Active and Marginal Religious Affiliates in Canada: Describing the Difference and the Difference it Makes

by

Joel Thiessen

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Sociology

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2011

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

In 2002, Reginald Bibby surprisingly asserted that a renaissance of religion is, or soon will be taking place in Canada. However, the assertion clashes with the dominant belief based largely on Bibby's accumulated data about Canadians' religious beliefs and practices, that Canada is becoming an increasingly secularized society.

Based on forty-two in-depth interviews, this dissertation tests the "renaissance thesis" and improves our grasp of how Canadians subjectively understand their religious involvements by comparing the views of active religious affiliates (those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services nearly every week) and marginal religious affiliates (those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services primarily on Christmas or Easter, or for rites of passage such as weddings and funerals). What explains their higher and lower levels of religious involvement, what is the likelihood that marginal affiliates could eventually become active affiliates, and how does this understanding help us to assess the degree of religiosity or secularity in Canada?

I argue that active and marginal affiliates are distinct mainly because of their different *experiences* with the supernatural or their local congregation, and the *social influences* that either encourage or discourage involvement in a religious group. These conclusions emerge from a close examination and testing of fundamental principles in Rational Choice Theory, a theory currently popular in the sociology of religion and in Bibby's ongoing analysis of religion in Canada.

Contrary to Bibby's prediction, there is little reason to believe that marginal affiliates will eventually become active affiliates, regardless of changes to the supply of religion in Canada. In general, marginal affiliates appear content with their current levels of religiosity. As a result, I think it is likely that we will witness continued secularization at the individual level in Canada, which if proven correct, could strain Canada's civic fabric in the future.

Acknowledgements

It is difficult to fully express my gratitude for my supervisor and mentor, Lorne Dawson. His sacrifice, patience, feedback, encouragement, inspiration, and gentle leadership to see this project through to completion reflect qualities that graduate students can only hope for in a supervisor. I feel extremely fortunate and blessed to have studied under a brilliant scholar and a down-to-earth individual.

I am grateful for the rest of my committee members—Janice Aurini, Douglas Cowan, David Seljak, and Sam Reimer—who generously gave their time, energy, and talents to offer constructive criticism, helpful feedback, and affirmation to strengthen the dissertation along the way.

I am thankful for Reginald Bibby's willingness to contact his 2005 national survey participants in Calgary, which was an important step to start this research project. I am also indebted to the forty-two individuals who kindly gave their time to share their stories, experiences, and thoughts with me.

The time it took to work on this project was significantly decreased, thanks to Elizabeth Gripping's excellent and meticulous efforts to transcribe each interview.

I appreciate the flexibility that both the University of Waterloo and Ambrose University College provided me during the time that I simultaneously worked on the dissertation and started my teaching career. I especially appreciate the hospitable and gracious welcome and encouragement that I received from the staff, faculty, and students at Ambrose.

At various points during my Doctorate degree I received funding to cover my tuition and research expenses. I would like to thank the University of Waterloo, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and Ambrose University College for their generosity and belief in this project.

Friends and family have been an important source of encouragement during my doctoral journey. My immediate and extended family—Mom and Dad, Scott and Carissa, Mum and Faither, and Ernie and Kathleen—have continuously supported my dream. So too have my close friends—Stu and Ruthie, Jeremy and Bobbie, Chris and Sara, Brad and Kristen, Steve and Christie, and Shayne and Dana—who housed me during my trips between Ontario and Alberta, who listened to my research ideas along the way, and who were a source of fun and joy when I was not working on the dissertation.

Finally, I could not ask for a better wife to walk alongside me during the long days and nights of reading, thinking, and writing. Helen's patience with my long work hours, her encouragement amidst the highs and lows of the doctoral student experience, and her fun and laughter always brought me back to reality and carried me through this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures

Chapter 1
Religion in Canada: Setting the Landscape

Introduction: Religious Renaissance?

In this dissertation I draw on findings from forty-two in-depth interviews to address two questions pertinent to our current sociological understanding of religion (especially Christianity) in English Canada.[1] First, what explains higher and lower levels of religious involvement in Canada? I tackle this simple yet surprisingly overlooked question by comparing how "active religious affiliates" (those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services nearly every week) and "marginal religious affiliates" (those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services primarily on Christmas or Easter, or for rites of passage such as weddings and funerals) understand their religious activities.[2] Second, how are we to assess the degree of religiosity or secularity in Canada in light of active and marginal affiliates' religious beliefs, practices, and involvements?

The need for such a study arises in response to Reginald Bibby's (2002) surprising assertion that a renaissance of religion is, or soon will take place in Canada. The claim clashes with the dominant belief based largely on Bibby's own data about Canadians' religious beliefs and practices, that Canada is becoming an increasingly secularized society. So why has Bibby seemingly changed his mind? The rationale behind his new view can be briefly summarized in terms of three basic points.

---

[1] Unless stated otherwise, any reference to religion in Canada refers to Christianity in English Canada.

[2] My "active" and "marginal" religious affiliate categories build on these findings and distinctions, though I do not measure "marginal religious affiliate" the same way that Bibby (2002 and 2004) does. He defines a "marginal affiliate" as someone who attends bi-monthly or monthly and an "inactive affiliate" as someone who attends less than monthly. I chose to collapse the terms "marginal" and "inactive" because individuals who attend once or twice a year are still somewhat involved and they do identify with a religious group. I more specifically state that "marginal" refers to those who attend for religious holidays and rites of passage, however, since this is the most common feature of those who attend less than monthly and who potentially desire more involvement in their religious group.

First, as Bibby has long demonstrated, there is ongoing evidence in Canada of widespread personal beliefs and practices relative to the sacred. Most Canadians continue to believe in a higher power, they pray with some degree of regularity, many claim to have experienced a supernatural entity, and many believe in life after death (among other indicators). Second, Bibby (2002: xii) alleges that "organized religion is making something of a comeback, and that it is all to be expected." He supports this claim by pointing to various statistics of increased or stabilized religious service attendance patterns among Roman Catholics, mainline Protestants, conservative Protestants, and those from non-Christian religious traditions. He also documents the many Canadians who consistently attend religious services for religious holidays and rites of passage each year. Third, among Canadians who attend religious services less than monthly, he argues there is evidence that many are open to greater involvement, if only religious groups would adjust the way that religion is supplied or delivered (e.g., offer more relevant preaching or livelier music). Together, Bibby claims that the pieces are in place for a modest revival of religious groups in Canada as we unite in our spiritual and religious quests.

Bibby has made an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of religion in Canada over the last several decades. However, I am a critic of the renaissance thesis. In Thiessen (2006) and Thiessen and Dawson (2008) I called Bibby's optimistic interpretation and forecast for religion in Canada into doubt on several counts (see Bibby 2008 for a response to these criticisms). First, as Bibby's own data reveals, Canadians' religious beliefs and practices were as fragmented in 2002 as they were in 1987, when Bibby first (and correctly) suggested that fragmented beliefs and

practices were indicative of individual secularization in Canada.[3] Therefore, it was odd that Bibby was suddenly so optimistic in *Restless Gods* (2002) about the current and future state of religion in Canada. Second, Bibby's optimism relies heavily on the assertion that 55% of "less than monthly" attenders desire greater involvement in their religious group, when in reality only 15% actually indicated a definitive desire to do so. In fact, 40% said "perhaps" they would be interested in more involvement. In combining these responses Bibby glosses over the ambiguity surrounding the "perhaps" response. Do those who answered "perhaps" really want more involvement and what would it take to make it happen? Even with those who did say "yes" what was preventing them from pursuing further involvement? Had they tried to get more involved given the many religious options now available in Canada? The lack of meaningful answers to these questions led me to question whether Bibby's projection was overzealous. Third, Bibby's inconsistent and misleading use of numbers and percentages, such as showing numerical increases in membership or attendance figures, despite stable or decreasing percentages relative to the entire population, left the door open to multiple and competing interpretations. While in some cases Bibby emphasized the numerical increases to support the renaissance thesis, one could as easily note the decreasing percentages to refute the same argument. Many researchers would argue that the latter is the more accurate measurement to rely on (including Bibby, who made this very point in *Fragmented Gods* 1987: 13). Finally, even if the evidence for a religious renaissance was much stronger, are the results of three surveys in a ten-year span enough to refute the forty-year trend of religious decline in Canada, or do we need more time to test whether this renaissance is in fact a trend or just a blip on the graph of religious activity in

[3] For example, high proportions of "less than monthly" attenders continue to respond affirmatively to the following statement posed on Bibby's surveys: "Some observers maintain that few people are actually abandoning their religious traditions. Rather, they draw selective beliefs and practices, even if they do not attend services frequently. They are not about to be recruited by other religious groups. Their identification with their religious tradition is fairly solidly fixed, and it is to these groups that they will turn when confronted with marriage, death and, frequently, birth. How well would you say this observation describes you?"

Canada? With these and other reservations and questions in mind (see Thiessen 2006 and Thiessen and Dawson 2008), I could not logically or empirically agree with Bibby's conclusion that a religious renaissance is underway in Canada. More and different data were needed to resolve the issue.

The Research Questions & Theoretical Context: The Approach

Some attempts have been made in Canada to distinguish between active and marginal affiliate attitudes and behaviours (see e.g., Bibby 2002; Bowen 2004), including suggestions that marginal affiliates could eventually turn into active affiliates (Bibby 2004). Yet as will be seen, analysis of existing quantitative data has resulted in inconclusive and competing interpretations about affiliates' current and potential future religious involvement. Surprisingly, little serious qualitative research has been undertaken to increase the precision and depth of our understanding of these findings. While quantitative data is certainly useful, qualitative data, especially when carried out in a comparative context, can help to fill in some of the gaps that standard survey results do not give the reader. To really make progress on the issues surrounding the renaissance thesis, Thiessen and Dawson (2008) called for in-depth qualitative interview data of the very participants who filled out Bibby's previous surveys. The rationale was that if I could speak with both occasional and regular attenders, those central to Bibby's renaissance conclusions, then maybe I could gain greater clarity and precision about the similarities and differences between their religious beliefs and practices. With this information in hand, I could also more effectively evaluate Bibby's religious renaissance thesis. This is what I did.

Throughout this dissertation I capture the thoughts and feelings of those Canadians who graciously shared their stories and religious views with me. It is surprising that few if any scholars have pursued rich, textured, and detailed qualitative data and analysis about seemingly

basic facets of religious life in Canada. In the Weberian spirit of understanding people from their own perspective, an idea later developed by symbolic interactionists, I ask what do we really know about *why* Canadians attend religious services or *why* they believe in a supernatural being? I would argue that we do not actually know much. This is troubling, especially when we look to our southern neighbours and their rich balance of quantitative and qualitative research in the sociology of religion. Therefore, with the underlying objective of further testing Bibby's renaissance thesis, this dissertation draws on interview data with active and marginal religious affiliates to better explain what accounts for higher and lower levels of religious involvement in Canada.

I begin this process in chapter two where I provide six vignettes of individuals that I interviewed, to improve our grasp of how active and marginal affiliates understand their religious involvements. What are the similarities and differences between these two groups in terms of their actual religious beliefs and practices, and the meanings that they attach to those beliefs and practices? Although no two individuals share the exact same religious history or possible trajectory, the vignettes begin to elucidate the major similarities and differences that are common to many of the active and marginal affiliates that I interviewed. These stories are the basis for the remaining data description and analysis in the dissertation.

One of the ways that scholars, including Bibby (1987, 1993, 2002), have attempted to understand different levels of commitment to social organizations, particularly religious ones, is by applying "rational-choice" theory (see e.g., Stark and Finke 2000). This theory is the basis of discussion in chapter three and four. My data collection and analysis centers on the latest and most refined presentation of the theory as found in Stark and Finke's *Acts of Faith* (2000). In particular, I focus on their bold conclusions about religious costs and rewards, religious supply and demand, as well as the social nature of religion. For instance, they posit that people make

religious decisions in the same way that they make other life decisions, by weighing costs and rewards and that humans, when looking for religious rewards, will seek to enter extended, expensive, and exclusive exchange relationships with the gods if the gods are believed to be dependable, responsive, and of great scope (Stark and Finke 2000: 96-102, 144). These technical terms are specific to rational choice theory and are conceptualized in the following way: humans will make periodic "payments" over a long period of time, incur significant material, social, or psychic costs, and make exchanges with god(s) only if they believe that the god(s) can be trusted to keep their word with humans, if the god(s) are concerned about and act on behalf of humans, and if the god(s) possess a diverse array of powers and range of influences with which to meet human needs. Put another way, if individuals believe the gods have been faithful and responsive to their expectations in the past, they are more likely and willing to pay higher costs in anticipation of receiving certain religious rewards. If someone prays for healing, whether or not they were healed will influence the likelihood that they will pray for healing again in the future. While Stark and Finke might be correct, we lack concrete empirical data. How exactly do active and marginal affiliates make sense of the religious rewards that they are pursuing (both this-world and other-world rewards) and the religious costs involved in obtaining those rewards, and how do past results influence current and future religious decision-making processes? What possible disadvantages, if any, might a rational actor consider when deciding their level of involvement in a religious group? These basic questions need to be asked and addressed with some directly relevant empirical data.

Stark and Finke also make assumptions about the relationship between the "supply" and "demand" side of religion, a relevant theme to this project given Bibby's market-model approach to studying religion. They posit that there is an ongoing "demand" for religion and the supernatural, and that individuals participate in religious groups *primarily* because they seek to

make exchanges with the gods. The supply-side exists to motivate and sustain individuals' high levels of religious commitment, and in doing so the suppliers of religious goods and services are thought to have substantial power to change people's religious preferences. There are problems with this argument however. How do we know that people have an inexhaustible demand for rewards that only religion provides or that people turn to religious groups primarily for religious reasons? How confident can we be in the assertion that differences in the supply of religion are the primary "pull" in motivating people to commit their time and energy to a religious organization? Alternatively, is it possible that individuals disregard a religious group's efforts to instil higher levels of religious interest and commitment, relying more on their own reasons to motivate and sustain their religious commitments? With respect to religious preferences, what if we explored the hypothesis that individuals determine their religious preferences and communicate such preferences either by increasing, maintaining, or limiting their involvement in their religious group? In other words, regardless of what religious groups do, individuals set their religious preferences and act accordingly. These questions also need to be approached with first-hand empirical data.

In a related manner, rational choice theorists posit that the supply-demand relationship is influenced by religious consumers' social ties. An individual's propensity to adopt certain beliefs and practices is directly related to how those around them think and behave, and the stronger those ties to a religious group are, the greater confidence one has in religious explanations. From a sociological perspective this reasoning makes sense. Logic would suggest that marginal affiliates, given their relatively low level of participation in their religious group, have a lower level of confidence in religious explanations when compared with active affiliates. However, Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) recent findings indicate that those with limited involvement in a religious group are quite confident in the religious and spiritual explanations that they retain. But

how do we ultimately know whether Stark and Finke or Heelas and Woodhead are correct? Is it true, as Stark and Finke propose, and Bruce (2002) agrees,[4] that an individual's confidence in religious explanations is strengthened when others express confidence in them, when individuals participate in religious rituals, and when people conserve their social (i.e., interpersonal ties, especially with others who share a similar religious worldview) and religious (i.e., mastery of and attachment to a specific religious culture) capital?[5] If this is the case, then to what degree and how precisely is this the case?

In chapter's three and four I explore the "rational-choice" approach to studying religion, concentrating on the above questions regarding religious costs and rewards, religious supply and demand, as well as the social nature of religion. What are the main premises behind rational-choice theory, what are some of the criticisms of it, and how does the data from this study test this theory and further our understanding of the similarities and differences between active and marginal religious affiliates? My analysis, as will be seen, is largely premised on the belief that we need to focus more intently on the "demand" side of the religious equation than rational choice theorists are inclined to do. In the end, a "demand" side focus lends itself particularly well to working out the differences between active and marginal affiliates, and to assessing whether marginal affiliates are truly open to greater involvement in their religious group.

Alongside rational choice theory, Reginald Bibby's work on religion in Canada is situated in another current (and strongly related) debate in the sociology of religion, secularization (e.g., Berger 1967; Bruce 2002; Casanova 1994; Luckmann 1967; Martin 1978; Stark 1999; Wilson 1982). As I will demonstrate in chapter's five and six, the way in which the questions about

[4] Steve Bruce argues that religious beliefs and practices which are detached from regular involvement in religious organizations cannot be sustained because they lack the social structures necessary for reinforcement.
[5] Readers should take note of these definitions of "social capital" and "religious capital," as I repeatedly use these technical terms common to Rational Choice Theory throughout the dissertation.

rational choice theory are resolved will influence how a person evaluates whether or not Canada is or soon will experience a religious renaissance, or if some variation of the secularization narrative is more appropriate for describing the state of religion in Canada. As just one example to illustrate the complexity of this matter, if people claim to attend religious services mainly for non-religious reasons, how should we evaluate the strength of religion in Canada? Should we reject the secularization narrative because people are attending, or should we accept the secularization narrative because people attend church for non-religious reasons?

When we think about the topic of secularization in a larger context, many researchers agree that the United States is the most religious nation in the industrialized world, while many Western European nations are the least, as defined by belief in God and attendance at religious services (e.g., Bruce 1999, 2002; Davie 1994; Finke and Stark 2005). The picture in Canada is less clear. Quantitative studies consistently reveal that regular attendance at religious services and religious institutions' social influence has decreased significantly over the last fifty years (e.g., Bibby 1987 and 1993; Bowen 2004; Lyon and Van Die 2000). Yet there is enduring evidence that Canadians are privately "spiritual" (see, e.g., Bibby 2002; Emberley 2002; Rawlyk 1996). High proportions of Canadians, for example, continue to pray in private, to believe in a supernatural entity, to identify with a religious group, and to attend religious services for rites of passage and religious holidays (Bibby 1987, 1993, 2002, 2006). Moreover, as indicated earlier, some marginal affiliates indicate their potential willingness to become more involved in their religious group (Bibby 2002, 2004). So, is Canada more like the United States or Europe?

Two interpretations have emerged from the data. Bibby (2002, 2006) argues that the many Canadians who still identify with a religious tradition and attend religious services at least a few times a year are proof that organized religion remains important in Canada. He notes that many Canadians who are marginally involved in religious groups are open to greater

participation, if only the groups would better meet certain ministry, organizational, and personal needs. For example, religious groups need to help individuals feel loved, connected, and cared for in a community. They also need to offer more relevant preaching, music, and programs. Moreover, they should attempt to be more inclusive along moral, ethical, and theological lines (e.g., on issues of birth control, abortion, or women in leadership) (Bibby 2002: 220-222). Accordingly, he has advised religious organizations to target these marginal affiliates to increase the ranks of their active members (Bibby 2004). For Bibby the degree of importance that individuals attribute to religion is thus defined broadly, and is not necessarily connected to their level of commitment. Any level of involvement signals the pervasiveness of religion. His hypothesis is essentially that despite lower levels of involvement, marginal affiliates award high levels of importance to their religion and religious organization.

Conversely, Steve Bruce (1999, 2002) and Kurt Bowen (2004) argue that people should not read too much into these marginal religious attachments because they speak more to the decreasing importance of religion than to its survival or chance for revival. They contend that private spirituality has little impact on most people's daily life in modern Western societies and that it will eventually disappear without reinforcing social structures in place. Consequently, Bruce and Bowen define religious involvement narrowly; an individual's beliefs and practices need to be supported by some form of religious community to remain salient. Their hypothesis is that marginal affiliates do not award a high level of importance to their religion or religious organization.

In some respects both of these positions make sense, but the trouble is that they arrive at very different conclusions based on similar quantitative data. This theoretical dilemma can be resolved, in part, by addressing the underlying methodological limitations of evaluating the secularization thesis with primarily quantitative data. Instead, and as I have done here, we need to

ask Canadians through in-depth interviews to explain how they understand their religious involvement and what meaning they attach to their religious attitudes and behaviours (this is especially important among marginal affiliates who selectively turn to their religious group to meet certain needs). For example, what does commitment to a religion or religious organization mean for both active and marginal affiliates? What factors, motivations, costs, and benefits are associated with high or low levels of involvement? Do affiliates even make a connection between religious "costs" and "benefits" and their own religious involvement? If they do, how is the connection made, and so on? For marginal affiliates, what does occasional participation mean to them? Why do they continue to attend for religious holidays and rites of passage? More than this, what factors or barriers do they think stand in the way of greater involvement? Have they done anything to overcome these barriers, and if so, what? By asking these types of questions, we see the usefulness of testing rational choice propositions as a way to evaluate the secularization thesis in Canada, while also advancing our comparisons of active and marginal affiliates.

Against the backdrop of Bibby's renaissance thesis, I use chapter's five and six to examine questions about secularization. In chapter five I summarize several key theorists' perspectives for and against the secularization thesis, and in chapter six I test and apply some of these theories with the data from this study. My argument will be that, in contrast to Bibby's optimism for a religious resurgence, particularly among marginal affiliates, we should not anticipate a religious renaissance anytime soon. In fact, we should expect to witness ongoing secularization in Canada, particularly at the level of individual belief and church attendance.

