, openness over dogmatism and creative freedom over

²⁴⁰ 39. Bell recommended the democratic election of Bishops and ministers.

²⁴¹ June, p. 104.

²⁴² P. 108.

²⁴³ June, p. 16.

²⁴⁴ June, p. 29.

static safety”.²⁴⁵ “People are more important than principles,” and attitudes surrounding birth control and sex should be relaxed. Paul suggested that the sexual revolution has helped to make headway against the “hypocrisy of puritanism.” It was an abridged *Honest to God*, except for Paul’s warning that if young men are up brought up too strictly regarding sexual behaviour, they might become hidden or real homosexuals.

This nearly tapped *Chatelaine’s* enthusiasm for religion. In the last critical article of the decade, “A Catholic Mother Answers the Pope” (1968), Joan O’Donnell defended the use of the pill, even though her daughter had suffered health problems from using it.²⁴⁶ The daughter subsequently used the rhythm method, got pregnant, and had a miscarriage. She was then shocked to discover that she was happy to have had a miscarriage. It was a moving and candid appeal for the use of the pill. Abstinence is not normal either, O’Donnell added, and people need the church’s understanding, as they do not want to feel estranged. *Chatelaine’s* run of the issues included the overlapping categories of women’s issues, sexuality and church reform. It contributed least to the discussion, but drew heavily from it, following a tighter arc of Neoliberal discussion than the other media sources.

B.C. Newspapers

The least informative sources consisted of the B.C. Newspapers. The teaching of religion in schools was a popular theme, referred to on a regular basis, but was only handled in sound-bites and never carefully examined. “The Mumbo-Jumbo Revolt”, for example, was a typical piece, discussing the Teacher’s Federation convention of 1964,

²⁴⁵ P. 101.

²⁴⁶ Nov., p. 26.

where 1200 delegates overwhelmingly voted to remove religion from schools in B.C.²⁴⁷ Religion in schools, they argued, violated the separation of church and state. Even the Vancouver school board requested the removal of religious instruction by 1969, as reported on the front page of the *Vancouver Sun*.²⁴⁸ There were both defenses and criticisms of this issue; one Catholic priest argued that schools were falling short in their duties to instruct “faith, self-reliance, and concern for other people.”²⁴⁹ Others wrote about successful experiments in non-denominational religious instruction, providing educators were “very careful to avoid any slant toward a particular creed or faith”.²⁵⁰ The religion in schools debate received by far the most attention in the B.C. newspapers, but was still understated when compared to the other sources.

Theology was not a major concern of these newspapers, who were catering to a decidedly different market, but the specific reasons for their absence of religious investigation were not obvious.²⁵¹ Their lack of interest may reflect Lynne Marks’ and Tina Block’s findings about B.C.’s more secular nature. What impact the more secular demographics of B.C. had on the religious content of its newspapers would require comparative studies involving other provincial media, and is beyond the scope of this paper. This could prove to be fertile ground for further studies of secularization, however. Compared to the national media, at least, it is clear that the B.C. dailies took

²⁴⁷ *Vancouver Sun*, 26 Oct. 1965, p. 4. There were some stray articles which adduced some familiar themes, such as, “Christian Uniformity Deadly” *Times*, 18 Aug. 1968, p. 3; “Most of Our Families are not Christian” *Province*, 5 Feb. 1957, p. 21; “Pure Christianity Urged by Baptists” *Times*, 25 Feb. 1964, p. 2; “Minister Challenges Atheist Contention” *Times*, 30 Aug. 1968, p. 6; “God is Dead idea Misunderstood” *Sun*, 25 Aug. 1966, p.8; but articles like these were the exception.

²⁴⁸ *Vancouver Sun*, 15 April 1969, p. 1.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6 May 1963, p. 13.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 May 1961, p. 10.

²⁵¹ In another exception, an 31 April 1965 *Vancouver Sun* article complained that the layman was a secondary consideration to the current style of church, which was more concerned about the survival of its ministries (p. 10).

far less interest in the topic of religion, and cannot be said to have engaged in or been informed by Neoliberal discourse to the same degree, if at all. If the media affected secularization in B.C., it would likely have been only the national media that did so, unless the purely secular content of papers can have a more subtle effect on the popularity of religion.

Summary

In balance, the 1960s produced a fascinating display of popular reflection within the selected print media. Some of the authors may have appeared to be grandstanding at times, or overly sanctimonious, but the cumulative effect of their detailed explorations resulted in an expansive study of the issue of Christianity in modern society. Each of the authors appeared to satisfy their own curiosity, which was probably far greater than that of the average person, given the intensity of motivation that the regular authors – J.A. Davidson, June Callwood, Pierre Berton, William Nicholls, A.C. Forrest, Eileen Morris, etc. – demonstrated in their pursuit of enlightenment.

