

## THE STATE OF MAINLINE CHURCHES IN CANADA<sup>1</sup>

Reginald W. Bibby

Want to briefly discuss with you.

1. The old story
  2. The revised story
  3. The current story
- 

### I) THE OLD STORY : RELIGION IS IN DECLINE.

#### Predictions of Religion's Demise



**Emile Durkheim**



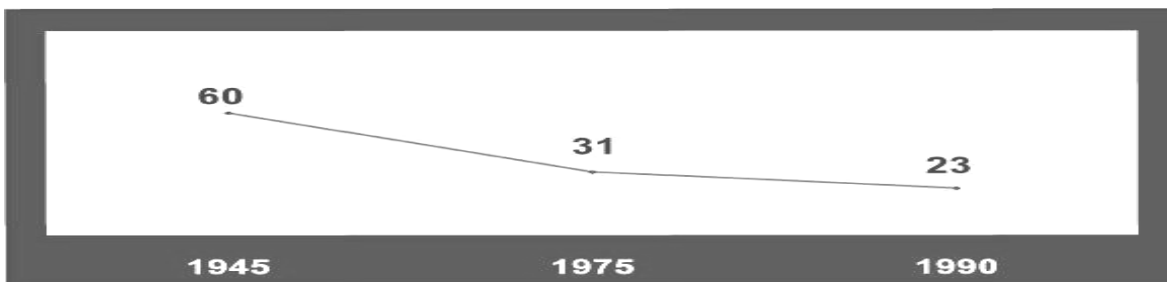
**Sigmund Freud**



**Karl Marx**

#### Religion's Fall

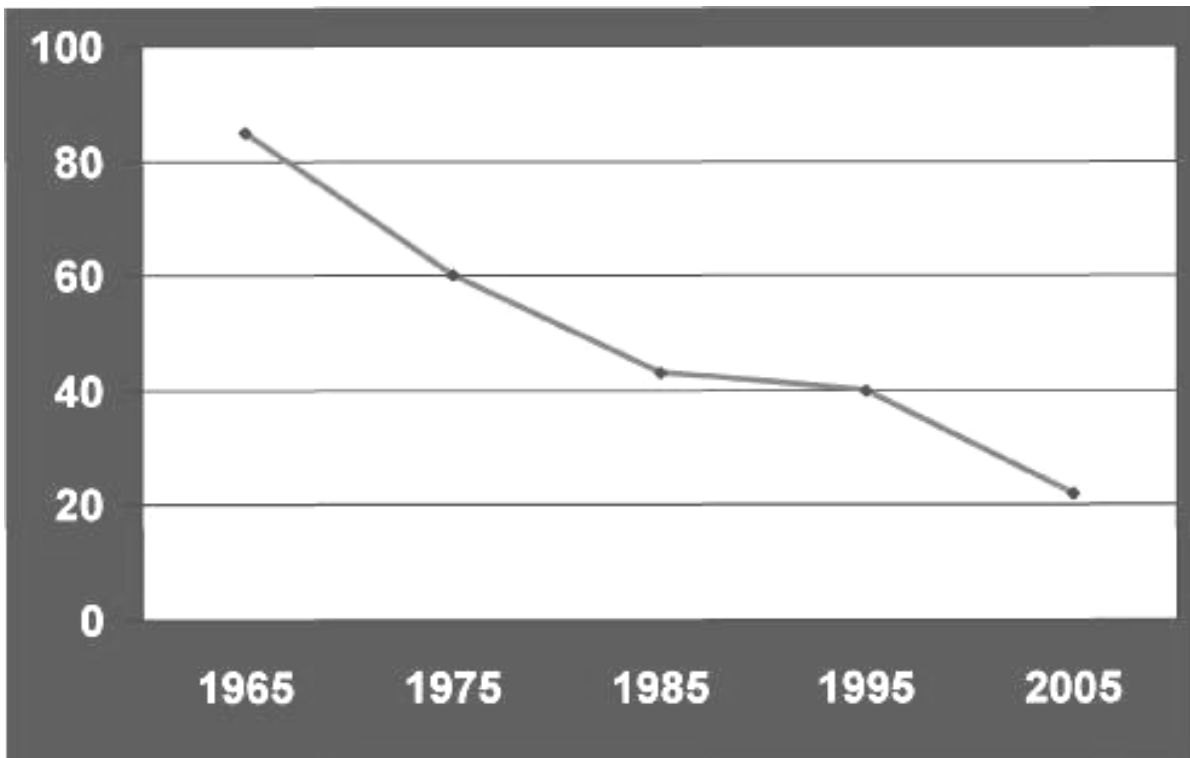
Weekly attendance: 1960-mid-90s



<sup>1</sup> This is a Powerpoint presentation

## The Net Quebec Situation

### Monthly-Plus Adult Attendance



### The Boomers

- Born between mid-1940s & mid-1960s:
  - average of 400,00 a year
  - 1981-2001: >50% of all 20-64-year-olds
- By 1966: oldest entering their 20s,
  - youngest in 1986
- Were at centre of participation drop-off
  - not temporary
  - lasted through end of the century

## II) THE REVISED STORY: RELIGION'S DEMISE WAS OVERSTATED.



*Secularization ≠ end of religion*

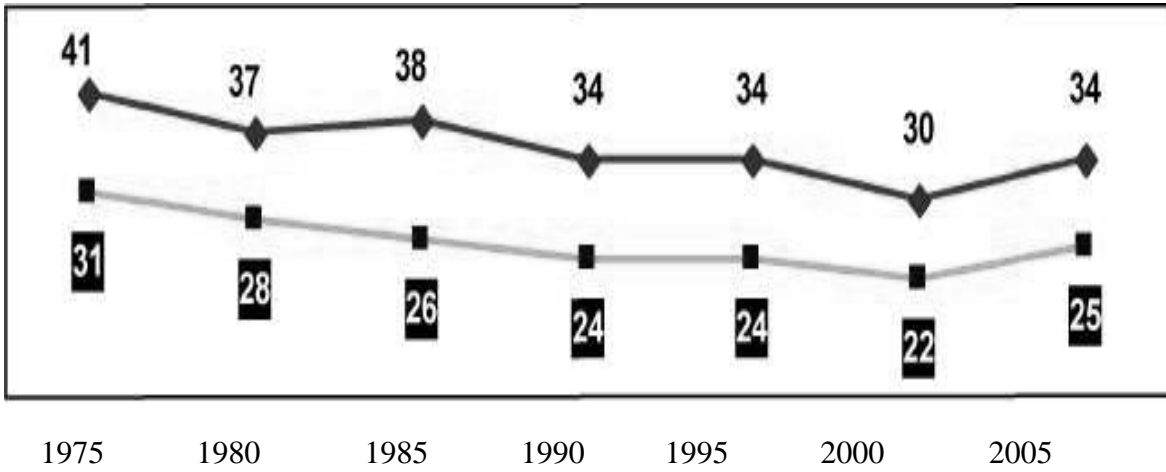
*Secularization stimulates revitalization*

### Canada's Ten Largest Groups

|     |                         |            |     |