In the final chapter I summarize some of the major similarities and differences between the active and marginal affiliates in this study. Based on these comparisons, and my general conclusion that we should expect further secularization at the individual level, I enter a brief discussion about the possible implications for civic engagement in Canada. I do so to position

this study in the growing and recent conversation about the intersection between individual religious belief and practice and civic engagement (see e.g., Bibby 2007; Bowen 2004; Dillon and Wink 2007; Putnam 2000; Smith and Snell 2009; Stanczak 2006; Zuckerman 2008). I conclude the dissertation by following Bibby's (2004) lead (and others such as Smith and Denton 2005 or Wuthnow 2005, 2007) and offering a series of recommendations for Canadian church leaders in light of my findings in this project.

The Data

Given the centrality of Bibby's research to the sociological study of religion in Canada, I approached him with a request to interview a subsample of active and marginal religious affiliates in the Calgary region from his latest 2005 national survey sample. Bibby generously agreed to assist. I additionally relied upon a snowball sample of participants, initiated by those from Bibby's sample who participated in my research.

There were three advantages to recruiting participants from Bibby's sample. First, drawing qualitative data from an existing representative sample alleviated some of the strains of snowball sampling and screening eligible participants. While I ended up relying on snowball sampling, the effort needed to begin this process was reduced thanks to Bibby's sample. Second, since some of these individuals had already taken part in Bibby's study, this enhanced their willingness to contribute again. Third, this sampling strategy allowed for triangulation of findings with existing quantitative data as well as for a research dialogue with the leading sociologist of religion in Canada. This has in fact already started (see Thiessen and Dawson 2008; Bibby 2008), and hopefully will continue.

Calgary was an advantageous location to gather data for several reasons. First, Bibby's 2005 national sample included a Centennial Year oversampling of Albertans. Compared to other

locations therefore, the likelihood of recruiting the desired target sample was enhanced. Second, Albertans score close to the national average for measurements of both active and marginal religious affiliates (see Bowen 2004: 54-55). This does not mean my small sample is statistically representative on a national scale, but it does help to reduce the likelihood of skewed results. Finally, as I live in Calgary, this was a time and cost effective way of conducting this research.

Some background information about Bibby's sample is useful at this point.[6] Bibby's 2005 sample includes 2,400 participants (weighted down to a representative sample of 1,600 cases) that allows accurate generalizations to be made about Canadians within about 2.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20. Of this national sample, 625 Albertans completed the self-administered survey, including 200 in Calgary, 194 in Edmonton, 87 in communities between 10,000 and 99,999 in size, and 144 from communities with less than 10,000 people.

By way of context, approximately 80% of Albertan respondents in Bibby's sample identify with a Christian religious group, 17% do not identify with any religious group, and the remaining identify with an "other" religious group (e.g., Islam, Judaism, Buddhism).[7] Of the 625 Albertans sampled, 165 (27%) are active affiliates, 387 (63%) are marginal affiliates, and the remaining participants are not weekly attenders, but are present at least once a month. Of the 387 marginal affiliates, 83 (21%) say that they are "definitely" open to greater involvement in their religious group, 131 (34%) say that they are "perhaps" open to greater involvement, 119 (31%) reveal that they are not open to greater involvement, and 54 (14%) did not indicate whether or not they are open to greater involvement.

[6] Personal communication with Bibby – August 2007.
[7] A 2001 Statistics Canada report shows that 39% of the province's population identifies as Protestant, 26% identify as Roman Catholic, 23% claim to have "no religion," and the rest classify as Christian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or Sikh.

Narrowing these figures down to the 200 Calgarians who were surveyed, about 74% identify with a Christian religious group, 22% do not identify with a religious group, and the remaining 4% identify with an "other" religious group.[8] Fifty respondents (25%) are active affiliates, 131 (67%) are marginal affiliates, and the remaining participants attend less than weekly, but attend at least once a month. Of the 131 marginal affiliates, all of whom are included in the targeted sampling, 24 (18%) say that they are "definitely" open to greater involvement in their religious group, 42 (32%) say that they are "perhaps" open to greater involvement, 44 (34%) indicate that they are not open to greater involvement, and 21 (16%) did not indicate whether or not they are open to greater involvement.

In terms of my sample, Bibby made initial contact with 160 of 200 in the Calgary region who participated in his 2005 survey (addresses were only available for this number).[9] This contact consisted of a letter of invitation by Bibby along with a formal participant recruitment letter from me that outlined the nature of this project and what their participation would entail (see "Appendix C" and "Appendix D"). After initial contact was made with participants, those who wished to participate (nine in total) contacted me directly, via telephone or email. Some participants that I interviewed from Bibby's sample then referred others to participate. While it would have been ideal for every participant in this project to have also participated in Bibby's survey, in no way does this jeopardize my ability to assess Bibby's research and data. In the end I am still dealing with active and marginal religious affiliates.

Between May 2008 and July 2009, I conducted forty-two interviews, including twenty-one active affiliates and twenty-one marginal affiliates. With the exception of two interviews that

[8] According to a 2001 Statistics Canada report, 35% of Calgarians identify as Protestant, 26% are Roman Catholic, 25% have "no religion," and the remaining are Christian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or Sikh.
[9] To maintain confidentiality Bibby did not provide me with the contact information for participants, hence he made the initial contact.

occurred over the telephone (to accommodate their schedules), all interviews were face-to-face and typically took place in coffee shops, people's homes, or places of employment. Although no official incentive was offered for their participation, participants were offered a meal or snack, and drink during the interview. Participants were required to sign a consent form prior to the interview, or in the case of the telephone interviews, give verbal consent to the terms of the interview (see "Appendix F"). They were also given the opportunity to ask any questions that they had about the project, or their involvement, before and after the interview. The interviews lasted 72 minutes on average, and ranged from 42 to 108 minutes long. All interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed, and detailed field notes were taken during the interviews. Given the nature of qualitative research, new themes emerged in the interviews that warranted additional contact with the first eleven participants. These conversations took place either over the telephone or email, and I documented their responses in field notes or email records.

Of the 42 people interviewed, there are 23 males and 19 females. Fourteen are between the ages of 18-34, fifteen between 35 and 54, and thirteen are 55 or older. Ten individuals are single, one is engaged to be married, 19 are in their first marriage, 4 are in their second marriage, 4 are divorced, and another 4 are widowed. In terms of completed education, four people did not finish high school, 4 did not pursue education beyond their high school graduation, 5 have a diploma or certificate, 8 have some college or university training (including three people who did not complete high school), 18 possess a Bachelor's degree, 4 hold a Master's degree, and two have Doctorate degrees. Thirteen identify as Roman Catholic, eleven are part of mainline Protestant groups, ten associate with an evangelical Protestant tradition, and eight are part of a non-denominational tradition or do not pledge allegiance to any single stream of Christianity (see "Appendix A" for a comparative chart based on these demographics).

Throughout the interview process I used NVivo 8, a qualitative data software package, to sort, organize, code, and analyze the data. As several scholars have indicated recently (Dohan and Sanchez-Janowski 1998; Hesse-Biber 2004; Miles and Huberman 1994), computer software is extremely helpful for clearly and logically coding mass amounts of qualitative data, without diminishing the role of the researcher to code the data. As is customary practice when coding qualitative data, I coded and analyzed the data throughout the data collection process, oscillating between data collection and analysis. My initial objective when coding was to identify categories and subcategories that intersected with this project's overarching theoretical interests, such as comparisons between active and marginal affiliates, rational choice theory, and secularization theory (see "Appendix E"). Still, building on a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2004; Strauss and Corbin 1998), I also wanted to identify recurring patterns that emerged from the data, ones that were not initially central to this study. Thus, in the "first cycle" (Saldaña 2009) or "open coding" (Strauss and Corbin 1998) phase of the coding process I identified major overarching categories in the data (e.g., religious upbringing or secularization). With every additional cycle of coding, I coded and re-coded, analyzed and re-analyzed earlier transcripts in light of discoveries from later interviews, resulting in several major (new and revised) headings and subcategories (e.g., different reasons for declining religious involvement or the potential desire for greater involvement in their religious group).[10] During the coding process I also created "analytic memos" (Charmaz 2004; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; Miles and Huberman 1994; Saldaña 2009; Strauss and Corbin 1998) to connect the data with the literature, to hypothesize about relationships between the data, to compare between active and marginal affiliates, and those with different denominational ties, and to document new research questions that arose from

[10] This process is sometimes referred to as "focused coding," where the researcher goes back through all transcripts looking for a specific code that has emerged in the data (see Charmaz 2004).

the data.[11] Once all of the data was coded in NVivo, I tabulated the number of responses that corresponded with the codes that I created. For example, if the main category was "reasons why marginal affiliates attend religious services when they do," and they offered six different reasons, I documented how many individuals cited each reason. My purpose for doing this was to give a clearer sense of just how many people believe or practice certain things. With respect to coding reliability, I relied on my supervisor, a fellow graduate student, and everyday conversations to test whether or not my coding and analysis "made sense."

There were several advantages to interviewing individuals to address the research questions at hand. In contrast to quantitative data, interviews tackle "why" and "how" questions (as opposed to "what" questions), and examine the processes behind religious affiliates' religious decisions[12] (see Duneier 2006: 686; Espeland 2005: 3; Goodwin and Horowitz 2002: 36; Lamont 2005: 2; Ragin 1987). Approaching the research questions this way yielded comparative insights into the similarities and differences between religious affiliates. Theoretically, these comparisons build on Bibby's ongoing descriptive comparisons, but as mentioned before, these comparisons uniquely address why people's level of involvement in their religious groups converge and diverge as they do. Put simply, these comparisons add the needed depth and context that is currently missing in quantitative research. Moreover, these comparisons enable me to directly test the competing theories about secularization in Canada, ones that are largely based on quantitative data and analyses.

[11] Inherent in this coding process are the many stages of coding that Strauss and Corbin (1998) refer to, including axial coding, selective coding, process coding, conditional and consequential coding, and theoretical sampling.
[12] For example, what factors contribute to people's ongoing involvement, decreased involvement, or desire for greater involvement in their religious group? Are these local congregational factors? Denominational factors? Family factors? Cultural factors? Employment factors? A specific event in life? Further, why are marginal affiliates not responding with greater involvement when some religious groups are seemingly changing to meet marginal affiliate demands?

Methodologically, the decision to compare between groups, as opposed to interviewing only active or marginal affiliates, is logical because it ensures that I do not incorrectly isolate marginal affiliates' attitudes or behaviours, for example, when in fact they are common among both active and marginal affiliates. By not confusing trait "x" among active affiliates with trait "y" among marginal affiliates, this project is designed with high construct and internal validity in mind (see Yin 2003: 34).

More than this, when discussing why marginal affiliates turn to religious groups for rites of passage or religious holidays, our current understanding is based on how religious leaders interpret the situation (see Bibby 1993: 147-151), but not on how Canadians define it for themselves. It appears obvious, therefore, that we need to ask Canadians directly about their religious involvement.

The exploratory nature of this project is aided with in-depth interviews because this method, in addition to its usefulness for testing existing theories, is ideally premised on creating space for new and unanticipated theoretical categories to emerge from the data (a feature that is not as common in survey research) (see Goodwin and Horowitz 2002: 37; Johnson 2002: 112-13; Strauss and Corbin 1998). This occurs as participants openly discuss a variety of topics that are not limited by the interviewer's questions, as opposed to survey research where participants are restricted in what they communicate based on the fixed questions and answers provided. On one hand this project is framed to contribute to existing discussions about active and marginal religious affiliates, rational-choice theory, and secularization theory. On the other hand, new themes, such as the role of tradition or sacred space, emerged early in the data collection process that helped to shape the type of questions asked later in the data collection process (and consequently inspired me to go back and ask initial participants additional questions based on later discoveries).

Finally, this project makes use of data, investigator, and theoretical triangulation (see Yin 2003: 98-99). Beginning with data triangulation, I compare the qualitative data from this study with the original quantitative data that prompted this project in the first place. How does this qualitative data clarify, challenge, or confirm existing numerical findings? In terms of investigator triangulation, while this is technically a "solo" project, I have relied on committee members and fellow academics to help make sense of the themes and possible interpretations from the data. As mentioned earlier, theoretical triangulation consists of corroborating or challenging existing theories alongside proposing new theories that arise from the data (see Espeland 2005; Jick 1979).

Reflexive Positioning

Part of the art of qualitative research is combing through massive amounts of data and distilling a narrative that aptly reflects those interviewed, in order to yield theoretically significant findings. I agree with those (see e.g., Altheide and Johnson 1998; Denzin 1990; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995; Prus 1996; Richer 1988) who suggest that this process is an intersubjective one, whereby the researcher is a co-producer of the data with the participant. The participant produces the data by answering a series of questions, and the researcher contributes through note-taking, coding and analyzing the data, as well as filtering the essential findings for the readers. This is important because both researchers and participants' biases are at play in all forms of social scientific research, and shape the historical and cultural lens through which something is studied and interpreted. All through this dissertation participants' biases and worldviews are presented, each contributing to our knowledge of religion in Canada. In his introduction to *Identity and the Sacred* (1976: x), Hans Mol declares: "it is becoming a habit of scholars in the sociology of religion to present an autobiographical account of their ideologies in

introductions. I think it is a good habit. It helps readers to understand (and explain away, if they so desire) whatever pro- or anti-religious biases they encounter." As a co-producer of the knowledge presented here, it is only fitting that I take a brief moment to reflexively position myself.

I write as a devout Christian who was socialized (and still practices) in the evangelical Protestant tradition. Growing up as a preacher's son, I was exposed to the many elements of religious organizations. I learned about the politics, the leadership roles, the missions and visions, and the strategies for evangelism in religious organizations. Moreover, I have been and currently am involved in various leadership positions in the local church and I am a sociology Professor at Ambrose University College, an evangelical liberal arts university in Calgary, Alberta. Although I do not claim to be even a lay theologian, I am deeply interested in how Christians and other religious groups live out their beliefs in the context of Canadian society. On the one hand, this interest has come out of a personal dissatisfaction with the personal piety, or lack thereof, of some who attend weekly religious services. Many weekly attenders seem to struggle to live out their faith during the days between weekly religious services. On the other hand, as one who is committed to an organized religious group, I am concerned about the significant decline in weekly attenders since the 1950s. I have not personally witnessed the renaissance of religion that Bibby speaks of so confidently. However, lack of involvement in religious organizations is not only disconcerting to me as a practicing member of a religious group; it also concerns me as a member of Canadian society. What are the implications for Canadian society if fewer people are involved in religious organizations, or adopt a set of religious beliefs and practices?

The application of data, investigator, and theoretical triangulation is intended to alleviate any fears that these biases might cloud my ability to look fairly and objectively at the data gathered. In the end, I am confident that the findings are a fair and balanced reflection of an

untold aspect of religious life in Canada today. Hopefully the reader arrives at a similar conclusion.

Chapter 2

Converging and Diverging: Six Active and Marginal Affiliate Vignettes

Introduction

Drawing on six vignettes from those that I interviewed, my primary goal in this chapter is to outline some of the central similarities and differences between the active and marginal affiliates in my sample. My purpose for documenting these stories is twofold. First, they introduce the reader to the central people and themes at the core of this dissertation. The stories that I present mirror the beliefs, behaviours, and experiences common to many others that I interviewed. While these observations may resonate with many active and marginal affiliates across Canada, further empirical research is clearly needed to test these findings further. Second, these accounts will become the basis for testing and applying rational choice theory and secularization theory in later chapters, advancing my chief objective to understand what explains higher and lower levels of religious involvement in Canada.

Mindful that active and marginal affiliates are not homogeneous groups, my secondary task in this chapter is to highlight some distinct elements *within* the active affiliate camp, between those raised in a religious home and who remain actively religious, those raised in a religious home but abandoned their religious faith for a time before resuming active involvement in a church, and those without a religious upbringing who are now actively involved in a religious group. We will also see differences *within* the marginal affiliate group, between those not raised in a religious home yet attend mainly for religious holidays and rites of passage today, those who attended religious services regularly when growing up and attend primarily for religious holidays and rites of passages today, and those who attend religious services mainly when invited to another's rite of passage or for the occasional religious holiday. In addition, the following stories

shed some light on similarities and differences between Roman Catholics, mainline Protestants, and evangelical Protestants.

Admittedly, one of the central and difficult tasks for sociologists is to make complex sets of data comprehensible for others. Typically, sociologists navigate their way through data analysis by creating distinct categories into which they organize individuals, their attitudes, and behaviours. Sometimes this is a straightforward process that can be effective. Other times real life is too complex and people's lives cannot be reduced to compartmentalized categories. In studying Canadian religion, sociologists have categorized national levels of religiosity in several ways, in the process drawing on different measurement frameworks. For instance, Acadia University sociologist Kurt Bowen (2004: 44) identifies four religious groups. The "very committed" attend religious services weekly, define themselves as religious, and say that religion is important to their lives. The "less committed" attend religious services one to three times a month and claim religion is not important to them. "Seekers" indicate that religion is important in their lives, but rarely or never attend religious services. The "non-religious" rarely or never attend religious services and assert that religion is not important to them.

Chief researcher at Angus Reid Strategies, Andrew Grenville (2000: 217-221) identifies three groups: "churchgoers," "private believers," and "nominal and non-Christians." Each of these groups has sub-categories. Among churchgoers there are the "church-centered." They attend religious services at least weekly, claim that church doctrine is more important than their personal beliefs, engage in various private devotions, and hold orthodox beliefs. "Privatistic churchgoers" are similar to the previous group except they claim that private beliefs are more important than their church's doctrines. Within the private believers camp, Grenville identifies "independent believers" who do not think that attending church is a necessary condition of being a "good" Christian. In the "occasional Christians" group, we find those who attend church, pray,

or read religious material a few times a year and claim that religion is important for guiding how they should live. In the final grouping of nominal and non-Christians, Grenville introduces the "private theists," those who do not think religion is important to their lives or attend religious services, but they pray on occasion and maintain some level of belief in God. Rounding out this group are "atheists and agnostics" who do not generally believe in a god or participate in any religious activities.

Over the course of his career Reginald Bibby has introduced readers to a range of categories, beginning with his distinction between the "committed" and "uncommitted" in *Fragmented Gods* (1987: 62-85). The "committed" believe in God, the divinity of Jesus, and life after death. They pray on occasion, claim to have experienced God's presence, and know who denied Jesus. The "uncommitted" adopt religious beliefs and practices in fragments or do not believe or practice at all. In *Unknown Gods* (1993: 170), he expanded these categories to include "active affiliates" (people who identify with a religious tradition and attend religious services nearly every week or more), "marginal affiliates" (who identify with a religious tradition and attend from two to three times a month to many times annually), "inactive affiliates" (who identify with a religious tradition and attend once a year or less), "disaffiliates" (who do not identify with a religious tradition, attend less than yearly, and their parents identify with a religious tradition), and "non-affiliates" (where neither they nor their parents identify with a religious tradition and they attend less than yearly). In *Restless Gods* (2002: 47-49) and *Restless Churches* (2004: 62-63), Bibby modified his definition of "marginal affiliates" to include those

who attend bi-monthly to monthly, and "inactive affiliates" now included those who attend less than monthly.[1]

The reason for presenting these different categories is to illustrate the methodological challenge that sociologists face when categorizing and labelling respondents. As we can see, it is difficult to provide measurements, analysis, and conclusions that are consistent, accurate, and comparable with one's own studies and others' findings. Some categories contain only a couple of measures as their criterion, while others include five or six indicators. This is problematic for the sociological study of religion in Canada and elsewhere.

These limitations are magnified when we consider the driving emphasis on quantitative research in the sociology of religion in Canada, at least when it comes to studying Christianity (Reimer 2008). This methodology fails to capture the depth of information that is needed to better understand questions about religion in which sociologists are interested. For instance, what does it mean when a person says that religion is important to them? Is this a sign that religion remains salient for individuals, as Bibby (2002) suggests, or that it matters little if unaccompanied by religious practices such as church attendance, as Bowen (2004) argues? Unfortunately, quantitative data does not provide us with such answers. As a result sociologists of religion reach competing conclusions about similar data, or they unsuccessfully design survey instruments intended to measure the same concept (i.e., secularization), that in the end leave them with ambiguous data and interpretations.[2]

As a way to possibly resolve this problem, it has been suggested that researchers should include more, rather than less, measures and make them consistent when differentiating groups of

[1] I could mention countless others to illustrate the many ways to organize, categorize, and differentiate between key religious indicators among populations (see e.g., Finke and Stark 2005; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Rawlyk 1996; Reimer 2003; Roof 1999; Smith and Denton 2005; Smith and Snell 2009; Stark and Finke 2000; Wuthnow 2007).
[2] As we will see in chapter five, the contemporary debate over secularization between Steve Bruce and Rodney Stark or Reginald Bibby and Kurt Bowen, for example, is clear evidence of this problem. These conflicts are rooted not just in deeper theoretical positions, but also in methodological decisions and interpretations.

people based on religiosity levels (Thiessen and Dawson 2008: 407). This is because more indicators give the reader more and precise information about respondents' attitudes and behaviours, which in turn lends itself to more well-rounded and informed data interpretations. After going through the process of gathering first-hand interview data, and coding and analyzing the volume of information that participants shared, I see the challenges of such an endeavour. Finding individuals who share the exact same five or six characteristics in terms of religious beliefs and practices is difficult, though not impossible. Consequently, though I still favour demarcating groups with more rather than less measures, it is pragmatic to follow Bibby's lead to distinguish active and marginal affiliates, based solely on their identification status with a religious group and their frequency of religious attendance. We will see, however, that there are several other traits common to active and marginal affiliates that help us to understand these two groups better. Not only this, but after interviewing and analyzing active affiliates, it became clear that they vary in terms of religious upbringing and in their differing liberal and conservative views about religion and the world. Furthermore, not all marginal affiliates have the same motivations for selectively turning to religious organizations or do so on the same occasions. As I present and discuss some of these similarities and differences, I am not claiming, unless indicated otherwise, that there is a straightforward causal relationship between various factors and people's religious beliefs and practices. All I am arguing is that correlations do exist between certain variables and people's religious attitudes and behaviours, and further research (e.g., qualitative research with larger sample sizes or multivariate statistical analysis of large survey sets) is needed to pinpoint specific cause-effect relationships.