The data is conclusive in some areas. The Neoliberal discourse drew its energy directly from the publication of *Honest to God*, although liberalism and Neoliberalism had been working in the background for sometime. They had merely lacked a unifying leader, principle and self-consciousness, all of which Robinson provided. The sources then proceeded to carefully analyze certain problems of contemporary Christianity, naturally referring to prominent theologians in their search for insight. The Neoliberal sympathizers actively sought out like-minded theologians in their search for authority and allies in the effort to transform Christianity into a more socially relevant religion, resulting in the popularity (among media) of the works discussed in the previous chapter.

The authors of these books, for their own part, had been searching for attention from the media – as was evident in the cases of James Pike and Charles Davis, both of whom had called press conferences and were outspoken about their desire to reach as many people as possible. The mass media and Neoliberalism spontaneously generated sympathetic activists who found each other in the middle of the 1960s. 1965 and 1966 clearly marked the high-water point of media interest, becoming Neoliberalism's short-lived golden age.

This pattern was found within each selected Canadian media source, to greater and lesser degrees, with the exception of the B.C. newspapers. The Canadian media was unique, obviously, in the paths it created for the dissemination of Neoliberal values, but the same pattern of liberal interest was evident in other countries as well.²⁵² While the ability of a small number of interested journalists to influence the five selected major media sources is a significant statement on the nature of the media in Canada, the pervasiveness of Neoliberal ideas around the world points to another origin of these ideas within society. On this note, we return to our discussion of Canadian secularization.

²⁵² See *A Question of Conscience* for information on the British media's reaction to the movement.

TABLE 1
SATURDAY NIGHT

Year	Month and Page	Author	Title and Topic
1963	Oct., p. 3	Arnold Edinborough	"Taking Aim at the Post-Christian World" - A review of the Anglican conference in Toronto, which called for renewed social interest.
	Oct., p. 35	William Nicholls	"O God, O Montreal" - A look at the same conference, critical of its lack of openness.
	Nov., p. 32	William Nicholls	"Honest to God, it's a Good Book" - A review of <i>Honest to God</i> (favourable).
1964	Jan., p. 30	William Nicholls	"Christians and Society" - Nicholls could defend traditional Christian morality, but "does not want to".
	Sep., p. 39	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Are Billy Graham and Evangelicalism proof that there is support for traditional Christianity and the literal word of the Bible?
	Nov., p. 32	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Reviews the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin, who attempts to combine science and religion.
1965	Jan., p. 30	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Universities are teaching more religion, as students appear more interested.
	Feb., p. 11	Arnold Edinborough	"Sex, Religion and Pierre Burton" - A review of the <i>Pew</i> .
	Apr., p. 31	N/A	"More still on the <i>Comfortable Pew</i> " - Letters to the editor, plus one by Burton defending his work from the charge that it misrepresents Christianity.
	Apr., p. 34	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - A review of <i>Why the Sea is Boiling Hot</i> ; Nicholls accuses Burton of criticizing the church on the basis of his own values.
	May, p. 44	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - A review of <i>Objections to Roman Catholicism</i> , Michael de la Bedoyere, ed.; the book charges the church with failing to live up to its values.
	June, p. 40	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Is the Anglican or the United Church Canada's official Church, and what will they look like in the future? They need something "else".

	July, p. 26	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Are Unitarians the church of the future? Nicholls likes their style.
	July, p. 27	William Nicholls	"The New Theology" A theology that transcends the uncompassionate rigours of rational morality.
	Sep., p. 33	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - The death of Martin Buber, an open-minded, linguistic theorist and theologian who extended a dialogue to Judaism.
	Oct., p. 37	William Nicholls	"Dare They Take the Roman out of Catholic?"
	Nov., p. 32	William Nicholls	"Why Not Clergywomen?"
	Dec., p. 46	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Does Christmas mean anything?
1966	Jan., p. 34	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Where is Christianity when theologians call themselves Christian atheists? On its last legs?
	Feb., p. 34	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - An extensive article reviewing the works of Alitzer, Paul van Buren, William Hamilton, and Gabriel Vahanian, all Christian atheists in the tradition of Nietzsche, Nicholls argues. These same authors, and Harvey Cox, were reviewed by <i>Time</i> , Oct. 22, 1965, p. 22, in an identical article that also traces the origin of the movement from Nietzsche and Kierkegaard.
	Mar., p. 52	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Review of the <i>Passover Plot</i> , by Hugh Schonfield: fascinating, but difficult to call a scholarly work. Also reviewed by <i>Time</i> , Dec. 10, 1965, p. 64.
	May, p. 59	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" McLuhan is right; the full meaning of liturgy cannot be expressed in language.
	June, p. 27	John Polanyi	"The Faith of a Scientist" - Belief in objective knowledge must be considered as much an act of faith as religion. Expect a book in the future, called " <i>The Uncomfortable Lab</i> ".
	June, p. 42	William Nicholls	"Model Mystics with L.S.D." - The hunger for mystical enlightenment has led down new roads of religion. <i>Time</i> ran a number of articles on the same topic, for example, July 11, 1960, p. 59.
	July, p. 25	Fr. Stanley E. Kurtz	"The Relevance of Zen" - It might be possible to compare Buddha with Jesus and create a new religion.