|-----|-------------------------|------------|-----|
| 1.  | Roman Catholic          | 12,793,125 | 44% |
| 2.  | United Church           | 2,839,125  | 10% |
| 3.  | Anglican                | 2,035,495  | 7%  |
| 4.  | Christian (unspecified) | 780,450    | 3%  |
| 5.  | Baptist                 | 729,475    | 3%  |
| 6.  | Lutheran                | 606,590    | 2%  |
| 7.  | Muslim                  | 579,640    | 2%  |
| 8.  | Presbyterian            | 409,830    | 1%  |
| 9.  | Pentecostal             | 369,475    | 1%  |
| 10. | Jewish                  | 329,995    | 1%  |
| *   | No Religion             | 4,796,325  | 16% |

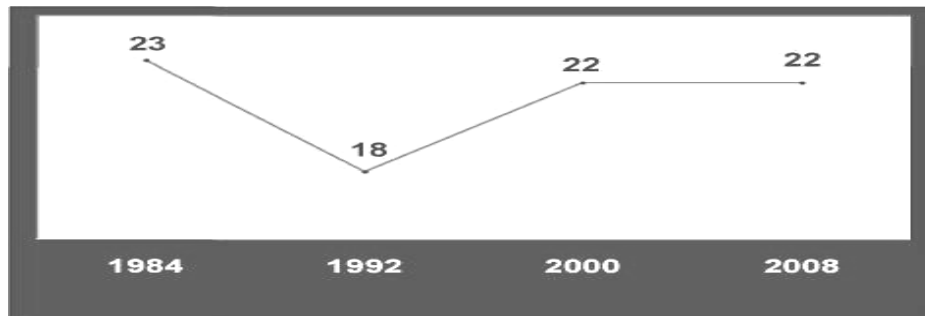
(Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census)

**Adult service attendance: 1975-2005**



▪ Weekly-Plus    ♦ Monthly-Plus

**Teenage Service attendance: 1984-2008**



## **Receptivity**

Among People Attending Less Than Once A Month

62% of adults  
40% of teenagers

Receptive to Greater Involvement IF They Can Find it to Be Worthwhile

They include...