In light of the methodological dilemmas outlined above, I follow the excellent qualitative work modeled by people such as Reimer (2003), Roof (1999), and Smith and Denton (2005), and

present three active affiliate stories[3]—Andrew Donnelly, Becky Eagleton, and Cam Bender—and three marginal affiliate stories—Emerson Cairns, Emily Foster, and Debbie Fisher—whose narratives, though their own, resemble many others who I interviewed. Their stories help us to connect real lives to abstract sociological concepts and theories and vice versa. All three active affiliates identify with a religious tradition and attend religious services weekly; however the trajectory that they followed to get where they are today varies. Andrew Donnelly was raised in a religious home where he and his parents attended a Salvation Army church each week, and he is now actively involved in an Anglican church. Becky Eagleton was raised attending a variety of evangelical Protestant congregations, including the Alliance, Baptist, and Full Gospel denominations. However, she made a conscious decision to abandon ongoing church involvement for a period of time before eventually returning to regular participation in a Baptist congregation. Cam Bender had almost no exposure to religion or religious organizations growing up but went through a conversion process in his mid-thirties that led him to being actively involved in a local United Church of Canada congregation.

The three marginal affiliates identify with a religious tradition and attend religious services sporadically. However, the reasons and occasions for their involvement differ. Emerson Cairns rarely attended religious services growing up, but now primarily attends a United Church of Canada church for religious holidays and to celebrate significant life events, such as weddings or the birth of a child. Raised in a religious home, Emily Foster attended Lutheran services regularly. Today her attendance patterns have tapered off to religious holidays and rites of passage in the Roman Catholic Church, the tradition that her husband was raised in. Debbie Fisher either has observed key life events in a church or may consider observing others there but

[3] To protect anonymity, the names used here are pseudonyms.

limits her exposure to church to those occasions when she is invited to another person's wedding, baptism, or funeral.

As I present these six vignettes, I am reminded of one main reason for why I am drawn to qualitative research. It is the opportunity to meet with individuals and hear them express, in their own words, their beliefs and experiences relative to the supernatural and their religious institutions, which leaves me in a privileged position to pass those along to readers. Hopefully I represent their views honestly and accurately, avoiding the pitfalls of qualitative research that Gary Fine (1993) warns against,[4] demonstrating the kind of care, precision, and fairness that those I interviewed generously showed me.

Active Affiliates

Andrew Donnelly: A Born and Bred Active Affiliate

Seventy-five year-old Andrew Donnelly welcomed me into his home on a June afternoon. He guided me to the kitchen table that overlooks the lush garden in his backyard, where, like so many of those I met with, he offered me a drink of water. Andrew is a retired teacher with a Master's degree in Religious Studies. Married and father to three children, he grew up in southern England along with his two brothers and two sisters, while his father served in the royal army before becoming an engineer in an aeronautic factory. While growing up, his family attended a Salvation Army church many times a week. When I asked if his family was fairly religious, he replied, "*Very* religious, yeah."

Andrew served as a musician in the army for two years after high school where he encountered and was transformed by a book by the Roman Catholic writer and monk Thomas

[4] Gary Fine (1993) outlines ten lies about social researchers. These include that researchers are kind, friendly, honest, precise, observant, unobtrusive, candid, chaste, fair and literary. He argues that researchers can easily fall into the trap of being deceptive throughout the research process in ways that range from pretending to like participants, to skewing or ignoring data from individuals that they disliked, to unfairly representing participants in the final write-up.

Merton. Though he valued his evangelical roots, which emphasized a personal relationship with Jesus, his reading of Merton facilitated a growing interest and desire for the sacramental and monastic features of the Christian life—features not commonly found in evangelical settings. This path led Andrew to formally join the Roman Catholic Church and become a monk. In the monastery he developed an appreciation for total commitment to God and the liturgical orderliness and structure of life, features which continue to affect his Christian life. After spending several years in a monastery, Andrew felt God calling him to pursue different vocations, those of husband and teacher.

While he still identifies as a Catholic, Andrew actively participates in an Anglican church. With his love of music, he began singing in the nearby Anglican congregation's choir where he is now actively involved. With respect to his religious affiliation, he states, "I don't think there's any reason why I should become an Anglican. I see myself . . . as a Catholic Christian." When I ask him how important his religious affiliation is relative to other identifiers in his life, Andrew quickly clarifies that I "have to define the word *religion*." This was a common sentiment among twenty-five of the forty-two that I interviewed. The word "religion" is problematic for active and marginal affiliates alike, conjuring up negative connotations of authoritarianism, sexism, legalism, and dogmatism. They prefer words such as "faith," "spirituality," or "personal relationship with God," terms that are less threatening, inclusive, and more acceptable in the wider culture. This finding is not surprising since scholars have increasingly accounted for this distinction between "religion" and "spirituality" in the last decade (see e.g., Bibby 2002: 194-202; Dillon and Wink 2007; Fuller 2001; Hood Jr. 2003: 249; Marler and Hadaway 2002: 294; Wuthnow 1998, 2001; Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott 1999: 901). What may be surprising to some who are not actively involved in a church is that regular attendees have just as many

problems with the word "religion" as those who do not regularly participate (see e.g., Cavey 2005; Levan 1995).

After he voiced his displeasure with the word "religion," Andrew acknowledged that his ties to both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches are not that important, but that his identification as a Christian is of primary importance:

> My Christian faith isn't something which is . . . laid on top . . . it's not *part of* my life. My religious faith is an expression of what is ultimately true in my life . . . Being a committed Christian doesn't mean that you say goodbye to all the other parts of life. It is something which is part *of* life . . . the Christian faith is a way of looking *at* life as a whole . . . There is no conflict between the ordinary and the spiritual. There is no conflict. It is the same thing as two things.

Andrew's statements represent a distinct pattern among most (nine out of thirteen) active affiliates that I interviewed who were raised in a Christian home and who have maintained or increased their level of involvement over time: they give little importance to their denominational affiliation.[5] Instead, they give overwhelming evidence that their religious faith as a whole is the most important thing in the world. Similar to other active affiliates that I met, one female in her twenties states that she desires to experience "God in all aspects of my life: my physical body . . . my emotional state, my family . . . Allowing God to be in charge of everything: finances." Put simply, religion functions as a master status that influences active affiliates' beliefs and actions in all facets of their lives.

As a Roman Catholic who attends an Anglican church, Andrew still holds on to the beliefs that shaped his evangelical upbringing in the Salvation Army, such as a belief in a divine being who is active in the world and has a personal relationship with humans. He also maintains that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God to His followers living on earth, to provide guidance and

[5] Donald Miller (1997) provides evidence to suggest that denominational affiliation is less and less important for people, and Clarke and Macdonald (2007) show the recent and dramatic rise in Canadians who simply identify as "Christian" versus identifying with any particular denomination.

direction for upright living. These beliefs are evident in Andrew's discussion of the indescribable and mysterious restlessness of the human soul that drew him to faith in God and to his church observance. Citing St. Augustine's *Confessions*, he claims, "Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." It could be argued that most (thirteen) other active affiliates I interviewed echo this belief, to the extent that they feel lost without a guiding sense of morality, meaning, purpose, and direction in life from God. Several active affiliates offered statements such as God "helps bring purpose and meaning to your life," God "puts things into perspective for me," or God reminds them "of the way you should be living your life." A marginal affiliate male in his early thirties declares that God provides him with "a set of guidelines. I need guidelines . . . I'll never live up to those guidelines, but at least I have something to . . . shoot for." The difference between actives and marginals lies in how they conceptualize, establish, and maintain their groups' "sacred canopy" in their personal life. For Andrew and other active affiliates, ongoing church attendance reminds them that God should guide their moral compass and frame their daily experiences meaningfully. Marginal affiliates do not feel the same pull, desire, or necessity to reinforce their belief systems weekly. They only require a few appearances at church each year.

I then ask Andrew, "Do you find that you gain anything specifically from your personal faith commitments?" Rather than offering what I expected would be a list of benefits for believing and belonging, he offered the following response:

> At least for the Christian, there's only one road to God, and that is by way of the cross. And the cross is not peace or tranquility . . . The cross is painful . . . If you're going to follow Christ . . . who is the crucified . . . the *crucified* Lord, then there is no way to avoid the cross . . . That means . . . that you cannot expect total peace. You can't expect an escape from conflict . . . the Christian life is not a departure . . . is not an escape from the . . . problems and the pains . . . of everyday life . . . it's . . . a more intense way of living everyday life. It's an intensity of living, and it's an intensity of joy, and it's an intensity of pain.

Five other active affiliates made this point, especially those with no religious upbringing: in order to be actively Christian one must surrender their life to the will of God in all things. One active affiliate says that "sometimes God asks you to do stuff that doesn't make any sense. You know, you give up control of your life." Another active affiliate states that "God asks for us to surrender. He says, 'Surrender all things to me,'" while another person acknowledges that "you don't get to make your own decisions. Your life isn't your own anymore. If you're serious about it, it's not your own anymore. So you're not . . . you're not the boss."

When asked if religion is primarily an individual journey or one that ought to be shared with others, Andrew suggests that religion is primarily an individual phenomenon, but that individuals are shaped by their surroundings. Individuals consciously decide whether or not to believe in God and they decide to change their lives according to a set of religious principles. Consequently, they acquire their initial ideas and concepts about religion from other people, and group gatherings help to challenge and reinforce these ideas.

I ask Andrew, "How influential is your own congregation in shaping your beliefs and practices?" He responds, "Indirectly only . . . indirectly. I don't think . . . when I was younger . . . I'm not so impressionable now as I was." Andrew's encounter with Thomas Merton and the Roman Catholic Church as a young adult exemplifies the stories of most active affiliates whose religious beliefs and practices were developed in their youth. Once those beliefs are established active affiliates seek congregations that reaffirm those values. In this light, interviewees in my study agree that social influences help shape their religious creeds and practices, but ultimately they are responsible for their beliefs.

To summarize, Andrew's story offers insights into the life-worlds of many active affiliates that I spoke with. They believe that their religious worldview shapes their entire worldview, especially for those who were raised in a Christian home and attended church

regularly. Their religious beliefs and practices guide how they act in the different spheres of their lives, including their economic decisions and the life choices they make regarding vocation or marriage, among others. This is further evidenced in Andrew's realization that to be totally committed to his Christian faith, he must submit his human will and desires unto God. In this, he and other active affiliates, particularly among those who were raised in a religious home, do not interpret their life as their own. It is God's to do with as He wants. As will be seen later, the same cannot be said about the marginal affiliates that I interviewed. Furthermore, regardless of age, those active affiliates who were raised in religious homes and who have maintained active involvement in a church place less importance on their denominational affiliation than their overarching Christian identity. This is illustrated in Andrew's exposure to various denominations and the low priority he places on them as an important identity marker. This is also reflected in Becky Eagleton's story, which I turn to next.

Becky Eagleton: A Raised, Abandoned, and Returned Active Affiliate

I approached Becky Eagleton's home on a dark November night. She greeted me at the door, along with her husband and young son, and welcomed me inside. As her husband and son left for the basement, Becky made me a cup of tea and we sat down in the main floor living room. Approaching her twenty-eighth birthday, Becky is a psychological assistant who works with children and adolescents with behavioural or cognitive challenges. She loves her job.

Becky and her two brothers grew up in Saskatchewan where their father worked in real estate and their mother stayed at home. Becky recalls, "I had a great childhood, a really close family." Their family attended religious services in an evangelical setting once or twice a week, and her parents attended a Bible study each Tuesday night. Her parents were actively involved in church activities, ranging from music to the prayer chain to helping in the nursery. Claiming that

denominational affiliation was not important to her parents (similar to Andrew Donnelly), Becky spoke of her parents' movement from a Full Gospel to an Alliance to a Baptist church. When asked about the motivation for changing congregations and denominations, she cites leadership. In some cases the pastor advanced beliefs that differed from her family's and so they left, while at other times they were attracted to the personality or preaching of a pastor from another congregation. Regardless of the denomination, they always sought solid teaching from the Bible, a strong desire of other evangelicals that I interviewed.

Religion was important to Becky's family when she was growing up, but when she entered grade ten, Becky quickly realized that her religious involvement was not "cool," according to her peers:

> I think it was hard for me to find my place as a Christian in a secular world . . . I was an athlete, and so I felt like I was always under scrutiny . . . people knew who I was and stuff, so it was really hard for me to balance Becky the athlete . . . with Becky the Christian because none of my friends were Christian. And so merging those two was really difficult for me . . . I never drank in high school. All my friends drank. I didn't do drugs. All my friends did drugs. I wasn't having sex with my boyfriend. All my friends were having sex with their boyfriends.

Becky struggled with this throughout high school, which continued into university when she began dating a non-Christian. Despite warnings from family and close friends that this boyfriend was not a good match for her, Becky ignored their advice and physically and emotionally detached herself from them. Her boyfriend lived out of town, so she spent many of her weekends visiting him. The combination of missing church when away on weekends and her boyfriend's active assault on her Christian faith contributed to a gradual move away from active involvement in church life. Becky's boyfriend was also critical of her physical appearance, which factored into an eating disorder that she developed.

Becky would eventually break up with her boyfriend, at which point she realized that she had distanced herself from God, her church, and her family. She also came to the conclusion that if she was to solve her eating disorder, she would need to correct her relationship with God:

> In order for me to really be a healthy person . . . I needed to revamp my relationship with God . . . I needed to understand that God loved me, that God made me, and . . . that's enough. Right? I don't need anything else. And so, for me to recover from an eating disorder, knowing those two things were critical, and so I had to learn about God in a whole new way than I think I had ever previously known him…I had a desire to understand God better and to figure out, for me, what it meant to be a Christian and felt like I needed to be involved in a church to hear someone talking about God to get a better idea of what that could look like.

As she processed these life changes, Becky was invited to get involved in a parachurch organization[6] where leaders were required to actively participate in a church. At the same time, Becky's good friend invited her to return to the church that she attended before dating the non-Christian. Becky's eventual return was aided by the combination of strenuous life circumstances and social supports encouraging involvement in church.

Today, Becky and her family attend a Baptist church weekly. She and her husband are involved in the church's children's ministry, she participates in a weekly women's gathering, and they are pondering joining a weekly small group. When asked how important it is that she is Baptist, she claims that it is not important at all and that if she were to shop around for a different church (which she is not currently doing), she would consider most other Christian options other than Roman Catholicism because it's "not a fit for me."

Similar to other active affiliate interviewees, Becky says she is drawn to church for three main reasons: to learn from the Bible and the pastor, to participate in a like-minded community, and to honour and worship God through music and prayers. One male that I interviewed says that he attends "to hear the Word, because it's good to hear." Another individual that I met enjoys

[6] A parachurch organization is a religious organization that exists independent of any single church or denomination, but fulfills goals that assist what churches are doing in areas such youth, poverty, evangelism, or music.

"the community, the camaraderie . . . the group of people . . . they're a group of like-minded people." One woman attends to "honour the Lord and worship Him," and another attends to focus "on the practice of worshipping and giving thanks." She says, "When I'm at home alone . . . I don't necessarily feel the same worship. There's times when I do, but, more often than not . . . there's something from being with others and praying together that . . . helps me feel like there's a life presence there."

An extrovert, Becky delights in getting to know other people and is drawn to the social aspect of church life. Being part of a group of like-minded individuals also helps to solidify her own beliefs about God and the world, while helping her and others cope with life's difficult circumstances. Interestingly, none of her closest friends attend the same congregation that she does, though most of them participate regularly in other Christian churches. In fact, only half of the active affiliates that I interviewed were close friends with anyone who attends the same church, and yet most were close friends with someone actively involved in another church.

While Becky highly values learning new insights and being challenged from Biblical readings and pastoral sermons, what makes Becky and some other evangelical Protestant active affiliates in my sample stand out is their belief that they do not need a church to learn about God and share in fellowship with believers:

> We attend a church because I think it's important to be involved in that community of believers. For me, that doesn't have to happen in a church, so I would be happy meeting with people in a home or wherever. I don't care if it's a church building . . . But the community that I experience in that . . . I do also experience with our friends, having a meal together, hanging out, talking about what's going on in our lives, what God's doing in our lives, or what we're struggling with.

To clarify what she meant, I asked, "Do you think you can have these more informal gatherings at the expense of Sunday morning church gatherings?" She replied, "Oh, for sure." Because this is a common belief among the understudied movement within Christianity known as the

"emerging church," which challenges traditional ways of doing church (see e.g., Bell 2005 and 2008; Frost 2006; Gibbs and Bolger 2005; Hirsch 2006; Jones 2008; McLaren 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007; Pagitt 2008), I pushed Becky a bit further and asked, "Do you think you need to have, for lack of a better term, a trained specialist, like a pastor, for example, to walk you through discussions, or is that something that can happen without that?" Becky confidently replied, "I think it can happen without that . . . I think if you're doing a more informal setting, if everybody . . . not everybody. But if enough people are of the same mind . . . like, here's what we want to do in these settings: we want to learn from each other; we want to grow; we want to challenge each other . . . then, yes, I think it can happen." Generally speaking, this may be indicative of openness among evangelical Protestants to creatively engage the surrounding culture in meaningful and relevant ways while also holding steadfast to their core convictions. These alternative religious group gatherings (e.g., home churches) are worthy of sociological study in the future.

Like Andrew, Becky has a difficult time with the word "religion," but claims that her personal relationship with Christ is very important. It is about "putting God . . . in the middle of what you're doing all the time, and so I would say that that is a mindset that I have, that God's just a part of me and a part of what I'm doing, and I try to keep that in the forefront of my mind, to be involving him." To accomplish this she tries to read her Bible regularly and reads a lot of Christian books about spirituality and about being a good wife and mother. Becky prays to God often, and she listens to worship music constantly. Becky also sees her job and relationships as "ministry" opportunities where she can share and model her Christian faith with others. This is important to Becky because she firmly believes that individuals must enter into a personal relationship with Christ, admitting they are sinners, and accepting God's grace and forgiveness in exchange for eternal life in heaven. While she does not force these beliefs on others, something that many active and marginal interviewees in my study are vehemently opposed to, she tries to

model Christian values and attitudes in her relationships with non-Christians in particular. It is important to Becky that her non-Christian friends are eventually "saved." Similar to Becky and other active affiliate evangelicals that I interviewed, one woman in her mid sixties diligently prays for her unsaved friends and family members:

> I think we should share it with others because you're so excited about it. I love to share it. I love to share it with . . . people that I come in touch with when the opportunity . . . I'm not nasty about it. I don't push it down their throat, but when . . . the subject comes up and I can sort of steer it that way, yeah. Because you want them to be saved, too. You know, that's always on my heart . . . for others to be saved.

Overall, Becky has a strong sense that she can depend on God's providence. She told me of a recent flight she was anxious about taking because it was on a really small plane. She prayed and asked God to calm her fears. Her family also prayed about the flight. Everything worked out fine on her flight, and she credits God's response to her prayers as instrumental to the outcome. Although some marginal affiliates provided instances of times that they too had depended on God, it was much more common for active affiliates to claim that they could unequivocally depend on God. Of course, there were also examples of active affiliates who prayed for a specific outcome that did not transpire, such as healing from sickness. But as we'll see in chapter four, they still found a way to explain this by stating that everything happens for a reason and God is in all things.

In sum, Becky's narrative validates some of the themes in Andrew's religious story such as denomination mattering little to those raised in a religious home or individualism sometimes ruling over group authority. However, her story introduces us to some additional characteristics found among the active affiliates that I interviewed. In contrast to marginal affiliates, active affiliates tend to believe that God is actively involved in the world. Whether they believe that God prevented someone from getting into a car accident, healed a family member of an illness, or provided for someone financially, active affiliates are more likely to believe that God is involved

in human affairs. This belief is reinforced through active affiliate religious practices as well, including tithing, private prayer, Bible reading, and serving others, beliefs that are encouraged in a larger Christian community and developed through pastoral interpretations of scripture. Becky's story also points to a belief and desire for life after death, which for most active affiliates in my sample outside of liberal congregations, such as the United Church of Canada, was specified to mean heaven and the avoidance of hell. Entrance into heaven was conditional upon a combination of factors that included God's grace toward humanity along with the individual's willingness to believe in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Combined, these things shape Becky's evangelical outlook on the world, namely that she should actively seek to convert others, not through invasive tactics, but through modeling a life of love and hospitality toward others.