	Sep., p. 59	William Nicholls	"Muzzling the Critics" - Established institutions are still powerful enough to keep critics and reformers within traditional Christianity quiet and subdued. They have not been able to make changes, leading to resignations like those of Rev. Alan Jackson and Rev. Ernest Harrison in Toronto and Vancouver. The power of these institutions exceeds their needs.
	Oct., p. 73	William Nicholls	"Corruption Through Power" - Identifying one's self with one's office can be seductive. It is probably possible to do away with the church, leaving people to manage their own faith.
	Nov., p. 80	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - A review of the Lambeth conference for Anglicans.
1967	Jan., p. 32	William Nicholls	"Studying Religion in Universities" - The nature of study in universities has changed the nature of religion, as a result of the importance of evidence and reason.
	Feb., p. 25	Marshall McLuhan	"Love" - Incomprehensible. Something about changing sex mores, which therefore might have something to do with religion.
	Apr., p. 42	William Nicholls	"The Troubled English Catholics" - British periodical <i>The New Blackfriars</i> agrees the church is corrupt, in England, one of the most conservative Catholic countries.
	June, p. 51	William Nicholls	"The Death of the Church" - The Church of England is now 10% of Britain's population, and is predicting its own death. The church of the future will need to reduce religion to "nuclear" groups, that can relate religion to diverse environments.
	Aug., p. 32	William Nicholls	"Self-Perfection and Society" - Has religion more to do with inner life, or society? The Social Gospel was criticized as shallow by Niebuhr and Barth. Christianity is currently withdrawing from worldly problems.
	Sep., p. 41	William Nicholls	"Prayer to a Dead God" - Prayer is dead, too. Prayer should be saying "yes" to reality (Michael Novak), which is modern humanity's responsibility.
	Nov., p. 75	William Nicholls	"The Art of Upside Down" - A Review of Yoga and its possibilities for Christianity. Also covered by <i>Time</i> in the same July 11 article, 1960, p. 59.
1968	Jan., p. 39	William Nicholls	"Portrait of a Town Fool" - Indifferent. At this point, Nicholls appears to begin to run out of topics to cover.
	Mar., p. 51	William Nicholls	"Did God die at Auschwitz" - A review of Richard L. Rubenstein, <i>After Auschwitz</i> . Nicholls copies <i>Time's</i> Feb. 16, 1968 article, p. 40, and finally mentions Harvey Cox. If history is the will of God, God must be punishing Jews.

	May, p. 27	Rev. Gordon Baker	"Can Anyone Shake Up Our Church?" - Bonhoeffer, Tillich, Niebuhr, Robinson, Pike, Chardin, Burton, and Ernest Harrison are discussed. The future lies with those who cannot define God precisely, but have come to know "God" through the "depths" (Barth) of their relationships with others.
	Aug., p. 34	William Nicholls	"Comment and Criticism (Religion)" - Hippies are a religious movement. Charles Davis' <i>A Question of Conscience</i> has provided a source of reform within the church.
	Oct., p. 44	William Nicholls	"The Pill and Papal Authority" - Did the "pill" single-handedly destroy the Vatican's authority? <i>Humanæ Vitæ</i> ; Gregory Baum, <i>The Credibility of the Church Today</i> , birth control is the key issue in reform.
	Oct., p. 47	Norbert Lacoste	"The Church in a Profane World" - Currently, bishops have all the power, but history is moving from a sacred pole to a profane one. Psychology has taught us that laws can be flexible.
1969	Feb., p. 32	William Nicholls	"The Underground Church" - 'Underground' churches are developing, so that Christians can express their faith outside of the established institutions. Follows <i>Times</i> 's "The Underground Church", Mar. 29, 1968, p. 64; a response to the book, <i>The Underground Church</i> , by Rev. Layton P. Zimmer.
	Mar., p. 31	George Grant	"Is Freedom Man's only Meaning?" - The opposite of knowledge is madness. Relativism may not be the answer to our existential problems.
	May, p. 26	William Nicholls	"The World After Karl Barth" - Greatest theologian of the 20th C; dug through liberalism to find the message of the Bible. Was usurped by Robinson.
	Oct., p. 38	Erena Paris	"Sometimes Being an ex-Priest is Harder than Being a Priest" - Celibacy is unpleasant for priests. Real religion is not found in hierarchical system that dominates men and preserves its prestige and power.
	Dec.	N/A	Issue Title: "What Happened in the 60s" - No mention of religion.