75% of Catholic adults outside Quebec  
63% of Catholic adults in Quebec

as well as

51% of teenage Catholics outside Quebec  
41% of teenage Catholics in Quebec

## **III) The Current Story: Polarization and Its Effects.**

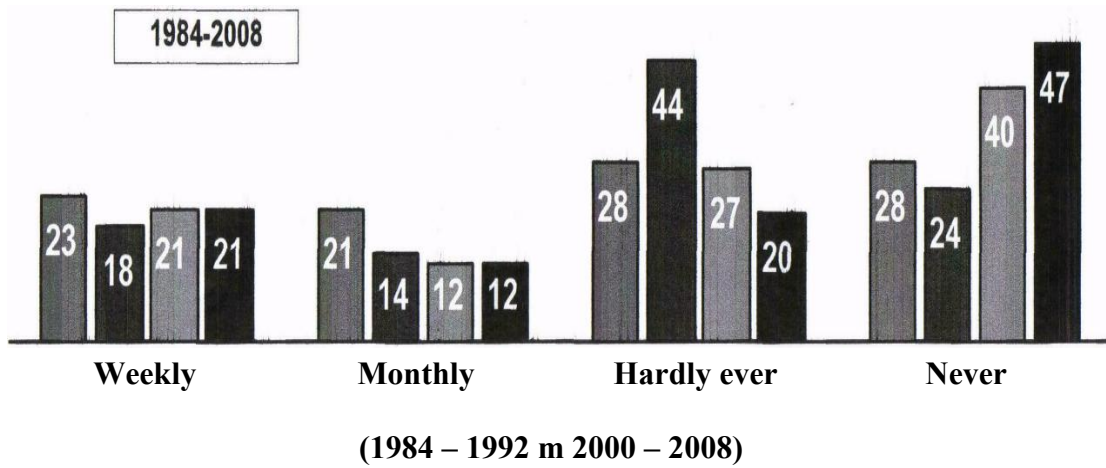
New book due out  
late summer, early  
fall of 2010

Religion in a Post-Religious and Pre-Spiritual  
Canada



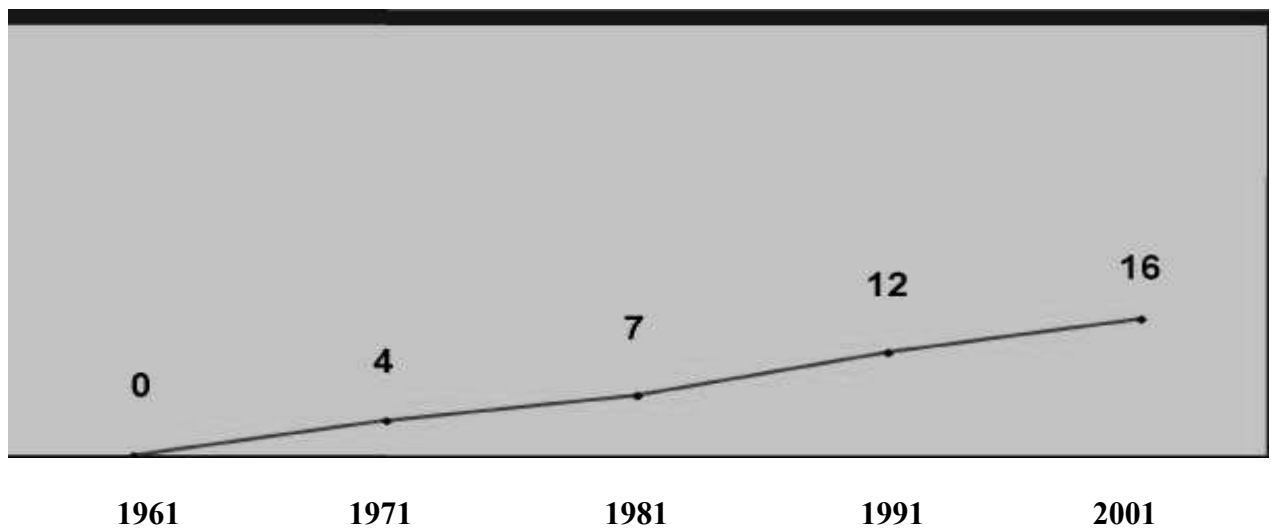
## Evidence of Polarization

### 1. Attendance



### 2. Identification

#### Adults With No Religion: 1961-2001



Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data.