The question arising from Becky's story is why she was raised in a religious home, abandoned any type of participation in her religious group, and then returned to regular involvement, when some marginal affiliates, as will be seen later, were raised in a religious home, also ceased their church involvement, but never returned again? Answers to this question as well as others relative to those who have increased their level of church involvement over time will become clear as the chapter progresses.

Cam Bender: A Transformed Active Affiliate

Cam Bender invited me to his downtown apartment in late October while his roommate was out for the evening. The view of the Rocky Mountains to the west was spectacular; the lights from buildings, cars, and street lamps were dazzling, and the energy of people buzzing around was appealing. Cam is a single thirty-seven year-old high school graduate who is an office manager for an oil company. He grew up in Calgary, the second of five children. His parents are

divorced. His mother, whom he lived with, worked in retail, and his father was a truck driver who was rarely around.

Cam recalls that his mother believed in God, but that his family was not affiliated with a religious group, never attended religious services, never engaged in religious conversations in the home, and the Bible on the bookshelf collected dust. He describes his family as a good one. There was no alcohol or drug use and they were not in trouble with the law. Cam claims that at the age of thirteen he became a "born again" Christian. Somewhat perplexed by this, given that he had no religious background and none of his friends were obviously religious, I asked him if anyone else introduced him to the idea of being "born again." He had difficulty articulating his conversion experience, but he indicated that it was *sui generis*. From that moment on Cam believed in God, though he did not appear to have any social supports before or for some time after to shape his beliefs.[7]

In his early twenties Cam attended a few religious services in his downtown neighbourhood because he was interested in the buildings' architecture. He also attended a few church services that friends invited him to, mainly for religious holidays and rites of passage. However, it was in his early thirties, when his younger brother (an evangelical Protestant) gave him *The Purpose Driven Life*, a best-selling book by Rick Warren (pastor of Saddleback Church

[7] It is not my intention, nor my role as a sociologist, to question the legitimacy of an interviewee's story. However, admittedly it appears odd that a person would come to accept a religious belief when they, at least from their own admission, had no social setting to even learn about this belief system. Where did such beliefs come from? I asked him about this later in the interview. He said that he began to read the Bible in his early teen years, to learn more about how he wanted to live his life and to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance in his life. This coincided with his "born again" experience. I could be wrong, but perhaps this is an example of someone projecting current beliefs and practices, or at least current terminology, on to past experiences.

in Lake Forest, California, one of America's largest megachurches)[8] that he seriously started thinking about religion and church involvement:

> I got to the part about . . . attending services and attending church and having a Christian family to support you and mentor and things like that, and that really hit home with me. I think God was kind of tapping me on the shoulder . . . that part was written for me. So I thought about it a long time . . . and I thought, "Well, where am I going to go to church?" So I kind of looked around, and I worked downtown, and I'd walked by the church a million times . . . And, when I really kind of started thinking about going to church or going somewhere to attend services, I walked by the church, and all of a sudden there it was. You know, there was just this big spotlight on it. I couldn't have missed it. And so I thought, "Okay, well . . . I'm going to go there and see what I think about it." And I went in, and I knew that was right where I needed to go. I never . . . because I live . . . within . . . walking distance of at least half a dozen churches, and I could have gone anywhere, but that was where I needed to go, and I really felt God was telling me . . . that's where I needed to go.

Today, Cam attends weekly services in the same United Church of Canada congregation that he first noticed years ago. The members' friendliness was appealing, which contributed to him staying. In terms of his involvements in the church, he recently helped lead a six-week church-wide discussion on the topic of "hospitality" and he volunteers as an usher on Sunday mornings.

I asked him how important it was to be part of the United Church of Canada as opposed to another Christian denomination and he indicated that it was very important, but not to the point that he would go around announcing his denominational affiliation to everyone. He would not consider changing religious affiliation mainly because "they embraced . . . the beliefs that I did have" (e.g., inclusiveness toward all people, especially the marginalized). As in Andrew and Becky's stories, here we see again a subtle form of individualism among those who attend church

[8] Rick Warren is best known for his "Purpose Driven" publications that include *Purpose Driven Church* (1995) and *Purpose Driven Life* (2002), which have captivated evangelicals around the world. Thousands of churches worldwide have modeled their organization after Warren's successful church plant in California, a church that has grown from zero to 20,000 over the last thirty years by targeting those who do not attend church regularly. His influence was also popularized in 2005 when Ashley Smith, a young woman held hostage by Brian Nichols, shared insights from *The Purpose Driven Life* with Nichols that ultimately convinced him to release her. Warren's influential reach is informed by theologically conservative views about homosexuality, abortion, and stem cell research, but also social action in areas of poverty, disease, education for the marginalized, and the environment.

regularly, not unlike the "privatistic churchgoers" that Grenville (2000: 218) discusses. These churchgoers attend services weekly, and yet while the church plays a role in reinforcing worldviews, it is ultimately the individual, not their church or its leader, who is the final authority of what they believe and how they behave (see Dillon and Wink 2007; Smith and Snell 2009).

Cam's core religious beliefs and practices center on his love of writing poetry. He gave me a copy of his latest book. It is filled with poems about everyday experiences of love, loneliness, and future goals, and repeatedly references religious and spiritual themes. This is one way that he expresses his understanding of God's sacrificial love and compassion for humanity. Cam enjoys walking on his own, listening to music, enjoying God's creation, and communing with and meditating on God. Each night he reads prayers, Scriptures, and stories from a devotional book before saying his own prayers. On the subject of prayer, Cam says, "I say my prayers every night. But . . . not only that . . . I find I pray throughout the day . . . I talk to God . . . say, I'm in a stressful situation at work or . . . I'm just saying, 'Oh, God, get me out of here . . . I don't want to wait in line here at Starbucks anymore. Get me out of here' . . . or, 'Move this line along,' or whatever . . . you just sort of pray silently in your head." It was interesting to note that the notion of prayer and a God who intervenes in world affairs is almost unique to Cam relative to other interviewees in my study from the United Church of Canada. Most other United Church members that I interviewed do not believe that God is actively involved in human affairs, maintaining instead that humans play the main or only role in how human affairs transpire. One male that I interviewed says, "I don't think that you can say that there is a God that acts in the best interests of human beings . . . I don't believe in the personified God which speaks to people, the bearded old man in the sky that threw lightning bolts at people, or whatever. It just doesn't make very much sense to me, and I think that . . . modern science has sort of revealed that." As a

result, he, and others, do not pray because they believe that their prayers cannot move God whom they are unsure even exists, or if he or she does, is not a puppeteer in personal or social events.

I asked Cam whether religion was important to him. He replies, "Oh, definitely. Spirituality, not necessarily religion because I'm not big on . . . you can't eat meat on Fridays, or you can't do this, or you can't do that or whatever, you know . . . they don't have a lot of those types of rules in the United Church. But spirituality, you know? Definitely. It's very important to me." Again, the term "religion" is troublesome to active affiliate interviewees.

I proceed to ask, "What does that word [*spirituality*] mean to you?" Cam replies, "I think it's just . . . communication with God, having Jesus in your heart, having the Holy Spirit within you, and being attuned to that, being able to listen to that . . . like, happened to me. Being able to interpret . . . what you're being told and understanding it."

When I ask Cam questions about his belief in the afterlife and what is required to obtain life after death, he, like other active affiliates, highlights the need to believe in Jesus, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that Jesus died on a cross for humanity's sins. Curious if any practices should accompany these beliefs, he replies "not really, no." In contrast to Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants, groups that stereotypically offer black-and-white answers about heaven and hell, Cam's conception of what is involved in obtaining life after death is fairly broad and inclusive in that particular religious practices are not required. But his belief is not as broad as fellow members of the United Church of Canada in my sample. Most whom I interviewed are either unsure about whether there is life after death, or they are not clear of what is required to go on to the next life, or they do not believe at all in life after death. For example, a United Church of Canada male says that he is "pretty agnostic on heaven," while another United Church of Canada female states, "Where we go from here, I don't know."

Cam's story teaches us two things. First, like Becky, choosing to pursue greater involvement in a religious group is sometimes influenced by one's social ties.[9] Cam's brother is a longstanding influence on how he thinks about religion, even though they do not attend the same church. That said, social ties are not always present, as was the case for a few active affiliates who developed an interest and eventual level of regular involvement in a church entirely on their own. These individuals were drawn to a church to investigate its beautiful architecture or attend a concert, only afterwards finding values in the church that echo their own. A marginal affiliate male that I interviewed reflects on one of those experiences:

> I went to a concert at [Alpha Church] . . . and they had . . . these bookmarks that were in the pews, and we looked at one that said, 'An open, accepting spiritual place for all people' . . . So we thought, 'Well, maybe we'll come' . . . And they had a rainbow flag on the . . . sign outside, and that's one of the things that my mom had always talked about . . . was connection with spirituality was acceptance of, I guess, more broadly, all people but . . . more specifically, I remember my mom talking about acceptance of gay and lesbian people into the . . . and [Alpha Church] had a nice little rainbow flag . . . that really appealed to me, and it kind of went from there.

Second, Cam's experiences provide insights to characteristics that are prominent among other active affiliates in the United Church of Canada that I interviewed. Without question, those from my sample lean toward the liberal end of the theological continuum when it comes to believing in a God, believing in a God who is active in the world and that they can depend on, believing in the afterlife, and the possible requirements to enter heaven (if there is a heaven). They also lean more to the side of individualism when it comes to their beliefs and practices, which they find is supported and encouraged in the United Church of Canada with its propensity for critical discourse about religious and secular ideas (see e.g., Graham 1990; Milton 1991). From my sample, religious beliefs appear more fluid and less certain in United Church circles

[9] This fact is supported in many studies on conversion, especially in studies on those who join new religious movements (see e.g., Dawson 2006; Harrison 1974; Lofland 1977; Stark and Bainbridge 1985).

than among Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, or Baptist interviewees who tend to be more theologically conservative.

Marginal Affiliates

Emerson Cairns: A Home Grown Marginal Affiliate

It was a cold March morning and the bitter Calgary winter had not yet subsided when I walked downtown to meet Emerson Cairns in his high rise corner office. We had been trying to schedule an interview for a couple of months, so I was hopeful that nothing would come up at the last minute that would take him away from our appointment. Thankfully he was there when I arrived and was welcomed into his office. Emerson, thirty-three, has a Bachelor's degree in geography and currently works as a director of a financial services firm. He is married, with one daughter and twin boys on the way.

The second of four children, Emerson grew up in Montreal where his father was an engineer and his mother stayed at home. His father has a Roman Catholic background and his mother was raised in the United Church. Although he does not describe his father as a devout Catholic, he characterizes his mother's parents as actively religious. His mother was also a Sunday school teacher in the United Church. When recalling his family's church involvement, Emerson indicates that it was limited to the United Church at Christmas, Easter, and when they visited his grandmother. Asked if religion was important to him or his family, he replied, "We're not atheist non-believers or anything like that, but . . . it doesn't make up . . . a big part of what we do or who we are." They did not pray, they did not read the Bible, nor did they talk about God or religious things.

Emerson has maintained a consistent level of church involvement throughout his life. Today he identifies with the United Church of Canada, though his affiliation with this

denomination means "nothing" to him because he knows almost nothing about other denominations. This is all he has ever known. Emerson and his wife were married in the United Church and they attend almost every Christmas. They do not really practice their faith in the home, and he is uncertain when I ask him about his belief in God:

> I think I do. I believe in something. I don't know if that's just been instilled . . . I don't know what side of the fence . . . I sit on . . . I have no reason to, but I . . . but you do . . . I don't know if I believe in a big bang theory any more than I believe in God. Right? So, you know, it's comforting to believe in God, versus, you know? But, probably, I believe more in the science . . . but God provides comfort.

He shows a similar apprehension towards life after death, unsure of what exactly happens after life on Earth.

I asked Emerson about the appeal of attending religious services selectively and to identify as a Christian while not subscribing to definitive beliefs about God or the afterlife or observing any religious practices in the home. For him, and many other marginal affiliates that I spoke with, religion is a source of good morals and principles in society (though he admits that religion is also a source of immense evil in the world, which marginal affiliate interviewees repeatedly noted). He says that he tries to do unto others as he would have them do unto him. He wants his children to subscribe to this belief, but he does not believe that he and his wife can suitably provide the framework for their children to live this out. He acknowledges that this is where the church and a trained specialist (i.e., a religious leader) may have more of a role in his family's life:

> Moving forward, we'll have . . . I don't want to say we'll have more influence, but . . . We'll expose our children . . . to it just so they get, sort of . . . a basic understanding . . . I don't think I'm capable . . . of conveying it properly to them . . . I'm not an expert, you know? But I think it's good for them . . . I had that basic knowledge that I feel like some degree . . . of desire to convey that to my children.

For those who are hopeful that individuals like Emerson might pursue greater involvement in their church, he qualifies the above statement later in the interview:

> I'd say I'd like for that to happen, whether or not I . . . am willing to be up at . . . I don't even know what time that starts on Sunday. Eleven? Ten? . . . We look at that as our day of rest . . . Like, we're busy the rest of the week and . . . But, again . . . I think it would be more along those lines of . . . to expose them that way. Maybe I'd just flip on channel whatever, get some Billy Graham.

On top of Emerson speculating about his future beliefs and actions, I posed some questions about his past and current beliefs and practices. I ask him, "What draws you on Christmas?" "Custom," he replied. Each Christmas his family goes out for Chinese food, they attend a Christmas service, and they watch *A Christmas Carol*, and the Chinese food is as important as the church service. Denying that he gains any religious significance when attending, he stresses that Christmas services are an opportunity for his family to spend time together. Not unlike sitting around the fireplace and talking, the Christmas service is another social event. He even leaves money in the offering plate, comparing the church service to watching a live show. He pays for the services that others offer for his enjoyment. In terms of the benefits of attending, he says that he feels good when he leaves; "it's nice to be there." It also helps remind his family that Christmas is not just about exchanging gifts.

Changing directions slightly, though still focused on selective attendance, I asked Emerson why he got married in a church. Emerson quickly commented:

> We wanted the ceremony . . . I didn't want to do it in a field or this or that with a justice of the peace or anything like that . . . There wasn't . . . I wouldn't say it was overly religious . . . there were some . . . undertones, but there was no readings . . . we didn't look and say, like, 'Do this." Like, it was, probably, 'the whatever one that everybody does.' He said, 'Pick one of these three.' It was like, 'Pick a box.' And so we had somebody do that . . . in my mind, that's where you get married: you get married in a church . . . and whether it's overly religious or not, we like to do it in a church . . . in that forum . . . we wanted people sitting in pews . . . we were up . . . on stage and that sort of thing, and . . . that worked for us.

I asked Emerson if there was "any sense of religious significance" in the ceremony. He responded affirmatively, seeing marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman. He rejects gay marriages and opposes polygamous forms of marriage on religious grounds. He

acknowledges that he does not understand the religious meaning, significance, and justification for Christian wedding rituals, but holds firm in his conviction that marriage is a practice instituted by the Christian church that should be observed and respected.

Some, like Kurt Bowen (2004), posit that religious belief and practice is more consequential for daily behaviour the more a person attends religious services. So I asked Emerson if getting married in a church had any impact on the quality of his marriage. He responded:

> No, I don't think so . . . But being married in a church and stuff like that? That was more . . . I don't want to say pomp and circumstance, but it was something that . . . we felt strongly about doing. I just can't tell you why . . . it was more . . . this is important because this . . . I don't want to say the perception and perspective or anything like that, but . . . it was the place where the ritual is conducted, and that's what we wanted to do.

Curious about the United Church's influence on Emerson's everyday activities, I asked him about whether religion should be primarily individual or social and how influential his own religious tradition is in shaping his beliefs and practices. Here is where a defining feature of the marginal affiliates that I interviewed, relative to the active affiliates that I spoke with, appears. They believe that religion is primarily an individual phenomenon. Emerson claims that "it's more individual . . . You've got a belief. That's yours . . . and that's your journey, in terms of where you want to go with that. And I believe everybody else is entitled to their own [beliefs]." Another individual that I met said that religion is "definitely an individual journey," while another marginal affiliate who I interviewed stated that "it's individual. From my point of view, it's an individual journey . . . I don't care if someone shares it with me, to be honest." Emerson justifies his response by pointing to the cultural value of individualism where individuals are entitled to choose their own belief system. He is especially adamant that groups should not force their way into an individual's space to convert them, such as Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, who have a negative reputation among interviewees for their door-to-door proselytizing. Emerson agrees that

churches have a role to influence members of their congregation, though he admits that his church has little say in his personal beliefs and practices: "They probably would prefer me to be more engaged et cetera, but . . . as long as I show up and bring a cheque and allow them . . . I appreciate what they do, and there's people who want to be much more involved and who can agree to exist on those terms."

To summarize, Emerson had some type of religious exposure growing up, he, like other marginal affiliates in my study, continues to attend at Christmas because it is a traditional custom, he was married in the church because that is where weddings should be held, and he wants his children to be exposed to church to gain good morals and values. In chapter six I examine the challenges of late modern life (see e.g., Giddens 1991) relative to tradition, and the role that a "chain of memory" (Hervieu-Leger 2000) might play in stabilizing individuals who are knowingly or unknowingly fearful of the growing sense of disconnection they have with others and even themselves. Beyond this, Emerson's uncertainty about God's existence or life after death is common among the marginal affiliates who shared their stories with me. However, his views about religion are unapologetically individualistic and he has little desire for greater church involvement. He is not alone.

Emily Foster: A Busy yet "Spiritual" Marginal Affiliate

Emily Foster, thirty-seven, is married with two children. She taught in the Catholic school system before having children, and is now a stay-at-home mother, although she regularly volunteers at her children's school. She has a busy life caring for her children, which made a telephone interview easier on her schedule.

Emily was raised in Calgary. Her father owned his own business and her mother was an accountant. Like nearly all marginal affiliates who I interviewed, her family was very religious

and actively involved in their church growing up. They attended a Lutheran church where her father served on the leadership board. Rather than attending Sunday school with other children, Emily attended the adult services and fondly remembers sitting beside her father each week. Sadly, when she was ten, her father passed away from complications with diabetes. This devastated her family. She recalls, "I think it was devastating. I was very close to my father, and we did a lot of travelling together . . . he was, obviously . . . a pillar of support in our family . . . and I think his death, actually, kind of had our family fall apart, to some degree." I asked how her church responded, and she remembers that they provided meals during the first few weeks after her father's passing. However, it was not long after when Emily's family did not feel like they belonged in this church without dad around. Emily recalls that "it just wasn't the same." After all, dad was the family's main connection to others in the church. They missed the strong sense of community that they once felt and decided to leave the local Lutheran congregation. Emily's mother stopped attending altogether, which Emily attributes to the new demands on a single mother's time. Emily did go on to visit a number of churches in the area, but never felt like she belonged. Her attendance at church gradually ceased.

Emily's mother moved back home with her own family when Emily was sixteen, leaving Emily to live with her sister and her husband. A short while later her sister moved away, meaning Emily was left on her own to rent an apartment. She worked three jobs during high school and university to pay the bills, maintaining high grades throughout. She described this time as a very busy one where she developed a strong sense of independence, a trait that has remained ever since. Needless to say, she admits that attending church again was not a priority during these years:

> I think, because my life was so busy working three jobs going through high school, doing all of that, I think the values—which, I think, were modeled through my father—and . . . some of the very simple basics . . . do unto others . . . I always thought it was very

> important to try your best to be honest. Some of those things really stuck, but the form of religion and the process of attending church . . . I think that, sort of, fell by . . . I think you return to prayer. You have faith to some degree, but it was such a busy time for me.

Emily rarely, if ever, attended religious services for some time, until she met her husband, who was Catholic. His mother wanted them to have a religious wedding ceremony in a Catholic church. It was not important to Emily to be married in a church, never mind a Catholic one, but she accounts for her husband's rationale for getting married in a church this way:

> "You know what? Well, first of all, you're not Catholic, so that's going to be hard on my poor mom. She's this old, and, you know, da, da, da . . . ." And I wasn't opposed to being married in a church. Of course, that was where my roots were. We grew up spending our time in a church, so I wasn't opposed to it. I don't know that I ever have embraced some of the ideals of Catholicism, believing that the sacrament must happen in the church and so, therefore, we had to be married in a church. So we tried to just, sort of, make it work for us.

Her husband's mother was also the main reason they baptized their children in the Catholic Church.

As it turned out, Emily and her husband really enjoyed the priest who performed their wedding and they began to attend regularly. They appreciated that Mass was not so formal, and Emily found that her experience there reminded her of the safe and comforting feeling that she experienced growing up in the Lutheran church. Unfortunately, the church closed down because there were too few priests to lead this congregation on the edge of the city where they lived. Emily and her family tried driving longer distances to other churches of various denominations, but they did not find a warm connection to any other church and they could not be bothered with driving around the city for a church as her family already commutes during the week for work and other commitments.

