



ULBS

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SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS
The History of Christianity in Canada

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Key words: Canada, Christianity, secularization, missionaries, first nations, religious currents, interfaith.

The doctoral thesis has 353 pages and comprises four large chapters: In the first chapter I dealt with the Beginnings of Christianity on the Canadian soil of the French-speaking Colonies. Here I exposed the beginnings of Christianity from 1659 to 1700, delving into the decline of the missionary church, the English conquest and its aftermath, popular religion and cultural diversity, the relationship with civil authorities, the challenges of Anglicanism and liberalism, clerical consolidation, Protestantism and revolution. We continued with the period 1840 to 1820 where we talked about the most important religious changes that took place. An important moment was also the period from 1920 to 1960, where the rise of the interventionist state took place.

In the second chapter I dealt with the English-speaking colonies, where I exposed their origins, trends in religious life, growth and expansion between the years 1815 and 1840 followed by the period 1854-1914 when new religious movements and confessions took place but also the first world war and its consequences, religious currents, interdenominational cooperation and Church unity.

In the third part of the doctoral thesis, I highlighted some of the most important church figures in Canada, treated in an interfaith manner. Personalities such as St. Francois de Montmorency-Laval, Lazar Puhalo, Gregory Baum, Clark Pinnock, Douglas John Hall, John Stinca, as well as others who left a deep mark on the history of Canadian Christianity.

In the last chapter I made an update synthesis of the main Christian denominations in Canada, the Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism, the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church and the Canadian Baptists, also emphasizing secularization and change the religious composition of Canada.

The purpose of this paper is to tell the "inner story" of Christianity in Canada in a way that complements the "outer story" summarized in the works of H.H. Walsh, John Moir, and John Webster Grant. I paid close attention to popular religion and the relationship between religion and social realities such as gender, ethnicity, and class.

Patterns of religious practice among the general population and the social dimensions of religious experience emerged to take their place alongside traditional subjects such as the history of missions, church-state relations, and the development of ecclesiastical institutions. Valuable contributions were made to the interpretation of social movements, such as the temperance crusades, which had deep roots in religion. Popular piety, including the role of voluntary associations in religious life, was a major research focus.

I also made efforts to assess the degree of lay conformity or non-conformity with clerical standards of observance at different stages of Canadian history. Patterns of religious affiliation and the role of religion in community life have been included as a prominent theme in major urban histories. Biographies retained a prominent place, but increasingly embraced the role of religion in the private and family life as well as the public life of their subjects.

A great deal of important work has appeared on broad religious movements such as the revivalist tradition in Canada, with the result that we now have a fuller and more nuanced understanding of such subjects. The place of women in the life of the church and the place of religion in women's lives emerged as a major topic of inquiry. The study of religion has also been linked to material culture, as we have come to appreciate that church architecture and other forms

of symbolic expression provide both a window into the inner spiritual life of believers and a testimony to the place of Christianity in Canada's cultural landscape.

Christianity among First Nations was another area of major concern, but unlike other earlier work, recent scholarship has attempted to see this story from the perspective of native converts as well as white missionaries. At the same time, First Nations resistance to proselytizing and assimilation began to receive the serious attention it deserved.

The present work is therefore an attempt to fill a major gap by providing an up-to-date and comprehensive history of Christianity in Canada in one work that is concise yet broad enough to be of interest to readers. The work was planned from the beginning to be an integrated history, tracing the institutional development of the main churches in Canada, each section focusing on five major topics: secular religious practice and perspective; the relations between the church and the state; missionaries and potential converts; interfaith relations; and the impact of Christianity on Canadian society and culture. I sought to ensure unity and consistency by focusing on these common themes.

The work is divided along linguistic rather than regional or denominational lines. Although it tries to take account of regional and denominational diversity, it deliberately seeks a high level of generalization by emphasizing the common experience of the churches. From a current point of view, the elements of religious consensus and historical points of convergence stand out even more clearly than two decades ago; for even in the midst of rivalry and conflict, the churches agreed more with each other than any of them could agree with the increasingly secular assumptions of contemporary Canadian culture.

In the periodization of the material, I prioritized events that had a direct and substantial influence on religious life. Sometimes, as in the case of the British conquest of Canada, the two converge, but in most cases they do not. For example, I have identified the flowering of the Ultramontane revival in French Canada (around 1840) and the final dissolution of the Church of England in English Canada (1854) as more fundamental turning points for the churches than the Confederation (1867). Chronologically, I followed the story in detail from the era of European exploration in the late 15th century to the period around the 1960s, when the decline in participation in organized religion became unmistakable. For the years 1960 to the present, where

the proximity of events makes precise historical analysis difficult, the final chapter offers a shorter, more impressionistic reflection on the major developments.

Canada as a nation is becoming increasingly religiously diverse, particularly in large urban centers such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, where minority groups and new immigrants are congregating and represent growth in most religious groups. Two significant trends become clear when the current religious landscape is examined closely. One is the loss of "secularized" Canadians as active and regular participants in the churches and denominations in which they grew up, which were largely Christian, while these churches remain a part of Canadians' cultural identity. The other is the growing presence of ethnically diverse immigration in the country's religious fabric.

It would be rash to predict the future of organized Christianity in Canada. The trend of declining church membership and attendance has continued apace and now appears to be affecting even conservative Protestant denominations. But the influence of the churches has fluctuated in the past and may rise and fall again. One fundamental change, however, seems to be irrevocable. The defining reality of contemporary Canadian society is pluralism, which includes not only cultural, racial and religious diversity, but also the recognition of tolerance of different beliefs and customs as a core social value. Whatever the fortunes of Christian churches, they must live in a framework that excludes the kind of cultural authority they once enjoyed.