### 3. Belief

#### Belief in God or a Higher Power: Adults & Teenagers, 1980s & Now (%)

|                         | ADULTS |      | TEENS |      |
|-------------------------|--------|------|-------|------|
|                         | 1985   | 2005 | 1984  | 2008 |
| Yes, I definitely do    | 61     | 49   | 54    | 37   |
| Yes, I think so         | 23     | 33   | 31    | 31   |
| No, I don't think so    | 10     | 11   | 9     | 16   |
| No, I definitely do not | 6      | 7    | 6     | 16   |

#### Life After God.

#### Values of Theists and Atheists: Adults, 2005 (Indicating They View as "Very Important")

|                    | Nationally | Theists | Atheists |
|--------------------|------------|---------|----------|
| Honesty            | 92%        | 94      | 89       |
| Kindness           | 83         | 88      | 75       |
| Being loved        | 82         | 86      | 70       |
| Courtesy           | 78         | 81      | 71       |
| Concern for others | 75         | 82      | 63       |
| Forgiveness        | 75         | 84      | 52       |
| Politeness         | 74         | 77      | 65       |
| Friendliness       | 73         | 79      | 66       |
| Patience           | 61         | 72      | 39       |
| Generosity         | 55         | 67      | 37       |

Source: Project Canada Survey Series, reginaldbibby.com

**Desire for Religious Rites of Passage in the Future: 1987-2008**

|                         | <b>1987</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2008</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Wedding ceremony</b> | 94          | 89          | 84          |
| Outside Quebec          | 94          | 90          | 86          |
| Quebec                  | 95          | 85          | 77          |
| <b>Funeral</b>          | 93          | 86          | 83          |
| Outside Quebec          | 93          | 86          | 83          |
| Quebec                  | 94          | 85          | 81          |
| <b>Birth-related</b>    | 85          | 70          | 65          |
| Outside Quebec          | 83          | 67          | 62          |
| Quebec                  | 94          | 81          | 74          |

**Receptivity to Greater Involvement**

"I'd be open to more involvement with religious groups  
 if I found it to be worthwhile"

|                                | <b>&lt; Monthly</b> | <b>Monthly +</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| <b>Nationally</b>              | 38%                 | 65               |
| Catholic: Outside Quebec       | 55                  | 67               |
| Catholic: Quebec               | 30                  | 65               |
| <b>Conservative Protestant</b> | 35                  | 65               |
| <b>Mainline Protestant</b>     | 47                  | 62               |
| <b>Other Faith</b>             | 51                  | 69               |
| <b>No Religion</b>             | 28                  | 53               |

## Research on the Less-Involved

- ❖ Not looking for churches - looking for ministry Open to churches that touch their lives
- ❖ Worth their time, resources
- ❖ Three key areas:
  1. Spirituality
  2. Personal Needs
  3. Relationships
- ❖ Perhaps Rodney Stark is right...that there is always a market for religion

"People continue to have needs that only  
the gods Can Satisfy"  
Rodney Stark

- ❖ In good company...

"Our souls are restless until they find their rest in Thee"

St. Augustine



"All of us have "a fundamental disease" that leaves us  
forever restless, dissatisfied, frustrated, and aching"

Ron Rolheiser



#### IV) CONCLUSION

- ❖ All this data = religion in Canada not what it used to be a new picture & new story is emerging
- ❖ Will we see Canada & Canadians say goodbye to God?
- ❖ Will we see new generations who live life "beyond the gods"?
- ❖ Or will we find people empty, longing for, needing God?
- ❖ Will life "beyond the gods" be short-lived?
- ❖ Those who value faith faced with a great opportunity... & a great responsibility... to respond ...

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Further details on this material and  
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[reginaldbibby.com](http://reginaldbibby.com).