Currently, Emily attends religious services mainly for Christmas and Easter, though she does not necessarily attend every single year. This is not unlike the six other marginal affiliates I spoke with who take a hit-and-miss approach to attending for religious holidays. She offers

multiple explanations for why her family attends when they do. In part, it is routine; sometimes her children are involved in a Christmas presentation, and other times they have family from out of town who would like to attend. Part of Emily longed for the type of religious experience that she was exposed to as a child and in her early years of marriage, and she may even consider being more involved in a church, but she admits that it is difficult to sit through a church service while tending to two young children, and she cannot get past the driving distance to possibly find a church she feels comfortable in. She acknowledges that busyness is the main reason for not being more involved and she readily states that her family has not tried hard enough in recent years to find a church that would better suit their needs. Other marginal affiliates that I interviewed similarly speak about their busy schedules as a deterrent for attending church more often. One woman says, "Just having to get up on a Sunday morning, as bad as it sounds, when . . . you work so much, I guess. But that's really bad. That's bad. But, like, to be honest, that's part of it." Another male highlights, "That's all it boils down to . . . is time . . . you work your butt off all week . . . Sometimes you have to work two jobs so you get to come home, kiss the kids goodnight, have a bath, go to bed yourself, and then, all of a sudden, next thing you know, it's Saturday, and you're going grocery shopping, trying to catch up on stuff you've done all week, and then Sunday, honestly . . . you don't feel like it."

Emily's family, however, does possess a strong set of religious (or spiritual) beliefs and practices. Her children know about God, pray regularly, read their devotional books, attend a school that emphasizes being a good moral person, and help in giving money to charities. Moreover, Emily listens to spiritual leaders on her iPod when she is in the car. Her family also

spends a lot of time in the mountains, enjoying nature and seeing God's hand in the beauty around them.[10]

I asked Emily, as I did with all interviewees, "Would you say that religion is important to you today?" Similar to most that I questioned, religion was not that important, but spirituality was. For Emily, spirituality captures all of the non-formal, non-obligatory aspects of religion, features that she and many others in my sample believed were missing in the Roman Catholic Church. Spirituality is rooted in good morals and values, things that she learned when she was a child and desperately seeks to pass on to her children. I asked her if she felt that she was offering enough moral and spiritual training for her children. She lamented in the following way:

> I don't think so, probably. No . . . I think the idea is grand that you're going to do this, and you're going to do it in your own environment, but life is busy, and it's full, and, sure, I think that we're probably falling short of it, and, I think, if there was an option which was more accessible for us—for example, if that Mass was still available and if it was in our community—it really . . . I mean, they were playing guitars in the church, and, for a Catholic church, that's pretty . . . you know? People were coming . . . in nice clothes, but they would have jeans with a nice sweater on, and . . . it really rang true for us . . . what we were . . . it was a nice fit, so, I guess, if that was still available . . . But, maybe, that's not how it works. I know it's not really supposed to be like a buffet where you jump in and out, but, I guess, we lost that, and having not found that feeling again . . . we've kind of let it slide. So we're probably, no, not offering enough.

From Emily's story we see one of the leading reasons given for why marginal affiliates in my sample are not more involved in a church: they are too busy. In some families, both parents are working to pay the bills, or they are busy transporting their kids from one event to the next. Maybe they need time on weekends to complete chores, or they just want to enjoy Sunday as a day of rest. However one looks at it, active participation in a church is not seen as a big enough priority for marginal affiliates relative to other things in life. Applying rational choice theory, it is correct to say that active affiliates find more benefits and gains by attending regularly, so much

[10] Clark and Schellenberg (2006: 4) indicate that in Canada, 37% of those who rarely attend religious services and 27% of those who never attend services engage in weekly religious practices in the home.

so that they are willing to attend regularly in spite of their equally busy schedules. I demonstrate this with empirical evidence in chapter four.

The high level of spiritual belief and practice in Emily's home is interesting, and maybe surprising to some. It is true that some marginal affiliates that I interviewed have very low levels of belief and practice in the home, but Emily is not unique in her ways. Spirituality is important to her. Moreover, like Emerson, Emily wants her children to be raised with strong morals and values which she believes are found in religion and through trained specialists in religious settings.

Finally, Emily Foster's experiences once more illustrate the relationship between social ties and one's level of religious involvement. She ultimately stopped attending because her father passed away and she did not have other strong ties to keep her at any congregation. When she did return sporadically, it was because of her husband and her mother-in-law. As we'll explore in chapter four, the nature and type of social ties that a person has is strongly correlated to their level of involvement in a religious group.[11]

Debbie Fisher: A Sporadic Marginal Affiliate

Debbie Fisher and I met in a coffee shop on a bitterly cold afternoon in January. Plenty of people were buzzing around, hoping to warm up with a hot beverage, but this did not detract from our task at hand: discussing Debbie's religious beliefs and practices. Debbie, a forty-three year-old wife and mother of two, was shy throughout the interview and sometimes struggled to articulate her beliefs and experiences. Probing questions and a gentle approach helped Debbie open up about her life.

[11] A footnote to Emily's story is that some marginal affiliates that I interviewed, unlike Emily, ran away from church because someone they loved died and they blamed God for not intervening and saving them. They were filled with anger and hurt, and questioned God amidst their pain, leading them to the conclusion that they could not depend on God and thus it was foolish to continue to regularly participate in a religious group.

Debbie has a high school education and is currently a cash clerk, having also worked as a receptionist and newspaper courier in the past. Debbie grew up in Calgary as a single child. Her father was in the armed forces for a period of time before working in a warehouse. Her mother worked several jobs over many years, including lunch-room supervisor at school, in-home child care worker, jeweller, and bar tender. Debbie's parents never attended religious services, though her mother was "very much a believer." Her mother shared her personal religious beliefs with Debbie, emphasizing the importance of Christmas and Easter: "She believed it was important to know . . . for instance, the difference with Christmas . . . Christmas isn't about Santa Claus. It's not about presents. There's actually a meaning behind it . . . why it actually happens . . . and she felt that that was very important to explain that to me." This was the extent of her family's religiosity as she grew up.

Debbie valued the religious beliefs and stories that her mother passed on, and developed an interest in Christianity. Around the time that this interest developed, Debbie's neighbours offered her a children's Bible and volunteered to bring her to church and Sunday school, which Debbie appreciated and acted on. She cannot remember the church's denomination, but she remembers that she had a lot of fun attending, meeting friends, and learning more about God. After attending for at least a year, she is pretty sure that her neighbours moved away, at which point she stopped attending. When she entered her teen years she got involved with a youth group where the pastor organized activities and prayer sessions. She enjoyed this very much. At the end of high school she moved away where she then lost all ties to any type of religious group activity.

Right after high school, Debbie struggled to adjust to young adulthood. Living on her own and trying to figure out her place in the world was a fearful endeavour.[12] It was at this time of her life that she met her husband-to-be, which she expresses was a "blessing in disguise, actually. It was kind of like the knight . . . [to] rescue me . . . I was so young, still, at that time . . . he was kind of my support system." As they considered marriage, they contemplated marrying in a Catholic church since her husband-to-be was Catholic (although a non-practicing one), but they ran into some roadblocks: "We had some difficulties trying to get married. We wanted to get married through a Catholic church, and we were told no because I was not Catholic."

I asked Debbie, "How did it make you feel when you were told that you couldn't be married in the Roman Catholic Church because of the fact that you weren't Catholic but that he was?" She replied, "Oh, I guess my nose was out of joint . . . when I thought about it, I didn't feel that I should have to convert to be able to get married in the Catholic Church . . . and I would have had to have taken a course. It's not just that . . . to do that. At least, that's what we were told . . . And I wasn't going to be taken as is. I had to be someone different before they would accept me, and I think that was the whole point." Among other reasons that will be explored in chapter six, interpersonal or intra-organizational tension such as what Debbie experienced factored into why some marginal affiliates that I met, who once attended a church regularly, no longer do today. Many individuals were driven away from ongoing involvement in their church because of tension with other people in their religious group or their church's judgmental or selfish approach to people. On top of this, some that I interviewed justified why they are not more involved in "religion" by citing the atrocious things that religious groups have been involved with, such as financial and sexual scandals, and wars.

[12] See Smith and Snell (2009) and Wuthnow (2007) for an overview of the main challenges that young adults face in contemporary society, including things like post-secondary education, delayed marriage, uncertainties of work and money, and strained relationships.

Following her set back at the Catholic Church, Debbie ended up marrying in a Salvation Army church. She could not speak for her husband, but Debbie believed strongly in the necessity of being married in a church (including a desire for her children to be married in a church when they do marry), and to have Bible readings at the heart of the ceremony:

> I think they have great meaning, and I think they're something to live by, I guess, somewhat like a contract in your marriage . . . to some degree, I think those things should be incorporated into your marriage, and I think that the vows that you make have a lot to do with that, as well. Like, I think . . . it's one package . . . I don't think marriage is something to be taken lightly, and that is the place to be doing it.

Similar to the question that I asked Emerson, I asked Debbie if the Bible readings from her wedding ceremony had any impact on her marriage. She responded, "No. No, I don't . . . well, I shouldn't say that. I'm not so sure how my husband . . . I can't speak for him, but . . . yeah, I guess it would. It would because how I treat him . . . how I act as a person in general, not just with him but with anybody else that I'm involved with . . . Yeah, so in my marriage and outside of the marriage, too, I guess, it carries over, as well. So, I guess, yeah." Looking into the future, Debbie says that she would like her funeral to also be held in a church for the same reasons that she was married in a church. The religious readings and themes are too important to life to leave out of these momentous occasions.

Debbie claims that religion has a greater significance in her life since being married and having children. She believes that it is incredibly important to share her religious beliefs and practices with her children. For example, she does not want her kids to associate Christmas solely with money and presents. For her, Christmas is about connecting with a higher power—a being they can turn to in difficult times (something she says she has done in difficult circumstances). She helps instil these values in her children each night when she prays with them and encourages them to tell God what they are thankful for each day. She also gave her son a Bible which he has apparently read in its entirety a couple of times, even though she does not read it.

I then asked if she ever attends religious services, and if so, whether her children attend with her. Immediately I could tell that my question stirred up strong emotions inside of Debbie, feelings that were difficult for her to verbalize. She gently hinted at the fact that her husband did not approve of her and her children attending religious services either for religious holidays or on a weekly basis. She does not discuss these things with her husband because it introduces unwanted tension in the family, and she cannot pinpoint if her husband had a previous negative experience in the church that would precipitate his negative reaction. This awareness of his disapproval of church involvement largely limits greater participation for her and her children. Another marginal affiliate male that I interviewed offered similar information about attending church occasionally, stating that "family more than anything just thought it was crazy. They're, like . . . 'What are you doing that for? What are you wasting your time for?'" He went on to say that he attends on his own: "I don't even tell them I'm going there. I'm just, you know, going out for a walk . . . don't tell them and don't have to feel as . . . uncomfortable."

Debbie's current level of church involvement is limited to when she is invited to attend a wedding or a funeral, or when she occasionally drops into an open church or hospital chapel to pray and think about life. She does not identify with a specific denomination, like several marginal affiliates that I met.[13] I ask her about why she spontaneously visits a church or chapel to pray. Her response is insightful:

> Reconnect, I guess . . . with the symbol, maybe. The symbol of the building, the symbol of the church or the chapel. To me, the house of God, I guess. That's how it is . . . It just feels better . . . To gain a closer connection, I guess. To me, that would be the bottom line: just a closer connection or feeling closer . . . I think it's a connection with God, and I think it's a connection with me . . . like, a one-on-one, you know…I feel a closer connection . . . when I'm actually in the church or . . . or a chapel or whatever . . . It might sound funny, but it just feels more holy, a little bit more . . . stronger . . . a closer

[13] Outside of Roman Catholicism, no single denomination is represented more among marginal affiliates in my sample than those who do not associate with a particular denomination (see "Appendix A").

> connection. You know, it's the house of God . . . it's what it resembles. It's a symbol . . . it just feels like I'm in it and not outside of it.

She then discusses the community and warm atmosphere she finds in churches, going back to her teen years. However, she does not believe that people need separate religious institutions to find community or to be religious or spiritual. An individual's desire for community and for opportunities to share one's burdens with others can equally be fulfilled in other social outlets (e.g., at work). Despite not attending religious services regularly, Debbie is confident that she holds to the core religious values her mother passed along. These include being a good person, praying to God, reflecting on life, believing in God's sacrifice for people, and looking forward to eternal life.

As with Emerson, Debbie considers religion and spirituality to be private matters. She rejects those who try to force their religion upon others. When talking about how influential religious groups should be in shaping people's beliefs and practices (including her own), she offers the following comments:

> I think you take from it what you want, basically. It's up to each individual what they . . . walk away with . . . like, perhaps, it means certain things to different people . . . Like I said, it's a personal journey . . . I mean, the foundation is there, but, perhaps, one person from the next might take away something totally different from it.

Consequently, this value of individualism facilitated nine marginal affiliates in my study to abandon previous involvement in a church. Either parents decided to give their teen children the option to attend or people simply grew tired of submitting to church rules and authority. As I will expand on in chapter six, individualism is a significant challenge that religious organizations are up against, a finding that resonates with studies in recent decades (see e.g., Adams 2006; Bibby 1987, 1993, 2006; Bruce 2002; Dillon and Wink 2007; Roof 1993, 1999; Roof and McKinney 1987; Smith and Denton 2005; Smith and Snell 2009; Wuthnow 1998).

In contrast to almost every other marginal affiliate I interviewed, Debbie indicates a desire for greater involvement in a religious group. In addition to her husband's restrictions on greater involvement, Debbie says that if she had adequate transportation to get to and from church (she does not drive), she would consider attending more regularly. She also suggests that if church services were offered on a weeknight, then she would contemplate more involvement. She was very confident that if a religious group was located next door to her and if they offered services at a different time of the week that she would attend more regularly. When I probed if she had ever attempted to get more involved before, either in a church in her neighbourhood, or a church that offers mid-week services, she replied, "No, I haven't, other than . . . at one point in my marriage, I did talk about it with my husband . . . about attending, and that was shut down very quickly. And so, like I said, based on . . . what I've told you . . . it makes it difficult. Then it never went any further than that." While there appears to be merit in the supply-side argument, that if religious groups adjusted their supply of religion, then people would respond with greater involvement, Debbie's story suggests that factors beyond religious groups' control (i.e., her husband) are more powerful in influencing her involvement in a church. Only two other interviewees showed a genuine desire for greater involvement, each providing reasons beyond any church's control (e.g., the social cost of losing friends or if they were at a different stage of life). I expand on these themes in chapter six.

Debbie's account resonates in three ways with several other marginal affiliates' experiences. First, social support plays a role in a person's attendance patterns. She began attending religious services as a child because her neighbours invited her, and she stopped attending when her neighbours moved away. As a young adult, her husband filled a needed social support, something that many claim to find in a religious community. Put another way, if people's social needs are met outside of churches, which Debbie's are, then there is less of a

chance that they will seek a church for social reasons. Further to this, Debbie's hesitation to attend more regularly today is because of her husband's negative response toward these actions.

Second, when we compare Becky's story with Debbie's and try to understand why some people do not return to the church after a period when they were actively involved and then left, we see that religious suppliers play a role. In Becky's case, people from her congregation openly and generously encouraged her to return and she was warmly received. Debbie's experience with the Catholic Church at the time of her marriage illustrates the alienating impact of a "we'll accept you, but only if you change" stance, even if this was not the religious tradition that she was raised in. Other marginal affiliates provided me with countless examples of ways in which people in their congregation hurt them, preventing them from considering greater involvement again. Some marginal affiliates that I interviewed also discuss ways in which God let them down as a catalyst for decreased involvement. I turn to some of these examples when I test and apply various aspects of rational choice theory.

Finally, Debbie identifies sacred space in a religious building as influential for her sporadic religious attendance patterns. The idea that someone is closer to God and to themselves in a sacred space is not surprising, but it begs the question why someone would not pursue greater involvement if this was so important? Maybe the answer is that it really is not *that* important for marginal affiliates, an idea that I test in response to Bibby's renaissance thesis in chapter six.

Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to document some of the main similarities and differences among the active and marginal affiliates that I interviewed. To briefly summarize some of the major observations, we learn from Andrew Donnelly's narrative that most active affiliates in this

sample claim to orient their entire worldview based upon their religious values. This is clear when Andrew speaks of his Christian faith as a master status in his life, or when Andrew and Becky Eagleton place more importance on their Christian identification than their denominational affiliation, or when Andrew admits to submitting control of his life over to God. In my sample, active affiliates are distinct from marginal affiliates in this regard.

Becky's experience of relying on God amidst her fears to fly on an airplane illustrates another common trait among the active affiliates that I met, that they are more likely than marginal affiliates to depend on God and to believe that he cares about and is active in the world.

Even though both active and marginal affiliates in my study are critical of the term "religion" and the dogma and legalism that they believe accompanies this word, they both value trained specialists who can instruct them in the ways of their faith. Becky, an active affiliate, values the insights that she gains from her pastor, while Emerson Cairns and Emily Foster, both marginal affiliates, believe that religious leaders can provide their children with better religious instruction than they can as parents.

Active and marginal affiliates also discuss the benefits of interacting with like-minded individuals in a church setting, mainly to reinforce their religious belief system. However, actives maintain that more regular attendance is necessary to fully benefit from the community of believers, to strengthen their belief system, and to help frame their daily experiences in a meaningful way.

Both groups also demonstrate a propensity to elevate individual beliefs and practices over the minister or the church's beliefs, evidenced in each of the vignettes in this chapter. Still, marginal affiliates are more adamant that the individual is the ultimate authority of truth, best summarized in Emerson's statement that everyone is "entitled to their own [beliefs]."

Not surprisingly, a person's religious habits are strongly influenced by their social ties. For Becky, her boyfriend contributed to her declining involvement at church, and her close friends facilitated her eventual return. Cam Bender first entertained the thought of regular church attendance because his brother encouraged him to read a book about the Christian life, which included a discussion of getting involved in a church community. Emily Foster stopped attending religious services because her father passed away. Debbie Fisher chooses not to pursue greater involvement in a church because of the negative reaction from her husband. Each of these examples exemplifies the central place that people's social ties have in their religious decision-making processes.

In terms of belief in and desire for life after death, the marginal affiliates that I interviewed are less likely to believe in the afterlife or to strongly desire life after death. This point is apparent when comparing Becky and Emerson's accounts. Moreover, marginal affiliates are more vague in what they believe is required to obtain life after death, if there is a next life at all. The exception among the active affiliates that I interviewed is those who participate in a United Church of Canada congregation, such as Cam Bender.

From my interviews we discover that marginal affiliates attend religious services largely because of tradition (Emerson, Emily, and Debbie), an opportunity to spend time with family (Emerson and Emily), a chance to connect with a higher power (Debbie), and to develop good morals and values in their life (Emerson, Emily, and Debbie). Based on their own acknowledgements, it is doubtful that most, if any, marginal affiliates will actually pursue more involvement in their church; mainly because they are too busy for church, or the church or God has let them down, or they do not see the need for an external religious authority to tell them what to think and how to behave.

As we can see in this chapter, active and marginal affiliates are not homogeneous groups. Individuals have different life stories, experiences, and worldviews, and their religious beliefs and practices vary. Still, there are some overarching traits that help to distinguish active and marginal affiliates. These topics, and others, are central to the discussion and analysis in the chapters that follow. By explaining and applying rational choice theory, and secularization theory, we gain added insights into what explains higher and lower levels of religious involvement among active and marginal affiliates, while testing some of the suppositions that are central to these theories as well.

Chapter 3
Rational Choice Theory and the Sociology of Religion

Introduction

I now turn to Rational Choice Theory (RCT) to explain some of the findings presented in the last chapter (and those observations yet to come in the dissertation). The need to deal with RCT can be addressed in three ways. The most obvious reason is that RCT market language is found throughout Bibby's (1987, 1993, 2002) analysis of religion in Canada. A full assessment of Bibby's work, particularly his renaissance thesis, requires a sound grasp of his theoretical framework, especially since some of the limitations of his analysis are rooted in the flaws of RCT.

A second reason is that some see RCT as the new theoretical paradigm in the sociology of religion, replacing the old secularization model (see Jelen 2002; Warner 1993; Young 1997). Like Bruce (1999: 30), I would not go this far as I still find merit in the secularization paradigm. I think each theory contributes to a more informed assessment of the other. Still, I am aware of the increased attention that RCT has received in contemporary sociology of religion, and I see its usefulness for making sense of religious attitudes and behaviours.

Finally, while one of RCT's strengths is its emphasis on theory, some of its core axioms and propositions lack concrete empirical data. This is the case with aspects of the argument advanced in Rodney Stark and Roger Finke's *Acts of Faith* (2000), and Laurence Iannaconne's article, "Skewness Explained: A Rational Choice Model of Religious Giving" (1997a). Iannaccone openly admits that he does not *know* whether or not people are rational, but that rational choice assumptions have been useful in the social sciences for building and testing models of human behaviour. He goes on to encourage empirical research that addresses micro-level questions relative to rational choice theory and religion (1997a: 41). Steve Bruce (1999: 43-

44, 121), Mark Chaves (1995: 99), N. Jay Demerath III (1995: 105-106), and Mary Jo Neitz and Peter Mueser (1997: 111-117) all echo Iannaconne's endorsement of micro-level research, calling for qualitative studies that examine individuals' stories, cultural context, the variation between cases, and religious production processes. To my knowledge, this study is one of the first attempts to empirically test some of Rational Choice Theory's foundational axioms and propositions.

