

Religious Polarizaation

*Clarifying the Impact of Secularization and
Deseccularization in Canada and Elsewhere*



Reginald W. Bibby

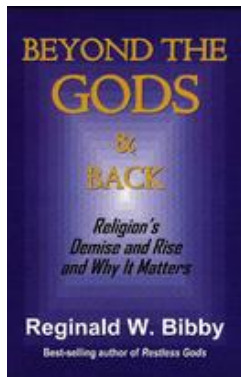
Toronto - May 30, 2017

ABSTRACT

As organized religion in Canada experienced significant declines in participation in the post-1960s, most observers interpreted what was happening through the eyes of the secularization thesis. However, since approximately the turn of the century, accelerated immigration from pro-religious settings has been contributing to a measure of religious resurgence, particularly in the case of Catholicism, Islam, and evangelical Protestantism. This influx is contributing to pronounced religious variations, where large segments of the population are variously embracing religion, rejecting religion, and opting for a “middle” position. Such a situation can best be understood by using a religious polarization framework. It highlights the fact that in every society and every conceivable group setting – national, regional, local, and immediate – some people are religious and some people are not, with others in between. In the context of polarization, secularization and desecularization tendencies are always at work, having an impact on the inclination of people to be “pro religious,” “no religious,” or opt for a “low religious” position. So understood, polarization may seem like a fairly prosaic and axiomatic framework. But it has considerable explanatory value in understanding past, present, and future religious trends in Canada and elsewhere. It consequently warrants more usage.



Background





Have been at this a long time...





...Lots of data...



* 8 Adult... 1975 → 2015: > 15,000

* 4 Teen.... 1984 → 2008: > 15,000

- Ongoing surveys: Angus Reid



Statistics
Canada

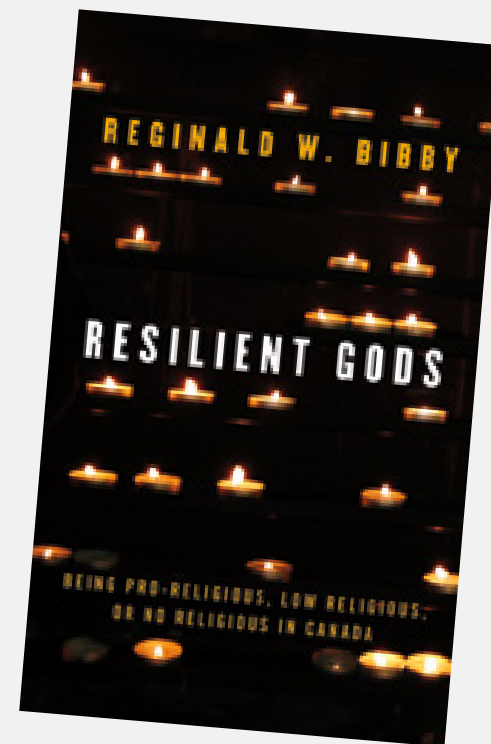
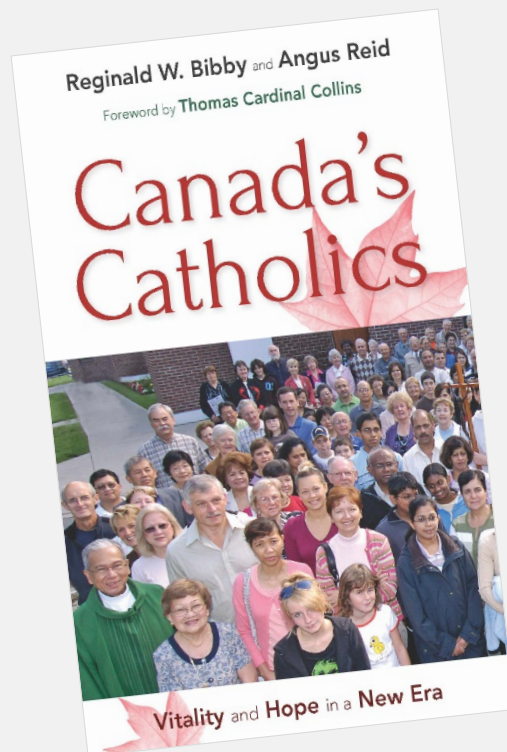
Statistique
Canada



...Lots of ideas...

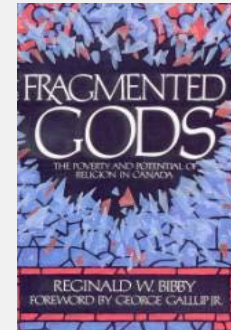
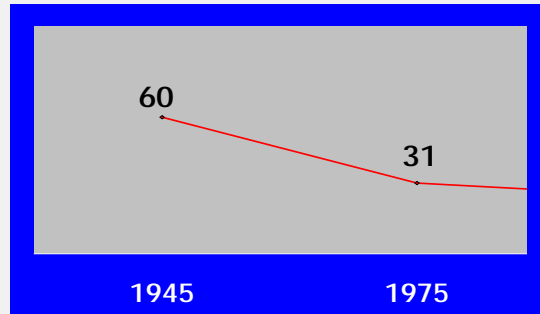


- *Some new and NB things to say*



I think I have
finally figured things out...