TABLE 2
MACLEAN'S

Year	Month and Page	Author	Title and Topic
1960	Jan. 2, p. 6	Morley Callaghan	"Why Single out Sex as the only Real Road to Sin?" - Extensive article looking at the origins of some Christian beliefs - from Tertullian's evil temptress to St. Augustine's ideas regarding Eve's creation of sin.
	June 4, p. 9	Rabbi Abraham L. Feinberg	"What the Jews can Teach us About Divorce" - Canadian laws seem puritan, and designed to preserve a certain culture.
	July 16, p. 7	Rev. W.E. Mann	"Our Churches are Damning the Wrong Kinds of Sin" - Church is becoming complacent and middle class.
	Dec. 3, p. 10	Stuart E. Rosenberg	"The Religious Revival that Just Doesn't Exist" - Rosenberg is fired of hearing that we are in the midst of a religious revival. It does not exist. The church has become complacent and middle class.
1961	June 3, p. 8	Grace Lane	"Stop Blaming the Church for Other People's Failures" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
1962	July 14, p. 13	Peter Gzowski	"The Cardinal and His Critics" - A review of Cardinal Leger.
	Nov. 3, p. 20	Anthony Ferry	"Oh Sing it, You Precious Pentecostal People!" - This emotional and evangelistic sect employs "brinkmanship" sermonizing.
1963	Jan. 5	For the Sake of Argument	Reader response section in the last pages of each issue: Says a reader, "If you can't get divorced, you should live in sin."
	Jan. 26, p. 30	Leslie K. Tarr	"Let's Throw the Bible out of School" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
	June 1, p. 24	Leslie K. Tarr	For the Sake of Argument - Let's Bring hellfire back to the complacent, middle class pulpit. Discussed in Chapter 3.
	July 6, p. 14	Rev. A.C. Forrest	"The New Drive for Christian Unity" - Discontinuity has hurt the church's mission in this world, which requires tolerance. Discussed in Chapter 3.

	Oct. 5, p. 30	Leslie K. Tarr	"The Case Against Christian Unity" - Unity can lead to abuse of authority, and obstacles to democracy. Discussed in Chapter 3.
	Dec. 2, p. 14	David Lewis Stein	"Why One Young Jew Doesn't Want to be 'Accepted'" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
1964	Feb. 22, p. 12	Robert Fulford	"Schlep in the United Church" - Complacent and middle class sermons have lost their message. Discussed in Chapter 3.
	Dec. 14, p. 21	Borden Spears (Ed.)	"Today's Religion: Is Anybody Listening?" - Spears interviews three clergymen. Discussed in Chapter 3.
1965	Feb 16, p. 16	Rev. A.C. Forrest	"A Churchman Answers Pierre Burton" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
	Oct. 2, p. 25	Joan Latchford	"The Changing Mass" - Pressure in liturgical reform has led to the saying of mass in local languages and the use of loudspeakers, amongst other new forms of technology.
1966	Aug. 6, p. 7	June Callwood	"Is God Obsolete?" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
	Aug. 20, p. 20	June Callwood	"The 'Changeless' Mass Changes" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
	Oct. 15, p. 22	Rev. E.W. Harrison	"The New Morality" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
	Oct. 15, p. 22	Thomas Allen	"The New Moralists" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
1967			
1968			
1969			

TABLE 3
CHATELAINE

Year	Month and Page	Author	Title and Topic
1960	Nov., p. 22	Eileen Morris	"We're Telling Our Children too much about Sex." - "Not that anyone wants a return to Victorian prudishness."
	Dec., p. 31	Yousref Karsh	"Canadians at Worship" - A pictorial.
1961	Dec., p. 36	Marika Robert	"What's it like to be Married to Pierre Burton?"
1962	Sep., p. 24	Eileen Morris	"Let's Abolish the Church Bazaar" - Women are wasting their talents selling pots.
1963			
1964	June, p. 86	Mrs. Eunice Fisher	"Last Word" - "If God in his wisdom intended the races to intermarry, then we would be all one colour." quips one reader.
1965	July, p. 19	Rev. Frank E. Bell	"What Makes a Minister Quit his Church?" - A minister explains his reasons for leaving the church. Discussed in Chapter 3.
1966	June, p. 16	Helen Hicks	"Why I got Out of Church Work" - Women's talents are being wasted raising funds.
	Aug. p. 80	N/A	"Last Word" - Several responses to the Hicks article. Predictable and nothing profound; some agreeing, some finding value in current church activities.
	Sep., p. 29	Nancy Tallier White	"How Our Divorce Law Degrades Us" - No mention of religion.
	Sep., p. 35	Earl Damude	"The Medical Discovery that Could Legalize Abortion" - Society has the right to be concerned about the quality of decisions that couples make about marriages. No discussion of religion.
	Sep., p. 180	Last Word	"Helen Hicks forgets that church work can be fun."

1967	June, p. 29	Rev. George W. Paul	"The New Morality" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
	Aug., p. 84	Last Word	There were several heated responses to the above article; "The New Morality is atheist;" "Anti-Christian;" "Virtuous women are still placed higher than non-virtuous;" "Cancel my subscription;" "The New Morality is only old immorality".
1968	Nov., p. 26	Joan O'Donnell	"A Catholic Mother Answers the Pope" - Discussed in Chapter 3.
1969			

Conclusion

This thesis has put forward the hypothesis that the mass media and the Neoliberal movement of the 1960s probably helped to secularize Canadian society by attempting to transform Christianity into a more “relevant” religion. The prevalence of Neoliberal theology in the mass media must be considered one of the more important omissions within the current Canadian narrative of secularization in the 1960s.¹ The mass media *was* a narrator of secularization in the decade. Journalists like Pierre Berton and June Callwood made use of several forms of media in an attempt to promote the values of Neoliberalism, which they hoped could make inroads against intolerance in society through challenging the basis of certain Christian dogmas. Journalists who were not as supportive of the Neoliberal arguments were also compelled to discuss them as news on an ongoing basis as a result of the importance of the many developments in the religious world and in theology that occurred throughout the decade.