Among the many axioms and propositions in RCT, I single out three themes in this dissertation: religious costs and rewards, religious supply and demand, as well as the social nature of religion. I isolate these topics because (a) they are central to rational choice theorists' attempts to explain religious behaviour (themes that largely have gone untested), (b) they directly intersect with the fundamental assumptions surrounding Bibby's renaissance thesis, and (c) they are most relevant and useful for comparing and explaining the main similarities and differences between the active and marginal affiliates that I interviewed.

The following questions are examples of how these three themes can help us to test and explain RCT and Bibby's renaissance thesis, and to further compare active and marginal affiliates.[1] In terms of costs and rewards, how exactly do active and marginal affiliates make sense of the religious rewards that they pursue and the religious costs involved to obtain those rewards, and how do past exchanges with the gods and others influence current and future religious decision-making processes? For instance, comparing Becky Eagleton and Emerson Cairns' belief in or desire for life after death reveals that they view religious rewards differently that, in turn, impacts their religious beliefs and behaviours. How might we explain this? With respect to religious supply and demand, do people have an inexhaustible demand for rewards that

[1] The language used in these questions is drawn from Stark and Finke (2000), the most prominent proponents of Rational Choice Theory.

only religion provides, such as life after death, and do people turn to religious groups primarily for religious reasons? Is the supply of religion really the main variable to consider in shaping people's religious preferences and motivating them to commit to a religious organization? Emerson, Emily, and Debbie's stories each suggest that they do not necessarily turn to their religious group for religious reasons, and when asked about their potential future involvement in their group, they reveal factors that are largely beyond religious groups' control. These observations at least raise the need to explore these rational choice assumptions further, particularly when they are so important for Bibby's renaissance thesis. Regarding the social aspect of religion, is it true that an individual's confidence in religious explanations is strengthened when others express confidence in them, when individuals participate in religious rituals, and when people conserve their social and religious capital? If this is the case, then to what degree and how precisely is this the case? The vignettes in chapter two reveal that social ties are correlated with people's religious involvements, and addressing these questions about confidence in religious explanations may help us to further, and more precisely, evaluate whether or not the rational choice claims resonate with humans' lived experiences.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the basic premises behind RCT relative to sociology as a whole and the study of religion within sociology. Following this I explain some of the drawbacks of RCT in the sociological study of religion. Admittedly, this chapter is dense but it sets the needed context for the next chapter, where I will draw on my interview data to empirically test fundamental axioms and propositions in RCT. My goal is to follow Chaves' (1995: 99) example of evaluating and testing particular aspects of RCT that either lack empirical data or are logically suspect and thus need further examination. Upon examining my interview data from both active and marginal affiliates, I will argue that RCT has, in part, failed to satisfactorily deal with the topics of religious costs and rewards, religious supply and demand, as

well as the social nature of religion. This exploratory exercise, if nothing else, may validate the theory or will raise some legitimate challenges for it—both beneficial to the advancement of knowledge.

Rational Choice Theory

RCT has gained momentum as a universal theory to predict and explain social life, a theory influenced by economists, sociologists, political scientists, psychologists, and anthropologists. Of its many objectives, one is to elevate the role of theory in academic inquiry where some believe rigorous deductive theorizing is lacking (Iannaccone 1988, 1995a; Stark 1997; Stark and Bainbridge 1996 [1987]). Rational choice theorists believe that this endeavour will provide theories mutually applicable and useful to fields like sociology, psychology, and economics. In the sociology of religion RCT has received growing interest for its theoretical rigor, primarily because of the work of sociologists and economists. Therefore, to fully appreciate the assumptions and application of RCT to the study of religion, it is useful to first summarize the basic ideas about humans as rational actors, found in sociology and economics.

In sociology, George Homans (1961) and Peter Blau's (1964) exchange theories are especially influential, incorporating behaviourist and economic ideas into theories about social structure, power, and inequality. George Homans' behaviouristic exchange theory proposes that we can better explain the social structures around us if we understand humans' face-to-face interactions. He posits that human interaction is based on the realization that others meet our needs by conferring rewards and punishments. In this people pursue rewards that they attach a high value to, but recognize that the probability of certain goals being met is not always high. Homans expresses this in the following formula: *Action = Value x Probability*. The course of action that one chooses is dependent upon the value of the reward along with the likelihood that

the reward will be received. For instance, if $Action_1$ is highly valued (e.g., 100), but the probability of that action being successful is low (e.g., .10), and if $Action_2$ is less desirable (e.g., 50), but the likelihood of that action's success is higher (.90), then the second action will be chosen (since 100 x .10 = 10 and 50 x .90 = 45).

Peter Blau's (1964) dialectical exchange theory conjectures that the more rewards (and valued rewards) that one expects to gain from another, the more likely it is that they will enter a relationship with that person. In this, past exchanges impact current and future exchanges. If past exchanges were reciprocal, leaving both parties satisfied, then the greater the chance that future exchanges would take place. Yet, while some individuals have services that others want, this does not mean that the "wanting" individual necessarily has something of equal value to offer in return. Power dynamics often ensue, where the person with most of the perceived power can generate compliance from the other. The fewer alternatives that the "wanting" person has, the more valuable the reward offered by the person in power becomes. Further, the less the "wanting" individual can survive without the desired reward, the more power the other has to dictate the terms of exchange.

In economics Laurence Iannaccone is known for his deductive approach to studying religion, influenced largely by economist and sociologist Gary Becker (1976). Becker's economic understanding of human behaviour is grounded in three assumptions: maximizing behaviour, market equilibrium, and stable preferences. The first idea proposes that people make decisions with the goal of maximizing gains and minimizing costs. This applies to everything from choosing a chocolate bar to one's friends, a job, or a church. The second element of his theory indicates that suppliers of a product (e.g., religious groups) constantly adjust to consumers' demands. Finally, Becker highlights that individual preferences are stable and that any changes in the market economy are most often due to changes in supply.

Some researchers who study religion have built a theory on this framework, namely Rodney Stark, William Sims Bainbridge, Roger Finke, and Laurence Iannaccone (though Rodney Stark is the central figure). Three books in particular stand out: *The Future of Religion* (Stark and Bainbridge 1985), *A Theory of Religion* (Stark and Bainbridge 1996 [1987]), and *Acts of Faith* (Stark and Finke 2000).[2] Here rational choice theorists have explored an array of topics at both the micro- and macro-levels, including: involvement in "strict" congregations, the problem of "free riders," religious conversion, religious monopolies and religious pluralism, secularization, and the nature, rise, and distribution of sects and cults. Without question an entire chapter could be devoted to summarizing and critically engaging each of these topics (see e.g., Bruce 1999; Bryant 2000; Young 1997). However, as already noted, three themes are pertinent to better understanding the similarities and differences between active and marginal affiliates, and evaluating Bibby's renaissance thesis: religious costs and rewards, religious supply and demand, as well as the social nature of religion.

A Theory of Costs and Rewards

The rational choice theory of religion is built on a particular definition of religion and subsequent ideas about costs, rewards, and compensators. Drawing on the work of anthropologist James Frazer, Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 5) claim that religion is based on a belief in the supernatural and that the supernatural is actively involved in shaping events on earth, while humans attempt to please the supernatural in the process. They define religion as "human

[2] For more discussion and application of rational choice theory in the study of religion, see Brewer, Jozefowicz, and Stonebraker 2006; Ellison 1995; Finke and Stark 2005; Iannaccone 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b; Iannaccone, Olson, and Stark 1995; Iannaccone and Everton 2004; Olson and Perl 2005; Stark and Bainbridge 1996 [1987]; Stark and Iannaccone 1994.

organizations primarily engaged in providing general compensators based on supernatural assumptions" (1985: 8).[3]

With this definition as their base, Stark and Bainbridge provide three axioms that explain human behaviour in general, but that can be applied to the study of religion. Their first axiom, following the tradition of social exchange theorists and economists, states that "humans seek what they perceive to be rewards and try to avoid what they perceive to be costs" (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 5). By rewards, Stark and Bainbridge (1996 [1987]: 27) mean "anything humans will incur costs to obtain," while costs are "whatever humans attempt to avoid." As an example, Stark and Bainbridge (1985), in their discussion of sects and cults, comment that those who choose to join deviant religious groups incur social costs of alienation and stigmatization, from friends, family, and the broader society. In return, they gain religious and secular rewards such as inner peace, social support from fellow believers, and financial support from the religious community.

The pursuit of rewards and avoidance of costs is sometimes influenced by individuals' social and biographical context and individual preferences. For example, Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 102-103) assert that those in positions of power in religious organizations place a higher value on worldly rewards, such as power or popularity. The powerless, on the other hand, desire other-worldly rewards such as eternal bliss, to make-up for the lack of material wealth on earth. In sum, like the economist, the rational choice theorist in the sociology of religion believes that religious decisions are made like non-religious decisions, by freely pursuing rewards and avoiding costs.

A major criticism that sociologists initially directed against RCT was that actors, when making religious decisions, do not actually have as much agency as rational theorists lead us to

[3] I define and explain "compensators" later in this section.

believe. Instead, a variety of external factors bind people's attitudes and actions. One constraint is social ties (Bruce 1999: 78, 126-127; Ellison 1995: 95; Sherkat 1997: 68). The way that a person is socialized influences what religious beliefs and practices are "normal" or "deviant," desirable or undesirable:

> For instance, individuals socialized within more lenient groups and traditions may find the very notion of imposing sacrifice and stigma repugnant – a violation of personal privacy, a denial of personal autonomy, or a diversion from 'true' spiritual pursuits. Thus, when selecting a new religious affiliation, they may begin by excluding some or all strict groups from the field of possible choices – perhaps out of opposition to religious demands, or because of other biases and social pressures against joining strict groups. Similarly, persons raised within strict traditions may well exclude more lenient groups from serious consideration, viewing those groups as outside the pale of 'real' religion (Ellison 1995: 95).

This is why Becky Eagleton stated that if she were to look for a different church, she would not entertain a Roman Catholic congregation because their beliefs and practices deviate too much from her evangelical Protestant roots. In this sense religion is not so much an achieved status (though it could be), but rather an ascribed status at birth. Further, social ties, like Debbie Fisher's husband, can be equally restrictive for a person's religious decision-making processes, which in Debbie's case limits her from pursuing greater involvement in a church.

Another constraint is lack of available options (Heath 1976: 46). Those in the remote jungles of Africa have a different quantity and quality of food options than those in Toronto. The types of congregations available to someone in a hamlet of 200 people versus a large city of three million influences the amount of choice that a person has. This is important to realize when RCT implies that religious consumers can shop around for the best religious product to meet their needs. The theory is too simple to fit reality.

Stark and Finke acknowledged these limitations in later revisions to the theory, stating that "people make religious choices in the same way that they make other choices, by weighing the costs against the benefits . . . within the limits of their information and understanding,

restricted by available options, guided by their preferences and tastes, humans attempt to make rational choices" (2000: 85). By adding these qualifications, Stark and Finke respond to their critics by stressing the subjective nature and interpretation of what it means to be rational. It is inaccurate to suggest that a decision is irrational just because someone has limited or faulty information, but rather it is the *intention* of rationality amidst the available information and options that is important to bear in mind. Stark and Finke equally acknowledge that social ties can be a constraining factor, but this does not mean that these constraints are not accounted for as individuals make rational choices about what religion they choose to believe and practice. In the end, Stark and Finke still advocate for the view that individuals possess high levels of agency in decision-making processes, and they call on sociologists to look objectively at people's decisions, their processes for arriving at those decisions, and then evaluate the impact of those decisions (also see Bruce 1999: 36).[4]

Stark and Bainbridge's (1985: 6) second axiom suggests that rewards are not always accessible to all people and some rewards are not available at all. For instance, power is a scarce resource. Not everyone can be in positions of power. Or consider eternal life, which is supposedly "the single most urgent human desire" (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 6), and yet is assumed to be unavailable in this world. The question that inevitably arises is how and why do people continue to pursue rewards that are, for all intents, unattainable?

The answer emerges in Stark and Bainbridge's third axiom: people create, exchange, and accept compensators. A compensator is "the belief that a reward will be obtained in the distant future or in some other context which cannot be immediately verified" (Stark and Bainbridge

[4] Despite Stark and Finke's revisions to their theory, they can still be criticized for advancing a theory that is not falsifiable. According to their theory, it is impossible to falsify their fundamental claim that all actions are based on rational processes. However, their theory differs from economic settings where it is straightforward to quantify one's pursuit of maximization of utilities (and thus to demonstrate irrational decisions). In many ways, their theory is filled with tautologies.

1985: 6). They quickly point out that this term is not intended to be derogatory, as in the way Marx suggests that religion is a drug for the masses. Instead, the word describes how people create beliefs about how to gain a reward in the future when it is not immediately available.

Stark and Bainbridge talk about two types of compensators, specific and general. Specific compensators deal with rewards in a limited way (e.g., a child is promised candy if they clean their room), while general compensators promise rewards that are far reaching in their consequences (e.g., the belief that life has meaning or that there is life after death). Regardless of the type of compensator, each are akin to delayed gratification or an IOU, and they give the individual or group the sense that it has control over accessing desired rewards. As sociologists of religion have tracked for decades, religion is one of the most powerful legitimating frameworks for people to make sense of the world. When it comes to religious compensators, people believe that if they abide by certain rules (e.g., do not steal), then they have control over the most general religious rewards, such as experiencing a happier life now and an eternal one later. Both Andrew Donnelly and Becky Eagleton, and others who I interviewed that are like them, exemplify Stark and Bainbridge's points about the role that compensators can play in shaping a person's religious orientation toward the world, both in this life and the next.

In *A Theory of Religion* (1996 [1987]), Stark and Bainbridge modified their definition of compensator to accommodate a new term, "explanation," in their theory. By definition, "explanations are statements about how and why rewards may be obtained and costs are incurred" (1996 [1987]: 30). When rewards are not readily available, humans create and accept explanations about how their reward can be obtained in the future (1996 [1987]: 35). Given the close proximity of this definition to their initial idea of compensator, Stark and Bainbridge redefined compensator to mean "postulations of reward according to explanations that are not readily susceptible to unambiguous evaluation" (1996 [1987]: 36). When comparing their

original definition of compensator with the later additions of explanation and compensator, confusion ensues. It appears that the first definition of compensator and the definition of explanation are very similar if not identical, leaving the new conceptualization of compensator redundant and less useful (see Bruce 1999: 31-33). As a result, Stark and Finke eliminated the idea of compensators altogether in their latest version of the theory, relying instead on the word explanations or "conceptual simplifications or models of reality that provide plans designed to guide action" (2000: 87). Stark and Finke once again ascertain that individuals create and accept explanations for obtaining rewards in the future. Furthermore, Stark and Finke adjusted their initial classification of religion to more accurately reflect the shifts in their theoretical language: "Religion consists of very general explanations of existence, including the terms of exchange with a god or gods" (2000: 91).

What makes this theory directly applicable to religion is its insistence that some rewards, such as eternal life or an understanding of the meaning of life, can only be obtained when one assumes that the supernatural exists and is responsible for giving the reward to individuals (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 7). Not only this, but throughout Stark, Bainbridge, and Finke's work we find that they believe that most if not all people desire life after death. Stark and Bainbridge insist that "the single most urgent human desire" is eternal life (1985: 6). They go on to suggest that "so long as humans intensely seek certain rewards of great magnitude that remain unavailable through direct actions, they will be able to obtain credible compensators only from sources predicated on the supernatural" (p.7-8). In *A Theory of Religion*, Stark and Bainbridge (1996 [1987]: 315) comment that "all humans share the desire for very general rewards, such as everlasting life, which seem unavailable to anyone this side of paradise." Stark and Finke argue that "religion is the only plausible source of certain rewards for which there is a general and inexhaustible demand" (2000: 85).

When we consider these axioms sequentially, along with the rational choice definition of religion, an implicit assumption becomes clear: individuals and groups believe that the gods (if they exist) have some degree of control over who obtains religious rewards (both in this world and the next).

> (A) Religion is based on general explanations of existence and a belief in supernatural beings, who are involved in human affairs and who humans attempt to please.
>
> (B) Humans seek religious rewards and avoid religious costs.
>
> (C) Since not all rewards are available, people create, exchange, and accept explanations about how and why rewards can be obtained in the future.
>
> (D) All people desire life after death, a reward that is not empirically verifiable and is believed to be controlled by a supernatural force.

Accordingly, rational choice theorists have extended social exchange theories to include exchanges between humans and the gods, premised on the human desire for religious rewards (Stark and Bainbridge 1996 [1987]: 81-86; Stark and Finke 2000: 83-113). However, what exactly are the terms of exchange between humans and the gods?

The main factor to consider when exchanging with the gods is the costs. What are individuals willing to pay the gods and what factors influence this decision-making process? Stark and Finke (2000: 97-98) argue that humans will pay higher costs to the extent that the gods are believed to be dependable, responsive, and of great scope. A dependable god can be relied upon to keep their word with humans, a responsive god is concerned about and acts on behalf of humans, while a god of great scope has a diverse array of powers and range of influence with which to meet human needs. A god of great scope is especially appealing. In polytheistic settings, people shop between gods who have limited power to only heal illnesses or curse others or bring rain for farmers' crops or help a couple with fertility. Gods in these settings have limited power over a person's entire life. A monotheistic god, on the other hand, is believed to have a greater

scope of power over all facets of a person's life, both on earth and in the afterlife. The monotheistic god is more convenient because it is believed to be able to heal illnesses and curse others and bring rain for farmers' crops and help a couple with fertility (i.e., akin to one-stop shopping). The combination of these rewards, which in total is a single god's loyal protection of an individual in all aspects of life means that people are willing to pay higher costs in exchange for these valuable rewards. To the degree that individuals believe their god or gods score high in these areas, they are more likely to engage in extended and exclusive exchanges with them (p.99-100).[5] This means that people will make periodic payments over an extended period of time and they will make exchanges with one god only.

Heath (1976: 7-18), Iannaccone (1997a: 33-35), and Stark and Finke (2000: 106-113) note that when individuals make exchanges (with people or gods), some exchanges are riskier than others. Riskless exchanges are those made after comparing all of the available options, and then proceeding with the one that gives the actor a high level of certainty that the desired outcome will occur. Riskless exchanges tend to be informed by past experiences, when individuals or groups experienced their god as dependable and responsive and in turn responded with extended and exclusive exchanges. In some ways, Becky Eagleton's experiences affirm this type of exchange, both when she decided to resume regular church involvement and when she (and those around her) prayed about her flight experience. A person's level of risk is also decreased when others share the same religious explanations and when they jointly participate in or witness an array of religious phenomena (e.g., religious rituals, prayers, miracles, or mystical experiences) (Heath 1976: 46; Iannaccone 1997a: 33-35; Stark and Finke 2000: 96-111).

[5] The logical question is how does one know if a god has been dependable, responsive, or of great scope. Rational choice theorists point to past experiences; individuals will know from their past experiences whether their god has "delivered" in response to their sacrifices or prayers. In the next chapter I present data on questions that I asked active and marginal affiliates about their past experiences in these areas of dependability, responsiveness, and scope.

High risk exchanges involve people's attempts to minimize their losses rather than maximize their gains. This is why people have house insurance. The thought of losing all of one's possessions is a greater burden than spending ninety dollars a month to insure everything, even if one never uses the insurance. This is akin to Pascal's Wager, where people assume a 50/50 chance that God exists. Rather than assuming that God does not exist and running the risk of going to hell, people choose to believe that God does exist. If they are correct, great, but if not, the costs are minimal, relative to the risks (i.e., cost) of eternal damnation. Some marginal affiliates that I interviewed adopt this position when it comes to attending church for religious holidays. One male in his early forties admits that "if I don't attend then, I'm going to hell." Another marginal affiliate, a female in her late forties, comments about people in general and says that "we were taught that if you don't go any other time of the year, you have to go then [Christmas and Easter]. Maybe they're afraid they won't go to heaven if they don't go." I ask her if this is a personal fear, and she says, "I guess I would feel that way." I then asked if she shares the same fear for her children, if they do not attend for religious holidays, and she again responded affirmatively. In total, people's assessment of costs, rewards, and risks informs how and why they make exchanges with the gods.

A Theory of Supply and Demand

As has been demonstrated, rational choice theorists posit that individuals have a never ending demand for religion (see e.g., Bibby 2002, 2004; Iannaccone 1997a: 28-29; Stark 1997: 46-48; Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 6-8, 431; Stark and Bainbridge 1996 [1987]: 101, 315; Stark and Finke 2000: 85, 89). But if this is true, how do we explain varying levels of religious belief and practice within and between nations?

One explanation is that there is variation in individuals' tastes and preferences (Stark and Finke 2000: 38, 86). Sometimes this is attributed to one's culture and the way that they are socialized. This is why preference for one religion over another takes place, or why certain styles of music are more preferable to others. Psychological and idiosyncratic variations also help to explain differences in tastes and preferences. A person's tastes are influenced by whether they are an introvert or extrovert, thinker or feeler, leader or follower.