1980s



1. The Secularization Argument

Predictions of Religion's Demise

Seemingly Accurate

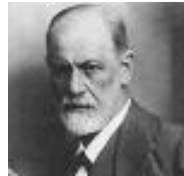
- Emile Durkheim



- Bryan Wilson



- Sigmund Freud



- Karel Dobbelaere



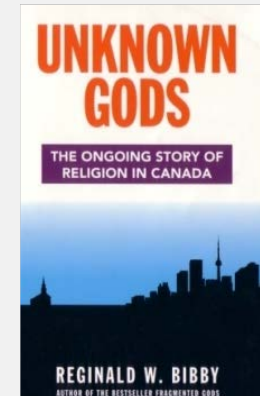
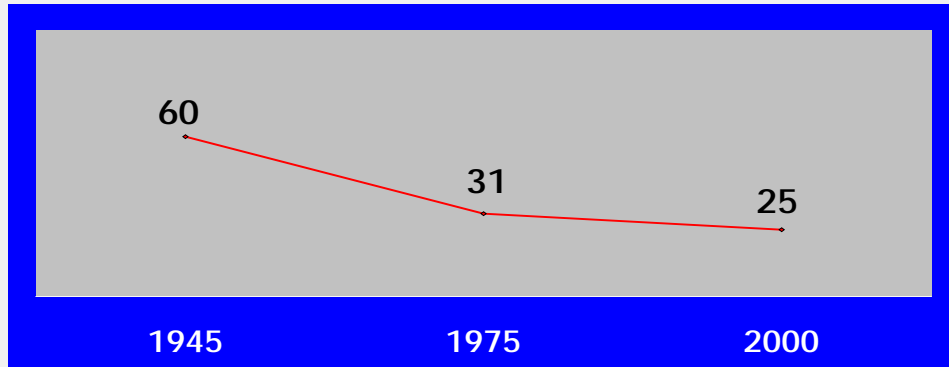
- Karl Marx



- Steve Bruce

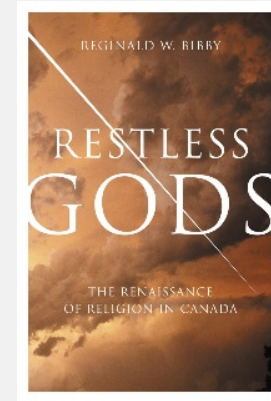
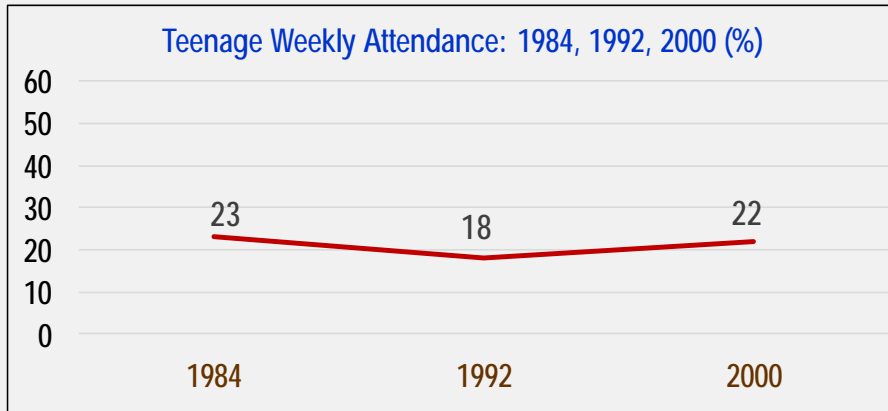


1990s



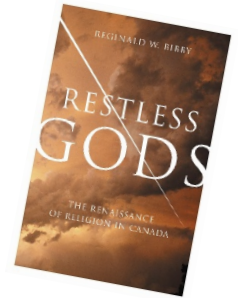
1. The Secularization Argument

2000



2. The Revitalization Argument

- What makes life interesting is when unexpected occurs



- Began to wonder...modest resurgence

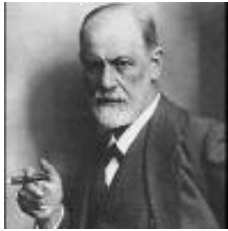
The Renaissance of Religion in Canada



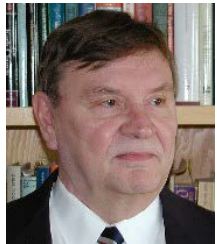
?

- Influenced considerably by





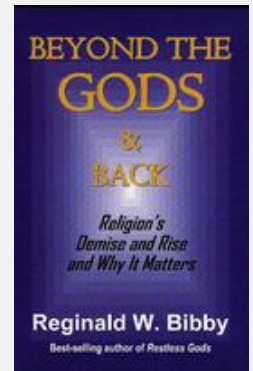
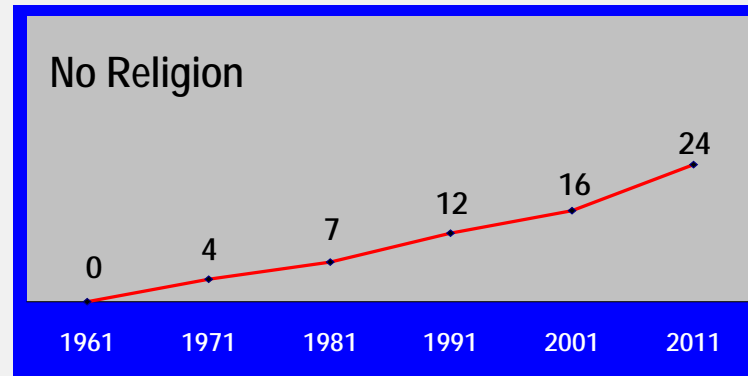
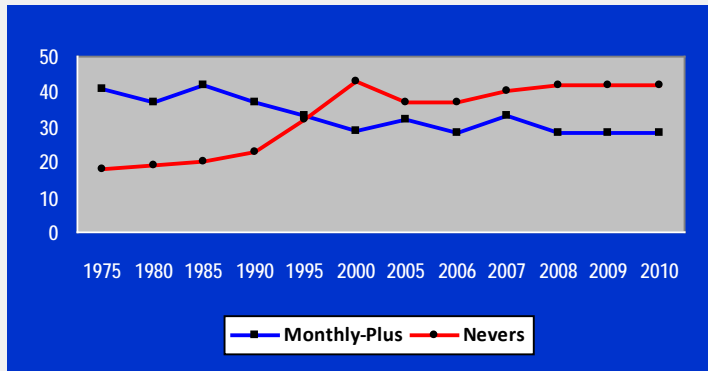
Linear & Unlimited
Secularization