The “Neoliberal effect” in the media probably had an impact analogous to the process described by David Marshall and Ramsay Cook. Neoliberalism did not win many converts outside of theological circles, but it seemed to reflect and perhaps to reinforce a growing feeling of disillusionment with Christianity among the general populace. This study therefore adds further support to Marshall’s claim that clergy have actively embraced secularizing philosophies over the years, and Cook’s argument that Christian liberalism and social criticism lead to secularization, not renewed faith. It also challenges the attitudes of Christie, Gauvreau, and Van Die, who contend that “ethical”

¹ While John Grant, for example, argues that liberalism is equivalent to decline, he does so only by implication (in arguing that liberal changes amounted to decline, and that criticism served to disenchant the public with religion in the 1960s). He does not explicitly reveal this in his thesis, nor discuss “liberalism” as a trend, as such.

Christian theologies should not be considered forms of decline, and emphasize the regenerative energies of liberals in the early part of the twentieth century as evidence of vitality within the church.

With at least two such periods of “renewal” in the Canadian past, liberalism within Christianity must be given more consideration in historiography as a force that acts across the decades. It does not appear to be, as Gauvreau and Christie contend, a temporary reaction to the problems of modernity around the turn of the twentieth century. It appears to be a result of the Problem of History, and a persistent influence upon belief in society. This study does not prove this point conclusively, however. There were many other secularizing forces during the 1960s, including the civil rights movements, women’s liberation, and television, to name a few. The popularity of liberal ideas about religion in the media might have been as much a response to their popularity among the populace as a cause. This study has merely conclusively demonstrated that the national media was heavily influenced by the Neoliberal movement, whatever the direct social ramifications of this might have been – although I would argue that any social ramifications would likely have been secularizing.

The B.C. newspapers do suggest that the content of religion in the media might correlate with local interest in religion. Comparative examination of provincial and community media, radio, paperbacks and likely television programming would be required to complete a study of the potential effects of the media and Neoliberalism on secularization. Studies like these, combined with demographic and oral history studies that investigate public beliefs, attitudes and practices - such as those of researchers like

Lynne Marks, Reginald Bibby and Tina Block - could yield some powerful insights as to the relationships between media and popular belief.

The most enticing question, of course, is how it is possible that liberal creeds of any era play a role in secularizing society, as many within the church fear and contend. Dean M. Kelley (*Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, 1972) offers some insight into the problem, arguing that “political correctness” appears to be a factor in secularization. He theorizes that popular expectations of religion in the 1960s were derived from secular liberal principles, and only ultimately helped to “water down” the traditional structure of mainstream churches, in concurrence with Marshall’s theory. Kelley argues that this liberalism even had the effect of increasing demand for a conservative type of Christianity. This explained the success of Evangelical churches in the 1960s, which gained adherents faster than the growth rate of the national population (of the U.S.), while the liberal mainline denominations suffered secularizing decreases.² The thrust of Kelley’s argument surrounds the evidence that Evangelical churches are faring better than “mainstream” ones. Kelley believes that liberal beliefs are less powerful than those of traditional Christianity, and he condensed what he perceived to be the destructive and secularizing elements of liberal religion into,

- “1. It is generally assumed that religious enterprises, if they want to succeed, will be reasonable, rational, courteous, responsible, restrained, and receptive to outside criticism; that is, they will want to preserve a good image in the world (as the world defines all these terms).
2. It is expected, moreover, that they will be democratic and gentle in their internal affairs (again, as the outside world defines these qualities).

² Kelley, Dean M., *Why Conservative Churches are Growing*, (New York: Harper & Row: 1972), p. viii. This is an excellent source for statistics on church membership in the U.S. before and during the 1960s. Comparing his data to Edwin Scott Gaustad’s *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) he shows that the increases in overall church membership into the 1960s reversed course suddenly. The major denominations in the U.S. then lost gains in members consistently each year throughout the decade. He looks at monies spent on construction, creation of youth groups, and other signs of growth, interpreting them as positive for evangelicals and negative for mainline churches.

3. They will also be responsive to the needs of men (as currently conceived), and will want to work cooperatively with other groups to meet those needs.
4. They will not let dogmatism, judgmental moralism, or obsessions with cultic purity stand in the way of such cooperation and service.”