A second explanation, and the one that rational choice theorists endorse most, is that the supply of religion significantly shapes individuals' preferences and tastes (see Finke 1997; Finke and Stark 2005; Stark and Finke 2000; Stark and Iannaccone 1994). This idea emerged as Stark, Bainbridge, and Iannaccone pondered why America was considerably more religious than Europe. In their search for an answer they highlighted America's official separation of church and state, which created a setting for religious groups to openly compete for people's allegiances. This is in contrast to many European nations, such as France, Germany, Italy, or Belgium, where church and state are closely linked. To understand the intrinsic differences between these extremes they built on Peter Berger's (1967: 138) observation that religions confront a "market situation" in religiously plural societies, and they introduced the idea of a "religious economy:" "religious economies consist of a market of current and potential followers (demand), a set of organizations (suppliers) seeking to serve that market, and the religious doctrines and practices (products) offered by the various organizations" (Stark and Finke 2000: 36). Since RCT assumes that there is a constant demand for the things that religion has to offer, such as life after death, it follows that the supply-side should be closely examined to properly understand how and why religious economies change. Similar to secular businesses like McDonalds or Coca-Cola, religious groups succeed or fail in an unregulated economy because of their ability to effectively create, maintain, and market a product that people are interested in, which includes supervising

and motivating people's exchanges with the gods (Stark and Finke 2000: 103-113). What, then, distinguishes religious suppliers' effectiveness where religious pluralism is found versus a religious monopoly?

Beginning with religious pluralism in the United States, RCT draws on economists' logic and presumes that with more market options comes increased competition between suppliers (Finke and Stark 2005; Stark and Finke 2000; Stark and Iannaccone 1994). We see this everyday as fast food restaurants, car companies, and hotels compete for people's loyalty. These types of companies set themselves apart from their competitors by sharpening their product with innovative marketing campaigns, reduced prices, free upgrades, healthier food choices, and toys for children. These companies believe that if they constantly improve their product, then people are more likely to consume their merchandise. Religion is no different. Competition between religions, such as between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, or competition within a religion, as between Anglicans, Baptists, and Pentecostals, entails that religious groups are vying for people's attention amidst a crowd of religious and non-religious "voices." Religious groups enhance their product by adjusting their music, preaching, programs, or doctrines, hopeful that more people will join their organization.

Rational choice theorists posit that the result is that people not only turn to organizations that sharpen their supply, but they respond with high(er) commitment levels (Iannaccone 1994). Why? It is because people are willing to pay higher costs (i.e., commitment) when they believe the reward is of greater value, an idea that has been repeated over the years by rational choice theorists. Stark and Bainbridge state that "the value of a reward is equivalent to the maximum cost a person would pay to obtain the reward" (1996 [1987]: 34). Stark and Bainbridge (1985) and Iannaccone (1994) claim that people are drawn to sects, as opposed to churches, because of the high rewards (e.g., assurance of being part of a chosen few, perception of belonging to a

'true' family, and material and social benefits) involved, making them more willing to incur high costs (e.g., geographical separation from family and friends, stigma in society, and time and money) along the way. Stark and Finke reiterate these beliefs when they say that:

> Among religious organizations, there is a reciprocal relationship between expense and the value of the rewards of membership . . . to the extent that one is motivated by religious value, one must prefer a higher priced supplier. Not only do more expensive religious groups offer a far more valuable product, but in doing so, they generate levels of commitment needed to maximize individual levels of confidence in the religion (2000: 145-147).

If individuals come to value a particular religious brand, and they associate strongly desired rewards with that brand, then they are more likely to pay higher costs to ensure that they receive those rewards. This is what Stark and Finke conjecture has taken place in the United States, all because religious groups exist in a free market whereby they openly compete by sharpening their product and offering better rewards to retain current members and attract potential members.

Conversely, in countries with a religious monopoly (i.e., state church) there is little competition because there are few, if any, religious options available. Examples include the Anglican Church in England, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, the Lutheran Church in Germany, and the Roman Catholic Church in Italy. According to Stark and Finke (2000: 228-239), many European religious organizations are weaker because they lack the impetus to sharpen their supply, sometimes growing more liberal in belief and practice with time since they have little fear of losing valuable social or financial support to other religious organizations. This is evident in four ways. First, some countries have allowed governments to influence local church theology in liberal leaning directions. For example, Scandinavian political leaders permitted female clergy and accepted religious leaders who did not profess a religious faith or were not baptized. As a result, the costs for membership (i.e., baptism) are reduced, and thus the reward value associated with membership in the organizations is less also.

Second, since the state pays for clergy salaries and church building upkeep (in Germany, for example), it is likely that clergy become lazy and complacent when it comes to improving their product to attract more people. After all, why would it matter if there are ten people or one-thousand people in the congregation if attendance and giving does not influence salary?

Third, lazy clergy and state-funded congregations breed lazy congregants. If clergy lack the drive to improve their religious product, and if church members are not required to "pay" to maintain the organization (i.e., tithe), then congregants are likely to respond with laziness as well. Namely, they see themselves as participating in a "free" organization where they are not required to give of their time, money, or energy to sustain the group. This returns us to the earlier idea about religious pluralism and groups that improve their supply, and possibly costs for belonging to the group, in exchange for people's commitment. People associate cost with the value of rewards, and if something does not cost much, it must have lower value.

Finally, given that religious monopolies have historically screened out competition from other religious groups through legal sanctions (such as in Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland, or Italy), it is difficult for religious pluralism to develop and serve as the antidote to the lower levels of religious belief and practice mentioned here. For example, in the mid 1990s, German media portrayed evangelical groups as deviant, sectarian or cultish, and with terrorist potential, leading to police raids on some evangelical congregations. In France and Belgium, Jehovah's Witnesses were targeted with higher taxation and had their religious publications banned from the postal system in an effort to curb deviant cults (Stark and Finke 2000: 232-236). Rational choice theorists are, therefore, not surprised that levels of religious adherence are lower in places where a religious monopoly exists.

Stark and Finke summarize the above conjectures this way: "Religious pluralism (the presence of multiple suppliers) is important only insofar as it increases choices and competition,

offering consumers a wider range of religious rewards and forcing suppliers to be more responsive and efficient" (2000: 201).

A Theory of the Social Nature of Religion

The entire rational choice approach to religion stresses that religion is a social phenomenon, a point strongly supported in the findings in chapter two. For example, the understanding of and desire for religious rewards is rooted in how people are socialized at home and in religious circles. The relationship between religious supply and demand is also shaped in social contexts, both religious and non-religious. In their "cultures" people learn what is desirable, normal, and deviant. Two additional ways in which rational choice theorists emphasize the social nature of religion include conversion and reaffiliation, and ongoing commitment to a religious group. Beginning with the former, Stark and Bainbridge's (1985) extensive examination of cults and sects reveals religious groups' successful initiatives to rely on interpersonal bonds when recruiting members. That is, members of religious groups sought to convert their family, friends, neighbours, and co-workers. Using the Unification Church as their example, Stark and Bainbridge (p.308-309) (building on Lofland and Stark's work in the 1960s) suggest that having a close bond with someone already in the Unification Church was a key step in the "joiners'" conversion process.[6] In fact, some joined the Unification Church without knowing much about their belief system, including some who outright rejected their ideology at first, relying instead on their friend's trustworthiness and character. They go on to show that this same principle applies to an array of cults, sects, and conventional religious groups. As Stark and Finke revised and strengthened their theory in *Acts of Faith* (2000), they captured these findings with this

[6] Eileen Barker's study of Moonies supports these findings, in part, though she argues that close bonds with someone already in the group only accounted for about one quarter to one third of the European Moonie population in the 1970s and 80s (Barker 1984: 96-97).

proposition: “In making religious choices, people will attempt to conserve their social capital [interpersonal attachments]” (p.119). Given the time and energy that people invest in their relationships, and the subsequent safety and stability in life that comes from meaningful social ties, individuals are reluctant to risk jeopardizing their relationships by not conforming to expected values and actions. Debbie Fisher’s limited involvement because of her husband’s negative reaction is clear evidence of this point. For this reason, people’s choice of religion and level of religious belief and involvement is influenced by their friends and family’s attitudes and behaviours.

Once an individual joins a religious group, social influences remain important for maintaining commitment to the group. According to RCT religious groups exist to promote and sustain individuals’ religious commitments, achieved by providing explanations for individuals in search of religious rewards. As Stark and Bainbridge put it:

> Living religion is a social enterprise, and religious beliefs take on significance for human affairs only as they are tied to social exchanges. Lone individuals, and even pairs of exchange partners, are seldom able to sustain strong supernatural orientations without powerful outside assistance . . . therefore, vigorous, formal religious organizations and social movements can give beliefs and attitudes considerable salience for personal relationships; in the absence of such mass social support, beliefs and attitudes are not generally salient (1985: 343-344).

This is why Stark and Finke (2000: 160-162) contend that when there are less dense social networks within a congregation there will also be low levels of reinforcement for commitment and less efficient means of monitoring member behaviour. It is unsurprising then that Stark and Finke (2000: 107) conclude that “an individual’s confidence in religious explanations is strengthened to the extent that others express their confidence in them.” These ideas are also endorsed by Ellison (1995), Iannaccone (1994), and Sherkat (1997).

Criticisms of Rational Choice Theory

Many criticisms have been levelled at RCT, including some that have already been mentioned regarding choice versus constraint and compensators versus explanations (see Ammerman 1997; Bruce 1999, 2002; Bryant 2000; Chaves 1995; Demerath III 1995; Ellison 1995; Heath 1976; Hechter 1997; Marwell 1996; Neitz and Mueser 1997; Olson and Hadaway 1999; Olson and Perl 2005; Sherkat 1997; Young 1997). Here I outline additional criticisms that have been repeated most often among scholars, those that tackle the core RCT assumptions, and those that aid in my comparison of active and marginal affiliates. As it turns out, my interview findings validate many of these criticisms, which I will detail in the next chapter.

Costs and Rewards

Concerns over the definition and conception of 'costs' and 'rewards' are many and justified, pointing to the over simplicity of RCT. The most glaring challenge is that, as opposed to money which is a universal tangible way of measuring cost in the economy, there is no single criterion for determining and measuring religious costs and rewards (Bruce 1999: 124-127; Bryant 2000). While rational choice theorists have rightly attempted to provide examples of costs and rewards over the years, many of which have been cited in this chapter, their attempts are inevitably flawed due to the subjective criteria for individuals weighing costs and rewards. What may be a cost for one person could in fact be a reward for another. For instance, raising a child could be an inconvenience to the individual trying to advance financially and career wise, while it is a significant reward to the person longing for a child. When we think about why people commit to stricter churches, it makes sense, in part, that they are willing to incur costs of social stigma, lost friendships, time, money, and extreme personal piety, knowing that they will receive highly sought after rewards along the way, including greater social solidarity, material support,

and firm promises of eternal life. The trouble with this theory is that it assumes, all things being equal, that people actually desire the same rewards, above all a supposed intense desire for life after death. This could not be further from the truth! As Emerson Cairns' narrative reveals, and illustrative of others in my sample, not all people desire life after death, let alone an intense desire among those who do want to experience eternal life, and individuals have different understandings and thresholds for costs that they are willing to incur. To imply a generic understanding of costs and rewards is erroneous.

A similar drawback is the idea that cost and value are directly related. I agree with Bruce (1999: 87) that this is too simplistic on two fronts—there is no universal measurement for what a religious cost is, and even if there was, evaluating the worth or value of the cost expended is entirely subjective. People interpret costs and value differently, so who decides what is expensive and what is valuable? More than this, RCT does not account for undue inflation where the cost of a product far exceeds its actual value, such as the gas spikes around the world in 2008. My home in Calgary costs more than three times the price of a similar home in Prince Edward Island. Does this mean that the house is worth more or that I value it more? Not at all! The truth is I lament the fact that I had to spend this amount of money on a house. The reward is no greater *because* the cost was. Bringing this back to religion, it could be argued that religious groups' high costs (e.g., beliefs about abortion, euthanasia, or homosexuality) turn some away, believing that they can obtain the same rewards (e.g., eternal life, community, or peace of mind) for half the cost elsewhere. As will be seen later, many active affiliates who participate in theologically liberal traditions, for example, give this rationale for why they are affiliated with the United Church of Canada. The criticism, and one that I agree with, is that RCT naively projects a theory of costs and rewards that does not accurately explain real human behaviour. Humans are more complex than the theory indicates.

Another limitation of these terms, especially cost, is the implication that cost entails something bad or undesirable. The following statement by Stark and Bainbridge exemplifies this:

> We believe close analysis of usage of the terms good and evil reveals that humans employ these terms as synonyms for rewards and costs. Good is beneficial. Good people reward us. Evil is costly. Evil people do 'bad' things to us—that is, they extract costs out of proportion to any reward we get from them (1996 [1987]: 114).

The trouble with this conceptualization is that costs may actually be enjoyable and desirable for some, once again highlighting the absence of a single and consistent measure for religious costs in RCT (Bruce 1999: 55; Bryant 2000: 542). For some marginal affiliates, as demonstrated in chapter two, attending church is interpreted as a cost, something undesirable, for obtaining the reward of eternal life (and avoiding hell). Still, many active affiliates joyously anticipate attending church each week, all the while believing that it is a cost or requirement for receiving life after death. As one Roman Catholic male states, "I don't consider, you know, my time as a sacrifice." As will become clear in the next chapter, few people that I interviewed think in terms of costs and rewards and they do not think of certain beliefs or behaviours, such as giving one's time and money to religious and charitable organizations, as undesirable costs. Instead these are things that people willingly and happily embrace.

It is difficult to know whether the underlying problem is, on the one hand, an incorrect or poorly conceived theory about religious costs and rewards, such that the fundamental theoretical assumption that people consciously weigh costs and rewards when making religious decisions is not true in reality, or on the other hand, that the theory still has merits, but is simply weak in how it can be operationalized. Perhaps the language of "costs" and "rewards" needs to change, or at least the ways in which they are conceptualized should change, to account for some of the limitations noted above. Future micro-level research in this area would be profitable.

Religious Demand and Preferences

Another criticism of RCT concerns the assumption that religious supply largely dictates the religious marketplace while religious demand, preferences, and tastes are constant. Three problems arise with this reasoning. The first has to do with the economist assumption that individuals have stable and unchanging preferences and tastes.[7] Heath (1976: 47-48), Ellison (1995: 90-93), and Sherkat (1997: 69-72) all question the legitimacy of this assumption, and rightly so. They contend that tastes and preferences change because of psychological and personality differences between individuals. For example, Sherkat (1997: 70-71) suggests that individual preferences are different because some prefer novel ideas to familiar ones. Social ties are also important to consider because socialization shapes people's tastes and preferences. Inter-religious marriages are another example where someone may convert and acquire their spouse's religious tastes and preferences, as we saw in Emily Foster's story. Yet another example of social influences comes in multicultural settings, like Canada, where exposure to people of different cultures and traditions may actually alter the preferences of locals. This helps to explain the growing popularity of various forms of Buddhism among Westerners (Bruce 2002; Eck 2001; Albanese 2007).

Another issue concerns the notion that demand for religion and the supernatural, and one could even say for religious organizations, is constant. In chapter's five and six I look at this in the context of the debate over secularization in Canada, but for now it is worth asking whether it is right to argue that people have an inexhaustible demand for rewards that only religion provides, or that people turn to religious groups primarily for religious reasons? How do we know that desires for these general explanations and rewards are chief among many? Moreover,

[7] To be fair, Stark and Finke (2000: 38, 86) have left a small window open to the possibility that tastes and preferences might vary given certain individual and social factors, however they are adamant in emphasizing that this is rare. They, like other proponents of RCT, most often advocate that preferences are stable over time and place.

what makes rational choice theorists so confident that exchanges with the gods is the main factor that draws people into involvement in religious organizations? Where is the empirical support? The limitation of RCT is that it assumes and speculates things that are questionable at a strictly logical level, never mind the empirical data that is desperately lacking to support these claims. Emerson, Emily, and Debbie's vignettes each offer clear examples that fly in the face of rational choice assumptions about people's demand for religion, whether it is their motivations for being religious or their demand for life after death or greater involvement in a religious organization.

Sherkat (1997: 73-77) additionally posits that some make religious decisions out of sympathy for another, as is the case for those who attend a religious service to please their parents (such as Emily Foster who married in a church out of respect for her mother-in-law). Others make religious decisions out of antipathy to spite others, for instance a young adult who gets involved in a new religious movement to rebel against their parents. Some attend religious services to set a good example for others, such as parents for their children. Some people even seek out religious involvement for completely secular reasons, like involvement in new friendships or sporting activities. Sherkat's point is that involvement in religious organizations is not necessarily, nor even often, motivated by a desire to make exchanges with the gods, nor is there even a deep-seated demand for religious things. Bruce (1999: 95-96) affirms Sherkat's conclusions, pointing to the low level of importance that Europeans give to various church activities. He shows that more importance is placed on maintaining cemeteries, preserving church buildings, and offering services on religious holidays and rites of passage, than offering weekly church services, regularly partaking in Holy Communion, or being involved in international missionary work. One needs to question whether religion really is as important to many as rational choice theorists assume.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to clearly delineate the trajectory of and relationship between rational choice theories in sociology in general and in the study of religion more specifically. In doing so, I traced the development of rational choice thought along the lines of religious costs and rewards, religious supply and demand, as well as the social nature of religion. In general, proponents of rational choice theory suggest that humans make religious decisions in the same way they make non-religious decisions, by weighing costs and rewards. If the rewards are valuable enough, people will incur high costs to obtain them. When it comes to religious supply and demand, RCT is adamant that suppliers of religion have more power to influence the religious economy than religious consumers, evidenced in higher religiosity levels in nations where competition among religious suppliers is the norm. Further, throughout their theory, rational choice theorists insist that religion is a social phenomenon, most obvious in conversion and reaffiliation processes.

From the criticisms that have been directed toward RCT we see some of the limitations and ambiguities that arise when rational choice theorists talk about costs and rewards, and we notice the heightened attention that some are calling for when it comes to religious demand and preferences (as opposed to religious supply). These concerns speak both to flaws in RCT logic as well as to the lack of empirical data to test and support RCT axioms and propositions. It is these things that I turn my attention to in the next chapter, drawing on my interviews with active and marginal affiliates. What do these interview findings tell us about religious decision-making processes, the social nature of religion, as well as religious supply and demand, how do these discoveries advance our understanding of the similarities between active and marginal affiliates, and ultimately, how do these observations help us to assess Bibby's renaissance thesis?

Chapter 4
Rational Choice Theory and Religion in Canada: An Empirical Assessment

Religious Decision-Making Processes

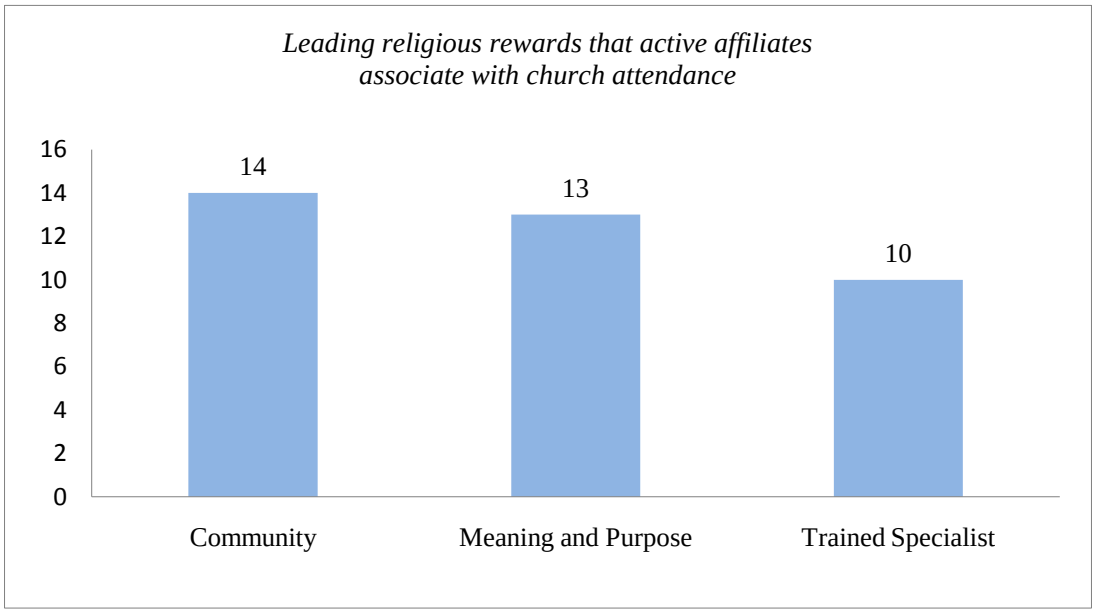
Rewards and Costs

In the last chapter I introduced two questions regarding religious costs and rewards. How do active and marginal affiliates make sense of the religious rewards that they are pursuing and the religious costs involved in obtaining those rewards, and how do past exchanges with the gods and others influence current and future religious decision-making processes? To this end, I asked participants a series of questions about why they attend religious services when they do and why they believe and behave as they do outside of religious services. With these rewards in mind, I then asked about the perceived costs, trade-offs, or sacrifices that they incurred along the way. More than anything this was an exploratory exercise since, surprisingly, rational choice theorists do not demonstrate any exhaustive attempts to empirically measure religious costs and rewards (aside from the standard costs of time and money). The data and analysis in this chapter help to further compare and explain some of the similarities and differences between the active and marginal affiliates in my sample, and to test some of the basic rational choice propositions about religious belief and behaviour. These discoveries will also aid my assessment of Bibby's renaissance thesis in the next two chapters.