Inevitable & Increasing
Revitalization



2010



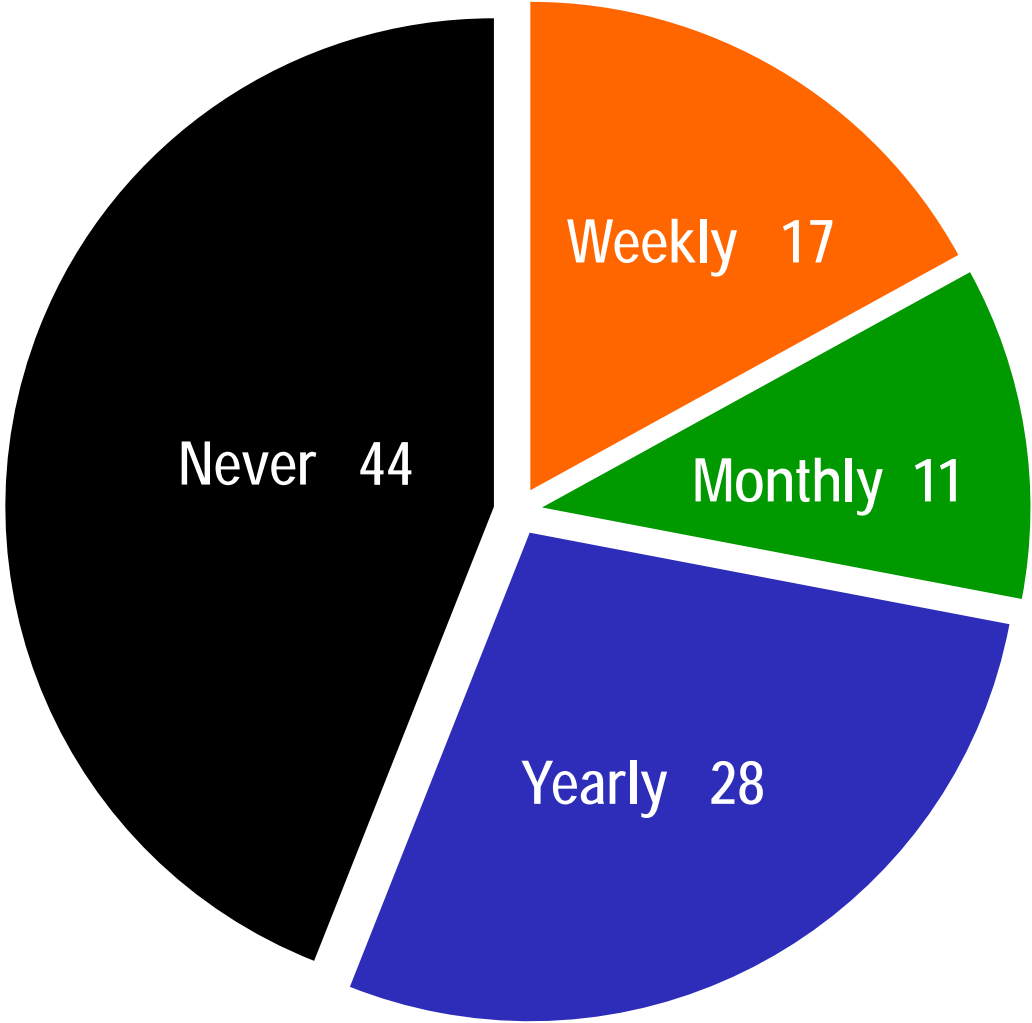
3. The Polarization Argument



The Numbers Story: 2011

12,810,705	Roman Catholic
2,007,610	United
1,631,845	Anglican
1,053,945	Muslim
635,840	Baptist
550,690	Christian Orthodox
497,965	Hindu
478,705	Pentecostal
478,185	Lutheran
472,385	Presbyterian
3,036,780	Other Christian
454,965	Sikh
366,830	Buddhist
329,495	Jewish
64,935	Aboriginal Spirituality
7,850,605	No Religion

Canadian Service Attendance: 2012



Source: General Social Survey 2012

*With all this in mind, around 2010,
yours truly had a mild 2-point epiphany:*

*First, clearly some Canadians were
embracing religion,
and an increasing number rejecting it,
with the remainder somewhere in the middle.*

*Second, that pattern is found everywhere
on the planet.*

Table 2. Salience, Identification, Belief, and Attendance: Select Countries

	<i>Salience</i>	<i>ID</i>	<i>Belief</i>	<i>Attend</i>
Thailand	97%	99	98	80
Nigeria	96	99	99	89
Philippines	96	99	99	64
Saudi Arabia	94	99	99	68
Pakistan	92	99	99	56
Ethiopia	90	99	99	78
India	90	99	99	73
Dominican Republic	87	99	97	53
Brazil	87	93	97	49
Iraq	86	99	99	53
South Africa	85	84	99	57
Iran	83	99	99	45
El Salvador	83	83	98	68
Mexico	73	83	97	60
Italy	72	83	82	49
Greece	71	97	96	29
Poland	69	92	96	62
UNITED STATES	65	84	88	43
Ireland	54	94	96	56
Israel	51	96	95	39
Spain	49	84	92	39
Ukraine	46	58	85	23
Korea, Republic of	43	63	98	35
CANADA	41	84	85	26
Germany	40	75	77	30
Cuba	34	90	75	20
Russia	34	52	91	15
New Zealand	33	74	79	27
Netherlands	33	58	74	26
Australia	32	81	83	23
France	30	57	80	20
Finland	29	85	91	12
United Kingdom	27	77	86	20
Hong Kong	24	85	56	19
Japan	24	48	87	38
Czech Republic	24	41	57	15
Sweden	17	75	70	17
China	—	7	60	9

Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *Beyond the Gods & Back* 2011: 59.