After reviewing these qualities, Kelly decides:

*“These expectations are a recipe for the failure of the religious enterprise, and arise from a mistaken view of what success in religion is and how it should be fostered and measured.”*³

This is perhaps the kind of “watered down” religion to which Cook and Marshall refer. Kelley’s proof that liberalism is secularizing lay in his evidence that Evangelical creeds are faring better than mainline ones; he does not have a deeper explanation. Kelley believes that “human beings cannot live without trying to make sense of their experience, to find the meaning in it”.⁴ Liberal beliefs are insufficient, as they are founded in a premise which states that nothing can be known for certain about God. Basically, there are those who *want* religion, for its own sake, as opposed to social consensus, and Kelley argues that these are the only true “believers”.

Christie and Gauvreau, in denying that the Social Gospel constituted decline, fail to take stock of many issues raised in this paper, such as the Social Gospel’s origins among liberal thinkers like Ritschl and Rauschenbusch in the mid-1800s, who also played a role in the growth of liberal theology around the world.⁵ In arguing that traditional beliefs are “overly intellectual,” Christie and Gauvreau also ignore one of the most compelling aspects of Christianity, its apologetics, which have attracted many intelligent believers over the years, until the advent of mass information and science

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

⁵ See Salem Bland’s *New Christianity*, as discussed in Chapter 2. *Full-Orbed* specifically affirms that the Social Gospel was not inspired by “liberalization,” as it was grounded in the doctrine of sin and salvation (p. 4). They do not discuss the importance of supernaturalism in religion.

possibly began to claim the curiosity in society once reserved for philosophy. The accusation that scripture serves no purpose other than to lend authority to institutions which merely seek to preserve their authority rather boldly dismisses any inherent value in theology. The apologetics of Christianity were strong enough to convert people like C.S. Lewis, who found analysis of the deeper mysteries of humanity's emotional nature within the framework of sin and grace not only rewarding, but enlightening. It may be that such intellectual ruminations provide the kind of support that belief systems require.

Christie, Gauvreau, and liberal theologians might also overestimate the attractiveness of liberal ideas to Christians. No religion has been completely won over by the claims of such thinkers, whose ideas begin with an attack on the religious premise itself, a result of the need to challenge Christianity's religious/superstitious claims to authority in the revelation of scripture, which Christians use to perpetuate the claims of their faith. As Coleman and Kelley point out, in many circles, there has been a conservative reaction to liberalism in Christianity since the 1960s, even challenging the premises of historical investigation.⁶ Robinson himself began to lose his Neoliberal fervour into the 1970s, going so far as to undertake the defense of certain traditional Christian beliefs from liberal debunking.⁷

If Neoliberalism failed to convert traditional Christians, it might have had something to do with its lack of a discernable and coherent foundation of belief from

⁶ Coleman, p. 12.

⁷ Ibid. For example, in his 1976 book *Reading the New Testament*, Robinson reaffirms that Paul wrote all of own letters, and that John wrote the 4th gospel, which are claims of the Bible that have been questioned by historical investigation. Cox also admits that "In retrospect, of course, it is easy to see that human religiosity is a much more persistent quality than Bonhoeffer thought it was," meaning that Bonhoeffer's prediction of an impending "non-religious" age (and therefore Christianity's desperate need to accommodate this modernity, or perish) was incorrect. "The Secular city 25 Years Later," *The Christian Century*, 7 November, 1990, pp. 1025-1029. Obtained from the website, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=206>.

which a “believer” could draw some kind of metaphysical certainty. The authors in the mass media during the 1960s offered any number of alternative beliefs to Christians, which any “good Christian” might well have considered to be tests of faith rather than viable substitutes. The variety in the propositions of Neoliberal writers probably did little to establish it in the minds of Christians as a true alternative conviction, nor was Neoliberalism sensitive to any number of the virtues that enthusiasts of traditional Christianity might value. Seen like this, liberalism stands inimically opposed to conservative belief, which seeks solace in the literal words of the Bible, and is currently represented by Evangelicalism in English Protestant Canada. Meanwhile, Neoliberalism’s challenges to traditional Christianity in the media may have helped to legitimate unbelief in Canada to the point where Christianity was no longer interesting to the media, which finally relegated Christianity to an obscure existence on the periphery of mass consciousness by the end of the 1960s.⁸

This raises a further question; how is it that Neoliberalism could have been unconvincing to Christians, but secularizing in its effects? The answer probably lies once again in its implicit theoretical foundations. Neoliberalism was created for one purpose: to dismantle the traditional and superstitious foundations of Christianity. It did not offer a viable substitute, save for vague formulas involving “continuing revelation” and “love”. The fact that in Canada, all but one of the major journalists who extolled the virtues of Neoliberalism were of secular vocation, and the fact that the two best-selling Canadian works of theology of the decade were both written by the same cadre of journalists (as opposed to theologians – although the works had been commissioned by the United and

⁸ Stackhouse, “Who Whom: Evangelicalism and Canadian Society”, in George Rawlyk’s (ed.) *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), p. 67. Stackhouse confirms that Evangelicals have disappeared from the mass media in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Anglican churches) must itself be an indication of something unusual about the theology of Neoliberalism and the reasons for its presence within the mass media. It was a “negative” philosophy – its “belief” was not really a belief at all, but a belief that outdated and prejudiced doctrines had to be changed. The widespread criticism of Christianity in the media, inspired by Neoliberalism, would therefore likely have reinforced other secularizing tendencies of the decade, as opposed to inaugurating a new era of believable, “religionless Christianity”.