At any point in time, a society's inclination to embrace or reject religion will vary, depending on pro-religion and no-religion factors that are organizational and cultural in nature.

But the proclivity to opt for religion will always co-exist with the proclivity to reject it, with noteworthy numbers of people comprising something of an ambivalent middle.

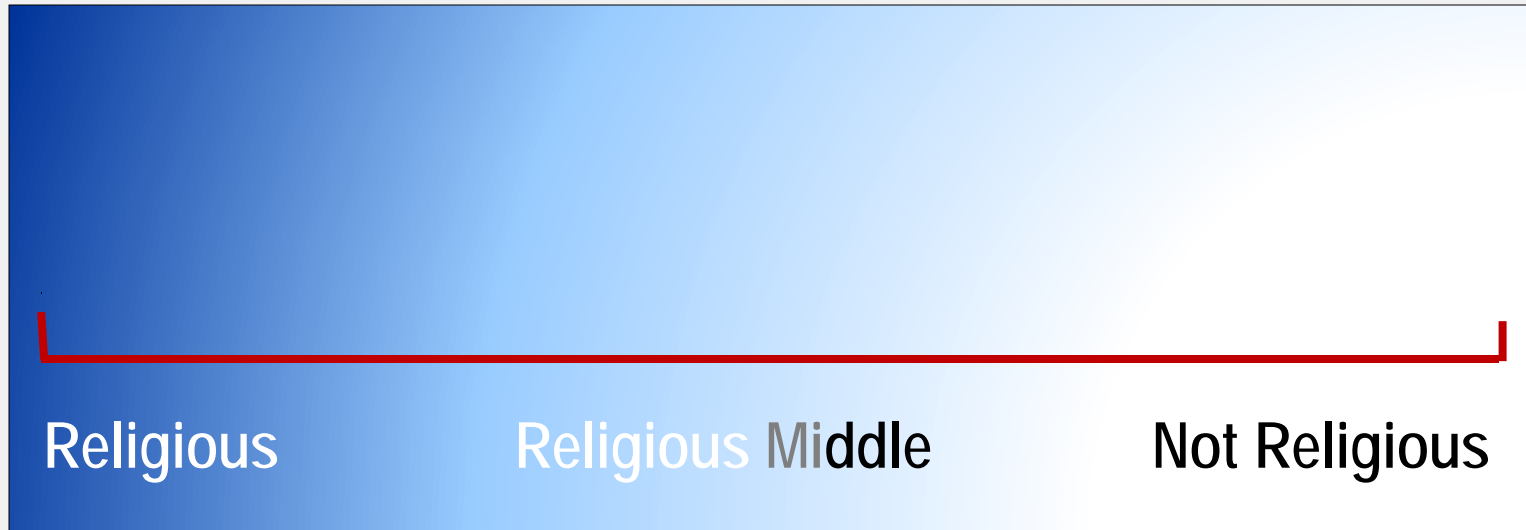
Not this...

Religious \longrightarrow Not Religious

But this...

Religious \longleftarrow Not Religious

The Polarization Continuum



Source: Reginald W. Bibby, *Beyond the Gods & Back*, 2011:56.

To sum up and clarify things...

It's not a matter of our buying into secularization or rejuvenation ("deseccularization").

Rather, polarization is the backdrop for understanding the dynamic, ongoing inclinations for secularization or deseccularization trends to be taking place.

Secularization

Deseccularization



Pro-Religious

Religious Middle

No Religious

Seen in the context of polarization...

hardly surprising people have been observing both secularization and desecularization patterns.

One is not accurate and the other inaccurate.

Both reflect activity on a dynamic, ever-changing polarization continuum.

*Around the world,
in every country,
and within regions within each country,
people variously
embrace religion,
reject religion,
or are ambivalent toward religion.*

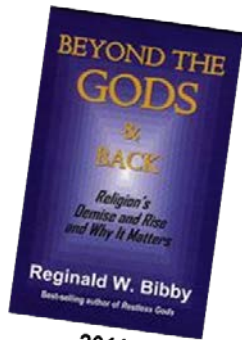
*“Everywhere”
includes Canada,
various regions and cities...
& the people in this room.*

*What we want to watch closely
are the factors
that are influencing
the inclination of societies
to lean in the direction of
pro-religion and no religion.*

These Days



**An Ongoing Exploration of
Polarization**



2011

2011: posed polarization

- *secondary analyses of data*
- *no middle*



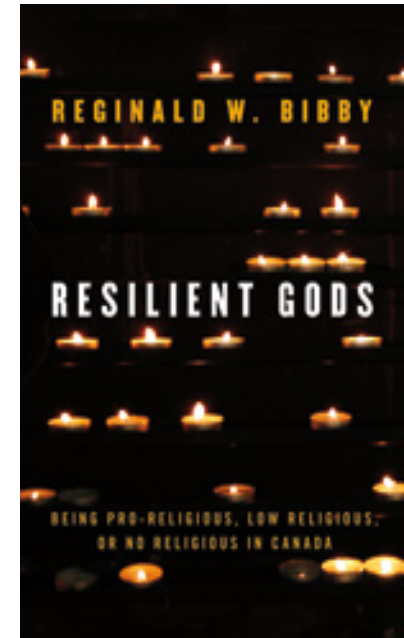
An Important New Survey: March 2015

- partnered with Angus Reid
- **3,041 participants**
- explicitly explored polarization
- **examined a variety of its correlates**
- unlike 2011: included "The Middle"

Clarifies Polarization

Correlates...*so what?*

- (1) personal well-being
- (2) social well-being
- (3) spirituality
- (4) death



Some people say Canadians variously

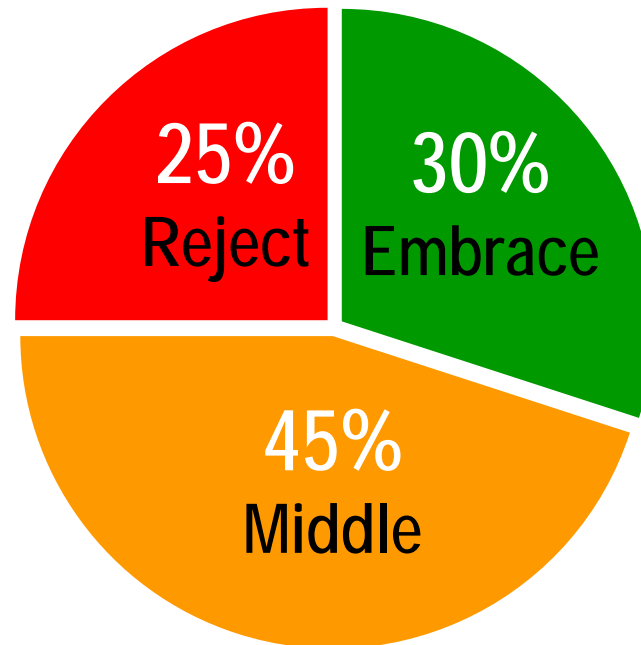
(1) embrace religion, (2) reject religion, or

(3) are somewhere in between the two extremes.



Where would you be tend to locate yourself ?

The three response options were: (1) *I am inclined to embrace religion*, (2) *I am inclined to reject religion*, and (3) *I am somewhere in between*.