Is liberalism equivalent to decline in Christianity? Is the Problem of History within theological circles merely the sharpened edge of the lathe of secularization? This thesis does not presume to answer this riddle, only point out that its consideration holds more possibilities for theories of secularization than Canadian historiography has yet explored.

Appendix A

A Brief Look at Evangelicals.

Evangelicals are worthy of note in a discussion of secularization as a result of their resistance to liberal and Neoliberal ideas, which some perceive to be secularizing forces within Christianity. John Stackhouse demonstrates that since the 1980s, Evangelicals have exhibited strong signs of renewal, funding two of Canada's top three seminaries (Regent College in Vancouver and Ontario Theological Seminary) and laying claim to the greatest number of theological students (by far).⁹ They have also sponsored more youth groups and enjoyed a virtual monopoly over Canadian religious broadcasting. Small Evangelical sects like the Christian Alliance and Brethren, consisting of roughly a tenth of a percent of the Canadian population, have generated more missionaries than Canada's dominant denominations (Anglican, Presbyterian and United) combined.

Stackhouse uses data from Dennis M. Oliver's research to indicate the strength of Evangelicalism relative to the other denominations. Oliver separates Christianity in Canada into two streams: the "believer's churches", or conservative sects (eg., Baptist, Mennonite, Evangelical) and "paedo-baptist" churches like the United, Anglican and Reformist. "Conservative" churches in his study were virtually identical with so-called Evangelical sects, and while the mainstream churches laid claim to the largest numbers of members, the total numbers for Sunday attendance in conservative sects was higher than that of the United Church. Furthermore, Christians appealing to the creed of Evangelicalism are also present among mainstream denominations, leading Oliver to believe that they constitute the dominant force in Canadian Protestantism. To this,

⁹ John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, p. 3..

Stackhouse adds Reginald Bibby's findings from his 1987 monograph, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*. Again dividing the Canadian landscape into "conservative" and otherwise, and comparing conservative sects to the United Church, Bibby confirms that Evangelical (equated with conservative) sects drew more people into church. "Believers" churches accounted for 10% of the Canadian population, and the United Church 20%. Meanwhile, 60% of conservative Christians and only 13% of United church members attended church weekly, meaning that conservative sects actually had a higher Sabbath attendance rate than Canada's most popular Protestant church. At most, Stackhouse believes that Evangelicals currently represent 15% of the Canadian public.¹⁰

Coleman believes Evangelicals provided for a segment of the religious market that demanded 1) "a living faith in a personal God and Saviour, 2) a vital witness to Jesus, and 3) deep concern for biblical and orthodox Christianity."¹¹ In the Canadian context, John Stackhouse agrees, outlining the core principles of Evangelicalism, which he describes an archetypal order of religious worship that can be adopted by most any willing Protestant sect:

- 1) Evangelicalism believes in the Good News: Jesus died on the cross, and was reborn so that humanity might be saved.
- 2) It maintains the sanctity of the Word of the Bible.
- 3) It believes in Personal Transformation, which comes from a personal and intimate relationship with God that is necessary for spiritual growth and maturity.

¹⁰ Stackhouse, "Who Whom: Evangelicalism and Canadian Society", p. 69. Stackhouse also argues that while Evangelicalism appears to be doing well, it has retreated into an isolationist mode. Canadian society no longer bears any marks of Evangelicalism, which had been characteristic of Canadian Christianity around the turn of the century, when Canadians "at the polls" almost universally claimed witness to Christ. Christianity is no longer a noticeable presence in the mass media, nor is it even a common topic in standard history texts or popular history magazines. *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 69. At least two histories of Canadian education from the 1970s, for example, barely broach the topic of religion: Wilson, Donald J., ed., *Canadian Education*, and Chaiton, Alf, ed., *Canadian Schools and Canadian Identity*, (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Ltd., 1977).

¹¹ Coleman, p. 45.

4) Followers are evangelists: they exist in the world to proclaim the Good News, and spread its message.¹²

Liberals and Evangelicals eye each other warily, observes Coleman. Liberals believe that the Evangelicals disregard the historical nature of faith, whittling it down to an individualistic experience, and are overly moral about many irrelevant issues (like abortion, for example).¹³ Evangelicals do not agree with liberals because of their skeptical stance on the personal qualities of God and the supernatural nature of revelation; they “confuse Christian action with humanism” and they reduce the transcendent to the profane. Liberals are often accused of being more interested in “fanning the fires of social unrest” than in reaching a real religious consensus, and of generating incomprehensible philosophy that is not as appealing to the average layperson as the simplicity of the Evangelical approach.¹⁴

Is it possible that one of these attitudes represents the future of Christianity, and the other its downfall? How is this possible? These will be important questions for future historians of religion.