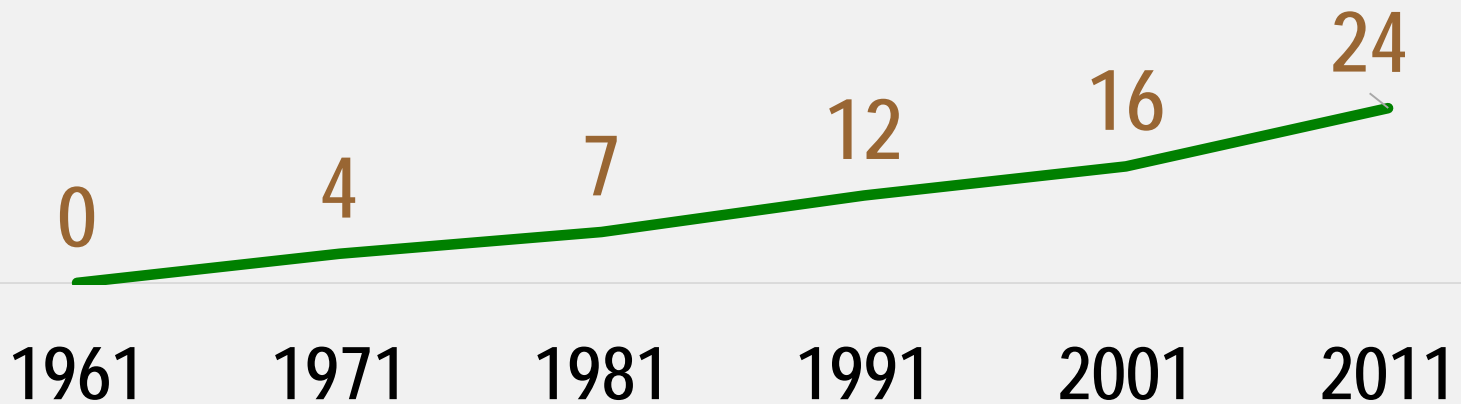


Embrace: The Pro-Faith

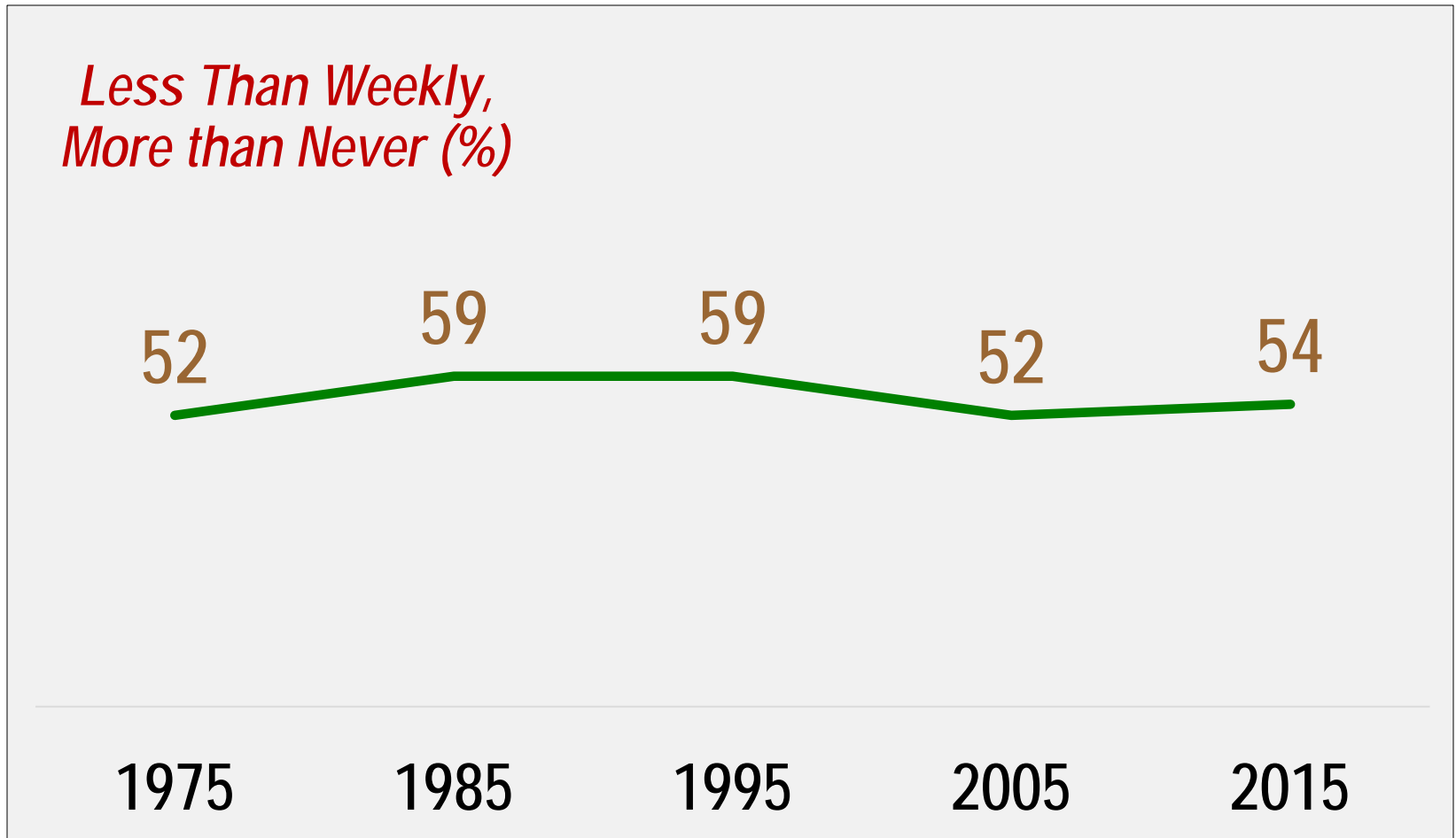
- **1985:** **45%** “Religiously Committed”
- **2015:** **30%** “Embracing religion”

Reject: The No Faith

*Adults with No Religion:
1961-2011 (%)*



The Religious Middle: The Low-Faith



***What we want to watch closely
are the factors
that are influencing
the inclination of societies
to lean in the direction of
pro-religion and no religion.***

Outside the Tent

From the Introduction

The World is Coming

...TO AN END



From the Introduction

The World is Coming

Canadian academics and religious leaders spend endless hours, ink and computer bytes talking and writing about whether or not the religious sky is falling in this country.

In the process, we have been like kids huddled in a tent, wondering whether or not there is a leak in the canvass. In the meantime, a major tornado is about to land. Or, conversely, the beautiful weather outside makes it – yes – “an academic argument” as to whether or not the little pin-prick in the tent actually matters.

These days, a global religious revival of tsunami proportions is taking place. Christianity, Islam, and many other major and minor religions are experiencing explosive growth.

What we do in the tent matters. But what is happening in the world around the tent matters much more.

Newsflash!



RELIGION MAKING A GLOBAL COMEBACK

Christianity & Islam the fastest growing religions

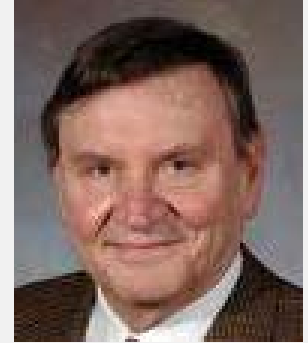
- "Christianity on its biggest roll in its 2,000 year history
 - its numbers & market share: at all-time highs
- 1950-2000: Roman Catholics grew from 500 million to over 1 billion
 - 1900-2000: Pentecostals: from zero to half a billion
- key growth: Africa, Asia, Latin America
 - by 2050: could be 220 million Christians in China – 15% of pop

Size & Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups: 2010-2050

	% World 2010	2010 Pop (Millions)	% World 2050	2050 Pop (Millions)	Growth 2010-50
WORLD	---	6.896	---	9.307	2.411
Christians	31	2.168	31	2.918	750
Muslims	23	1.600	30	2.761	1.162
No Religion	16	1.131	13	1.230	99
Hindu	15	1.032	15	1.384	352
Buddhists	7	488	5	486	-1.5
Jews	.2	14	.2	16	2

Source: Pew Research Center, *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050*. 2015.

“Contrary to the constant predictions that religion is doomed, there is abundant evidence of an ongoing world-wide religious awakening.



The world is not merely as religious as it used to be. In important ways, it is far more intensely religious than ever before; indeed, it is far more churched

Rodney Stark,
The Triumph of Faith. 2015

Premature Eulogies



Catholic journalist and trends analyst *John Allen, Jr.:*

“Even the most committed agnostic or atheist would have to admit that confident predictions made not so long about the inevitable decline of religion have proven stunningly false. The late twentieth and early twenty-first century have witnessed a powerful resurgence of religion.”

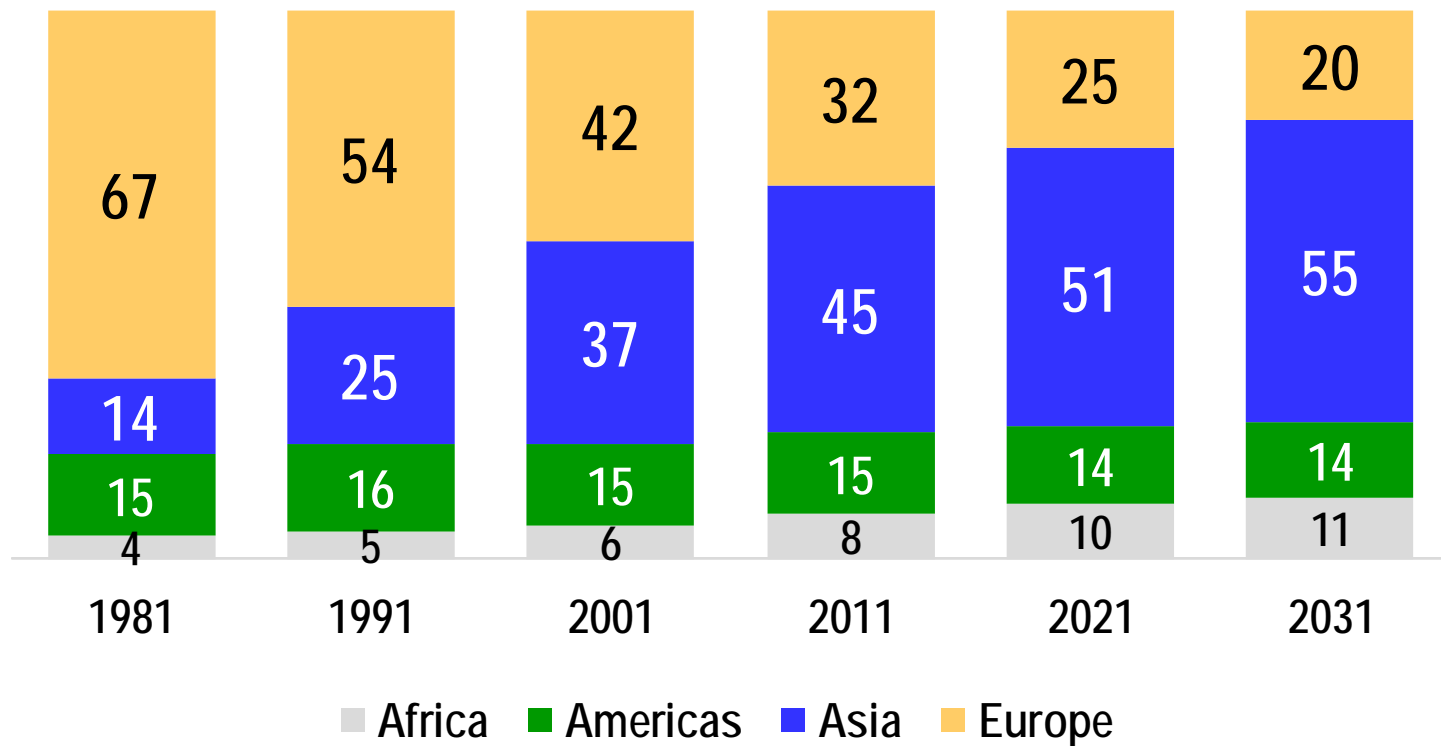
As for *Catholic numbers globally,*

“Anybody who thinks this is an era of Catholic decline needs to get out more often.”

“Pro-Religious Reinforcements Are on the Way”



Sources of Canada's Foreign-born Population: 1981-2031 (%)



Source: Derived from Statistics Canada 2010, Cat. 91-551-x.