¹² Stackhouse, John, "Who Whom: Evangelicalism and Canadian Society", p. 55. God is personal in Evangelicalism because God must be invited into the heart and home of a believer, in the form of a personality, creating a personal (and supernatural) relationship. Evangelical notions of seeking moral perfection through spiritualism follow a tradition of Christianity that is highly individualistic, and this was criticized by liberals as an unsatisfactory foundation for theology, which ought to concern itself with the good of the many. Evangelicalism often suffered from the stigma of not taking enough interest in the community as a result of being so involved in personal spiritualism and (by default) in the interests of the middle class. Evangelicals do not agree with this; at least one important book, Timothy L. Smith's *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-19th Century America* (1957), reasoned that a journey on the path of individual moral perfection did not necessarily preclude a concern for social ills.

¹³ Coleman, p. 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206. Says Marshall, "Theologians and liberal clergy may have known what they believed but they began to preach in ways that lacked the clarity and simplicity that many laypersons sought, perhaps making it difficult for them to respond to sermons with the same degree of conviction and assurance," "Canadian Historians," p. 79.

Appendix B

Works of theology and criticism cited within the Canadian media.

These readings were all mentioned within Canadian media during the 1960s. This list does not provide an accurate count of the number of appearances of these titles. Given the number of readings, some of which appeared a few times, but most of which only appeared once or twice, and given that few could be said to represent a traditional or evangelical point of view, the list makes its point without quantification. The works mentioned with any regularity or depth were dealt with directly in Chapter 2; these texts were mostly reviewed or mentioned only in passing. This list is meant to provide additional sources that might be included within a definition of Canadian mass media, as it relates to secularization.

- *A Dictionary of Angels*. A compellation of Jewish angels.
- Alitzer, A.J. *Nirvana and the Kingdom of God; Gospel of Christian Atheism*.
- Back, Rabbi Leo. *This People Israel; The Essence of Judaism*.
- Baum, Gregory. *Man Becoming*.
- Berger, Peter L. *A Rumour of Angels, The Noise of Solemn Assemblies, The Precarious Vision*.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.
- *The Bible Reader: An Interfaith Interpretation Of the Bible*.
- Boyd, Rev. Malcolm. *Are You Running with Me, Jesus?*
- Braaten, Carl. *The Future of God*.
- Caldwell, Erskine. *Deep South*.
- Culbertson, Jude and Patti Bard. *Games Christians Play*. A satire about Christian archetypes and stereotypes of the '60s.
- de Chardin, Pierre. *The Phenomenon of Man; The Future of Man*.
- de la Bedoyere, Michael, ed., *Objections to Roman Catholicism*.
- Dechanet, J.M. *Christian Yogi*.
- Dewar, Lindsay. *The Holy Spirit in Modern Thought*.
- Dewart, Leslie. *The Future of Belief*.
- *Dialogue*. This represents the first Mormon work of modern apologetics, designed to satisfy a more intellectual audience.
- Dunne, John S. *A Search for God in Time and Memory*.
- Eliade, Prof. Mircea. *Mephistopheles and the Androgyne*.
- Gale, Sir Richard. *Great Battles of Biblical History*.
- Gogarten, Freidrich. *The Secularization of History*.
- Greeley, Rev. Andrew M. *The Education of Catholic Americans*.
- Hales, E. E. Y. *Pope John and His Revolution*.
- Hamilton, William. *The New Essence of Christianity*; also, "Thursday's Child", an essay.
- Holloway, Phillip. *Christianity in Transition*.
- Kavanaugh, Rev. James. *A Modern Priest Looks at his Outdated Church*.
- Lynch, William. *Christ and Apollo*.
- Marty, Martin E. *The Second Chance for American Protestants*.

- Moltmann, Jurgen. *The Theology of Hope*.
- *The New Canadian Children's Catechism, The New Curriculum*. Sunday School text. Also mentioned with a Grade 4 religious textbook, *Traveling the Way*.
- Niebuhr, Richard. *Man's Nature and His Communities; The Nature and Destiny of Man*.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Revelation as History, Theology as History*.
- Pike, Bishop James A. *If This be Heresy; The Other Side; Faith of the Church; A Time for Christian Candour*.
- Ramsey, Paul. *Who Speaks for Church?* A protestant theologian.
- Renard, Rabbi Hubert. *The Automobilst and Christian Morality*.
- Robinson, A.T. *The New Reformation*.
- Rubenstein, Richard L. *The Religious Imagination; After Auschwitz*.
- Schonfield, Hugh. *The Authentic New Testament*.
- Simons, Bishop Francis of Indore. *Infallibility and the Evidence*. A progressive and influential Bishop who challenged the authority of Biblical word.
- *The Theory of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*.
- Towne, Anthony. *Excerpts from the Diaries of the Late God*. An ironic look at a deceased God's diary.
- Toynbee Arnold. *A Study of History*.
- Van Buren, Paul. *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*.
- von Harmack, Adolf. *The Essence of Christianity*.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *A Christian Natural Theology*.
- Zimmer, Rev. Layton P. *The Underground Church*.

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