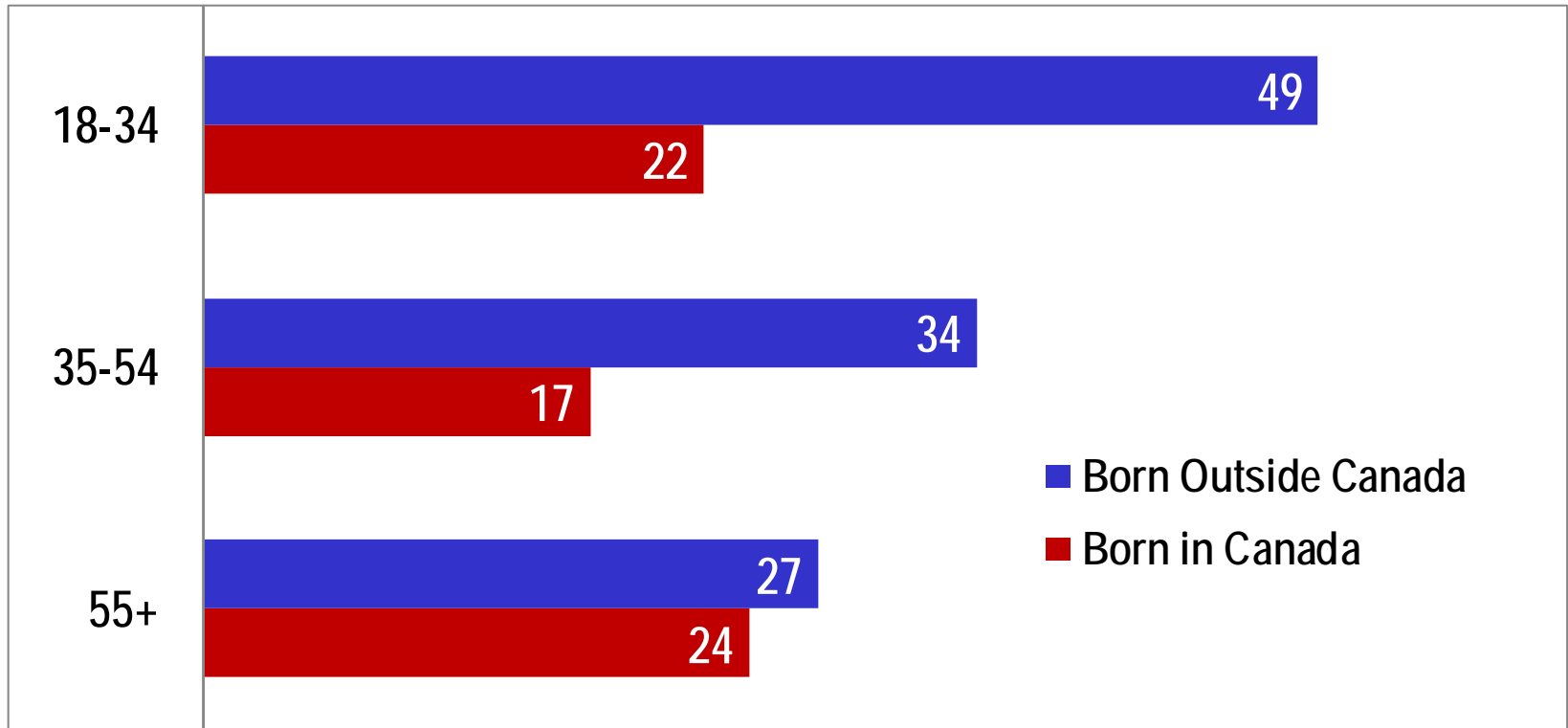
Immigrant Totals: 2001-2011

(In 1000s)

	2001-2011	Median Age
Roman Catholic	478	43
No Religion	442	33
Muslim	388	29
Christian, <i>n.i.e.</i>	162	32
Hindu	154	34
Christian Orthodox	108	42
Sikh	107	33
Buddhist	62	38
Pentecostal	41	36
Anglican	23	51
Jewish	21	45
Presbyterian	17	48
United Church	10	52
Lutheran	7	46



Monthly-Plus Attendance by Birthplace & Age: 2015

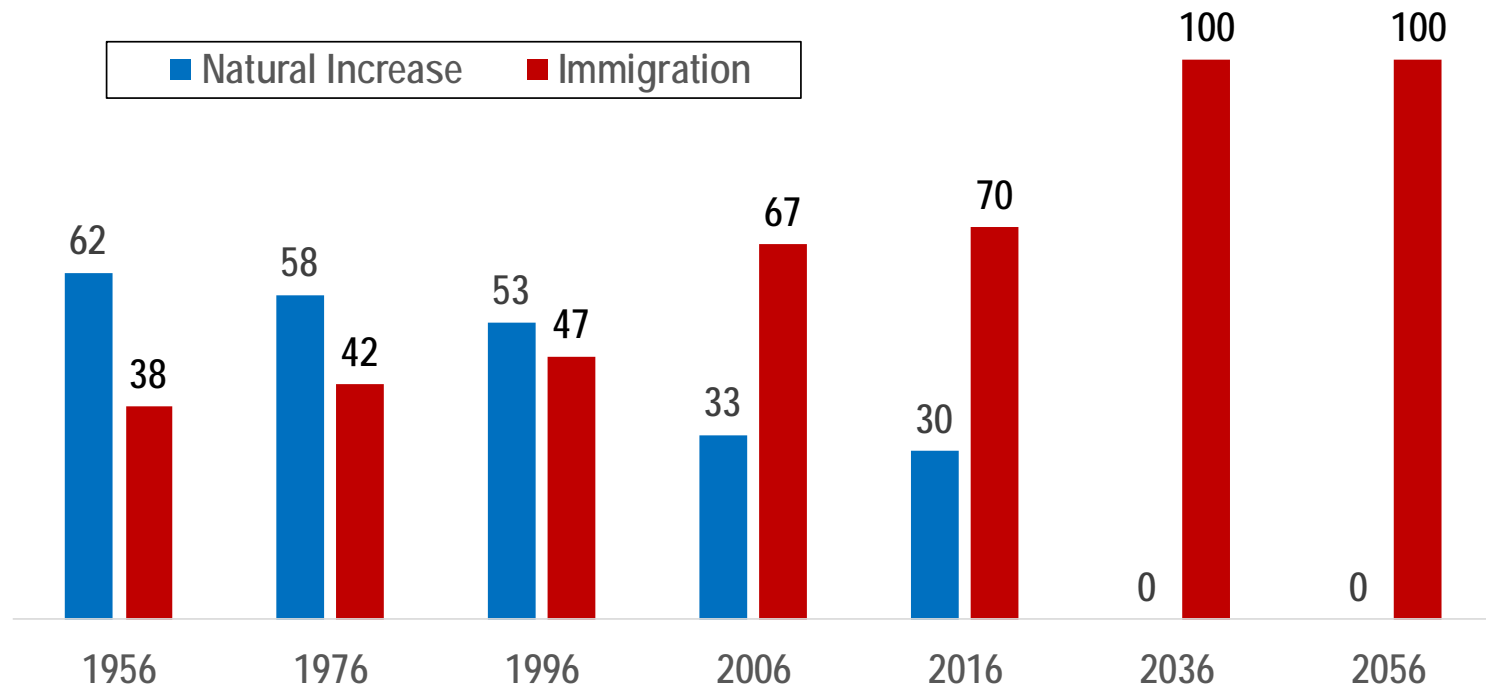


Source: Angus Reid Institute 2015.

*What's more,
immigration is only going
to become more important –
not less.*



Population Growth through Natural Increase & Immigration: 1956-2056



Source: Derived from Statistics Canada 2007. Cat. 91-003-XWE.

Current and Projected Sizes of Major Religious Groups: 2010-2050, Canada (%)

	2010	2030	2050
	Canada	Canada	Canada
Christians	69	64	60
No Religion	24	25	26
Muslims	2	4	6
Hindu	1	2	3
Buddhists	1	1	2
Jews	1	1	1
Other	2	3	2

Source: Pew Research Center, *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050*. 2015.

That Was

**THE MOST IMPORTANT SLIDE
IN THE PRESENTATION!**

A market for religion will continue to exist.

The Q is what groups will service that market?.

- **Good news for religious groups:**
religion's future not in question



- **Ongoing needs of large numbers:**
guarantees ongoing role for religion

- **Sobering news for religious groups:**
their individual futures
are anything but guaranteed



Conclusion