Active affiliates identified a series of rewards that they receive from their religious beliefs and practices. These vary from individual gains, such as feeling good about themselves, knowing that they are loved by God and others, and experiencing a break from the strains and busyness of life when they pray, read the Bible, or attend church, to more social things, like participating in social justice initiatives (e.g., helping the poor in society) and carrying on the religious tradition

of their family and religious group.[1] As we see in Figure 4.1, active affiliates identify three rewards that are of significant importance to them: participating in a like-minded community; receiving meaning, purpose, direction, and morals for daily living; and developing and affirming their faith by learning more about the Bible from a trained specialist and singing worship songs, and praying in a larger social setting.

Figure 4.1



The greatest benefit for active affiliates is the community that they experience with fellow believers. Fourteen of the twenty-one active affiliates mentioned this reward. Like Becky Eagleton, several active affiliates that I met spoke highly about the community that they experience in their congregation. A male in his late thirties, from an evangelical Protestant background states that the "regular Sunday morning community is regular enough that it does kind of keep me grounded, reminds me of who I am, what I believe, and it surrounds me with others that hold those similar beliefs, so it does kind of give me that weekly grounding." One

[1] See "Appendix B" for a complete list of rewards and costs that active and marginal affiliates provided, including how many affiliates cited each variable. Given the difficulty of measuring rewards and costs (reflected particularly as participants struggled to articulate rewards and costs), many of the rewards are simple motivations that people gave for attending (or plan to attend, in the case of future rites of passage).

woman in her mid-sixties, also part of an evangelical Protestant congregation expresses the gains that she receives when attending religious services. She says, "First of all, I gain friends . . . they do the same thing to me. There's people there when I'm down to encourage me. You know, and you can count on them if something happens to me . . . they're there to help you. And I can do that for them, too. It just works both ways. And I believe that's what the Lord wants us to do. I think that's what the Bible teaches to do. Not to forsake meeting together."

Experiencing community with like-minded individuals is important because it helps to remind individuals of what they believe and why they believe. It helps people to conform to the group's expected beliefs and behaviours. A Roman Catholic gentleman in his early sixties puts it this way:

> It kind of just adds a little bit of strength if you meet people of a like mind . . . If everybody's cheating on their income tax, and they tell you you should be, you're probably going to start cheating on your income tax, too. But if you meet a bunch of people that think that, "It's serious, you know, doing your tax forms. You don't start cheating on them, monkeying around." And you meet people like that, and you talk to them all the time, and what are you probably going to do? Do your tax forms correctly, and pay what you owe.

Aside from knowing that others share similar views about the world, active affiliates also benefit from the social and spiritual supports that they establish at church. While only half of active affiliates have at least one close friend in their congregation, nineteen active affiliates are friends with those who are actually involved in a church and they benefit from these ties. One Baptist female in her late twenties shares of the benefits of participating in a small group:

> Yeah, accountability in our small group because we're really honest with each other. Gain friendship. People who will support you when you need it . . . you get just a sense of peace about things . . . when you pray and do your Bible study and you're being consistent and you're being faithful . . . you can handle life's problems . . . because you know that it's going to be okay.

From this quotation (and others like it), we learn that active affiliates see their involvement in the religious community as an insurance of sorts that there will be someone there to help in times of

need, and vice versa. This mutual aid is reassuring for many, especially in a world where now it is even hard to count on the support of family (who may not be emotionally or physically present), let alone neighbours.

Second, thirteen active affiliates gain from the meaning, direction, and purpose that they receive from regular involvement in their religious group. They believe that the combination of regular church attendance, belief in God, along with a host of private practices (e.g., prayer, Bible reading, meditation and reflection) provides a source of meaning in life. It gives them a framework to interpret their social roles in the home, at the workplace, and as a citizen of the world. Andrew Donnelly's narrative is a clear example of the many other active affiliates in this study who believe that their faith provides them with guidance in life. One male says that prayer "keeps me continually grounded in God. Therefore, it just helps me be a better husband and father and neighbour and worker. I mean, everything I do, I try to filter through my belief system, so it definitely benefits. I think it makes my life better because I try to do things that are wise and good . . . I believe that my marriage is better off for it. My family is better off for it. My finances are better off for it. My relationships, in general. My personal health, even, physically and emotionally." Another female confidently declares that "I've always done well in my schooling . . . I was lucky to . . . stay on . . . honours . . . for junior high and high school, and I honestly believe . . . I put the effort in that's needed, but, like, even small things like that, I believe God, like, helped me through my schooling and has been, more than anything, the one to, I guess, give me the knowledge to attain the grades that I have." One other male asserts that "I'm a business-for-self guy, and I don't get paid unless, you know, I have deals coming in, and I've just trusted God that he will provide all things for me . . . Throughout the whole Bible, God has provided for his people. He always says that He will provide and that He will look after. And I trust that a hundred percent, and I put that into practice . . . I believe that and live that, and I breathe that. I

believe that with all things." In all of these examples we see that active affiliates believe that their lives are improved because they believe in God and they share in that faith with fellow believers on a regular basis.

A third reward that ten active affiliates discussed is the development and affirmation of their faith by learning more about the Bible from the pastor, singing worship songs, and lifting prayers to God in a larger social setting. Active affiliates are drawn to their religious leaders who offer insights into the Bible that they would not have discerned on their own. As one elderly gentleman who attends a United Church of Canada congregation states, "The points in Scripture have often been difficult to understand, and the guys at [Alpha Church] have been just tremendous in giving different insights into the meaning of Scripture." Why is this perceived as a reward? For people like Andrew Donnelly and Becky Eagleton, who had a religious upbringing, they believe that it is important to know as much about God as possible, so that they can uphold the beliefs and practices common to their religious tradition. As will be seen later, this is partially related to their conceptions about the afterlife and what is required to obtain life after death. It is also linked to their perception that obedience to God results in favourable outcomes for their life on earth, such as happiness in their family, work, and social life. For others like Cam Bender, who did not grow up in a religious household, learning from a trained specialist is beneficial to learn the basics of the faith and to develop a deeper Christian worldview.

In total, these gains are enhanced when individuals see people around them also learning and striving for the religious ideals that the pastor preaches about. The same can be said about singing songs and lifting prayers with others. As one person put it, "Even though I can just stick a praise tape on at home if I want to or a praise CD in the car by myself, there's something more powerful about larger corporate worship times." Another Roman Catholic woman in her forties indicates that "there's more power than just being by yourself." The strength, energy, and

development and affirmation of personal faith that people experience at church epitomizes the "collective effervescence" that Durkheim discusses in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915: 209-210): "In the midst of an assembly animated by a common passion, we become susceptible of acts and sentiments of which we are incapable when reduced to our own forces." He goes on to say that religious ceremonies function "to bring men together, to put the masses into movement and thus to excite a state of effervescence, and sometimes even of delirium . . . a man is carried outside himself and diverted from his ordinary occupation and preoccupations" (1915: 383-383). For the active affiliates that I interviewed, they believe that there is a different level and quality of connection with self, others, and God when worshipping in a set apart time and place with other people.

In light of the rewards they receive from participating in a religious group, half of active affiliates admit that their participation costs them friends, control over their life, time, and money. However, a critical finding that conflicts with RCT is that half of active affiliates in my sample indicate that they do not incur any costs for believing or belonging or they give up time and money, but do not see such things as a negative cost.

Since sacrificing time and money are self-explanatory (i.e., people commit time to religious practices such as prayer, attending church, or volunteering for church activities, and people tithe money to their church) and they were mentioned by fewer people than the other costs (five people mentioned time and two highlighted money), and given that these themes have been examined by Iannaccone (1997a) and Iannaccone and Everton (2004) elsewhere, I will focus on the costs of friends and control over one's life. Starting with the most cited cost of relationships, which eight active affiliates mentioned, those raised in a religious home spoke of lost and strained friendships when they were teenagers because they had to choose between the activities of their religious and non-religious friends. Becky Eagleton's reflection on high school in chapter

two reflects this tension. For those who did not grow up in a religious home, they reflected on the odd looks and strange feelings that they received from non-religious friends and family. People saw them as deviant, strange, and part of an outside group. One woman that I interviewed says, "I think there's an element of social . . . social isolation . . . something I've sacrificed is people, like, 'Oh, you go to church? Really.' Or 'You're one of the smartest people I know, and I can't believe you go to church.' Or 'What are doing this weekend? Oh, you're . . .' You know? . . . And so that social awkwardness . . . People outside of the church really don't know how to react to people's participation in the church." For some this led to abandoning certain relationships, while for others it strained, but did not end, friendships and family ties.

The second cost that participants mentioned frequently was submitting control of their lives over to God (seven active affiliates discussed this). Andrew Donnelly's experience shows us that active affiliates believe this is part of the cost if one is to accept their religious status as the master status in their life. This worldview is grounded in a theological position that God is highly active in the world and that a Christian's life is no longer their own. Many believe that God actually leads people to the person that they marry, the job that they work at, and the friendships that they form, and they know it is God speaking to them because of the words they read in the Bible, the internal peace that they feel, the validation that others pass along, and their past experiences. The pursuit of religious practices such as Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and church attendance are all intended to help active affiliates to discern God's will for their life and to act obediently to what they believe God calls them to do, even if it means following paths in life that they would not otherwise choose on their own. When asked about the costs that she incurs as part of her religious faith, one woman states, "It's inconvenient . . . sometimes God asks you to do stuff that doesn't make any sense . . . you give up control of your life." She goes on to provide the following example: "I committed to lead a team of college students to the Yukon this

summer for a prayer walk . . . and to church plant for six weeks . . . probably two months beforehand, I got pregnant and very, very, *very* sick . . . we had to cancel the trip completely, whereas . . . I had spent a year in prayer and preparation . . . that was terribly inconvenient . . . being very, very obedient . . . to what I had really believed God told me to do, and I ended up staying home all summer." As she reflected on what she learned from this experience, she says, "I think that God taught me a lot about who I am in Him, and it's so much less about what I do than about what He chooses to do . . . that He's in control of all of those things."

What I find most interesting and valuable is that half of active affiliates say that they have not incurred any costs to obtain desired religious rewards. When asked if he has experienced any costs in his pursuit of religious rewards, one male says, "I don't think so . . . I don't think I've had to sacrifice anything." Another individual responds, "I don't think so . . . I think it's all been a benefit, in terms of benefit to me, benefit to my family, benefit to others. I don't think that . . . that what I do and how I try to live my life, in a sense, costs me anything or . . . or deters from my life." More than this, if they acknowledge that they have sacrificed time and money, they do not interpret these as undesirable or bad costs. An active affiliate, like others in my sample, shares that "it costs money. Tithe . . . I don't necessarily think that those are all bad things . . . I don't think that the money is wasted, or anything like that."

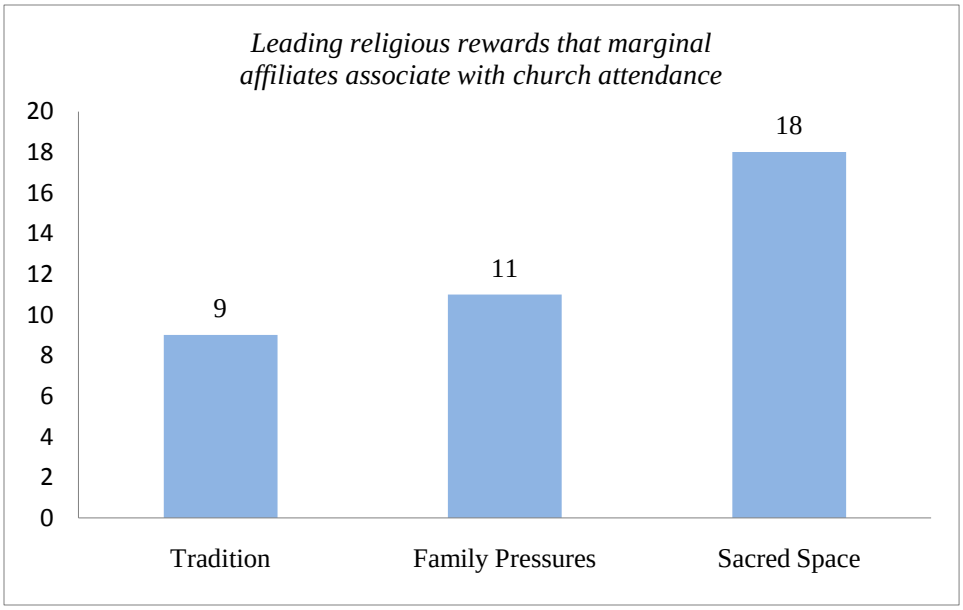
To summarize thus far, not everyone thinks about their religious decisions in terms of costs and rewards. More than this, if people do think about costs and rewards, it is done so in a highly subjective manner. These observations support Bruce (1999) and Bryant's (2000) criticisms levelled at RCT, and provide some concrete empirical evidence with which to move the conversation forward. For some active affiliates, giving up time and money for the sake of their religious group is understood as a bad cost, while for others they joyously give their time and money. While Stark and Finke (2000) might interpret these findings as evidence in favour of

their premise that people find "strict" (i.e., expensive) churches desirable, their argument still hinges on the subjective meaning and interpretation that people attach to the ambiguous term "cost." Yes, objectively one can simply calculate the number of hours given to religion relative to other activities and relative to what others do. But such calculations are only meaningful if the individual sees the forgone activities as some kind of sacrifice (and attaches the same level of significance or loss to that sacrifice as others do), and we know that people evaluate the quantity and quality of these "sacrifices" differently. Simply put, there is no single criterion for measuring religious rewards and costs, and even if there were, the term "cost" raises undue assumptions that costs are negative or bad. Therefore, the term "cost" is not as neutral as is assumed in RCT.

As we would expect, marginal affiliates attach very different rewards and costs to their religious decision-making processes. They provided me with twenty motivations and gains for why they attend religious services. These range from maintaining membership status for reduced funeral and burial rates, to the fear of going to hell, to avoiding the commercialism of Christmas, to reinforcing their morals and their belief in God, to feeling good about themselves.[2] Without diminishing any of these or the other responses given, I will concentrate on Figure 4.2 and the three explanations offered most frequently: tradition, family pressures, and a connection with a higher power in a sacred place.

[2] See Lamoureux Scholes (2003), Walliss (2002), and Zuckerman (2008) for additional research findings on motivations for those who attend religious services for religious holidays and rites of passage. Each study points to non-religious reasons as the main predictors for selective church attendance.

Figure 4.2



Starting with tradition, nine marginal affiliates observe religious holidays or rites of passage because they cannot imagine doing things any other way.[3] As we saw with Emerson Cairns, he and his family attend church and then go for Chinese food every Christmas Eve, and the Chinese food is as important as the church service to this family tradition. One marginal affiliate declares, "It's just a tradition. We've done it for a lifetime, and I'm not going to discard it." Another individual that I interviewed says, "when I do go, which is most Christmases, it's always part of . . . our tradition, our family tradition as part of the Christmas Eve experience." One other male states, "It's because of your Catholic upbringing and your parents and the way you were brought up, and that's why you go." These examples are not unlike other traditions that individuals and groups hold on to such as cooking the Thanksgiving turkey the same way as our parents. This is just the way that things have always been done and people cannot even conceptualize what a different way would look like.

[3] Phil Zuckerman's (2008: 8, 160) examination of life in Denmark and Sweden reveals that people observe religious rituals primarily out of respect for tradition.

Family also plays a role for eleven active affiliates who attend for religious holidays and rites of passage. One woman says that she and her sister attend church "mostly out of respect for Dad . . . I think he would like his daughters to go to church." Several people spoke of family pressures to get married in a church. One male says that his wife "wanted to get married in a church . . . more to appease my parents, my family—my mom, especially—than anything else." Put differently, and as Sherkat (1997: 73) conjectured and several others in my sample noted, family pressures are a source of motivation for people to observe rites of passage in religious settings.[4] This is especially true when parents pay for the wedding. Needless to say, people value the reward of good healthy familial ties, and thus they will avoid offending a family member (e.g., in-laws or grandparents) by marrying in a church according to their family's wishes.

Another facet of family life is also important. Some, like Emerson Cairns, indicated that attending services on religious holidays is a time to spend with family, particularly in a day and age with both parents working, children participating in a number of extracurricular activities, and extended families separated due to employment opportunities. One female explains her attendance patterns in the following way:

> I don't always see my family very often, so when we get together, I think it just kind of is good for us to all be there to kind of come together as a family and show that to each other and to God that we still all believe.

I proceed to ask her if she gains any religious significance from these occasions, and she says "no."

A third reason that people attend is because they connect to a higher power in a sacred place (eighteen people talked about this), which one Anglican gentleman in his fifties surmises is "a basic human need to want to believe in something bigger and higher than yourself." For some

[4] Emile Durkheim (1915: 190) asserted that people are religious because of a felt moral obligation to others in the group, including one's ancestors. Zuckerman (2008: 9) provides evidence that people baptize their children to please family members, not God.

people their connection to God is enhanced because they are surrounded by others who share the same basic beliefs about God, for others this connection to God helps them to better center themselves, and for some they feel that their rites of passage are more legitimate because they are performed in front of God in a sacred space. One thirty year-old female reflects, "I just think I wanted to be around people that believed the same . . . it is sometimes nice to go, I guess, because when you're there, obviously, you feel closer to God than you would usually." While almost everyone that I interviewed agrees that connecting to a higher power can happen outside the walls of a church, the quotation from Debbie Fisher in chapter two highlights the some people's special connection to God in a religious and sacred space: "I feel a closer connection . . . when I'm actually in the church . . . or a chapel or whatever . . . It might sound funny, but it just feels more holy, a little bit more . . . stronger . . . a closer connection. You know, it's the house of God . . . it's what it resembles. It's a symbol . . . it just feels like I'm in it and not outside of it."

When it comes to costs, marginal affiliates advance one of the central observations when we looked at active affiliates: they do not think in terms of costs or they do not associate any costs with the rewards that they are after. Seventeen marginal affiliates gave responses to this effect with some showing confusion over the question (demonstrating the methodological challenges of measuring this abstract concept) and others outright denying that they have incurred any costs. Typical of others' responses, one individual says that "there's been no costs as far as I'm concerned. No sacrifices. No sacrifices. It's all been . . . I want to do it. You know, nobody's forced me to do anything. Nobody said, 'You've got to go to church on a Sunday. You've got to be there.' No." I asked him whether he believes that attending church for religious holidays is a cost of some sort in order to receive some type of benefit. He replies, "No. I don't think God gives a toss whether I go and sit there on Sunday or whether I say a nice quiet prayer running on Sunday in the half marathon." Another marginal affiliate that I interviewed says, "I never felt like

I was sort of giving up anything for the way that I, you know, sort of worked on my spiritualism. Nope. I don't feel like I've really sacrificed anything in my relationships or anything like that, you know. Nothing like that, no."

A few marginal affiliates did indicate that if they took their faith more seriously, then they would probably incur costs mainly in the form of submitting control of their life over to God. But as the following marginal affiliate highlights, this is a fearful step that people are not willing or desire to take:

> I can imagine for some people . . . if you really took the rules and . . . actually tried to truly live up to them, I do believe there would be a lot of costs associated with it . . . I believe that, and I kind of fear that in the back of my mind . . . that if I truly, like, gave my life over to God completely and did what he truly desired . . . I imagine there would be a possibility of . . . some significant costs. Definitely.

Past Exchanges with the Gods and the Churches

As we saw earlier, Stark and Finke (2000: 96-102) theorize that religious decision-making processes are not only influenced by people's perceptions and experiences of rewards and costs, but also on past experiences when exchanging with the gods. Humans are more likely to pay higher costs if the gods can be relied upon (i.e., dependable), if the gods are concerned about and act on behalf of people (i.e., responsive), and if the gods have a far reaching set of powers and influence (i.e., of great scope). Already we have seen that active affiliates incur more costs in the religious decisions that they make. Therefore, if Stark and Finke are correct, theoretically we should find that active affiliates have a more favourable perspective that the gods are dependable, responsive, and of great scope, in turn leading them to respond with extended and exclusive exchanges with the gods. Even more than this, if we were to extend this theory to consider people's decision processes when choosing their level of involvement in a religious organization, something that Stark and Finke have not done in their theory, we could conjecture that religious

groups that are perceived to be more dependable and responsive could also expect its members to incur higher costs to be part of that group, manifested with extended and exclusive exchanges. Accordingly, if people believe that the gods and/or their congregation are dependable and responsive, then their exchanges are less risky than if they have low perceptions that the gods and/or congregation are dependable and responsive. For the most part, as we are about to examine, these hypotheses are true.

Nineteen active affiliates that I interviewed believe wholeheartedly that they can depend on God, and most have depended on God in the past. Eighteen also believe that God is responsive, that he is concerned about and acts in the best interests of humans. Some believe that God helps them to excel at school, work, or their relationships, and others provide stories of how God helps them in dire times of need. Among the many stories that I heard, one woman, whose type of story was not unique, shares that God prevented her from getting into a car accident during a snow storm.

> I couldn't move right, and I didn't want to go down this cliff. Well, all I could call is on the name of Jesus . . . you would not believe what happened . . . The Lord took me off the street, off the road, and I flew through the air like in a movie . . . I lifted off, and I went through the air . . . on that embankment, and then I landed . . . the Lord put this snow bank there, like a huge snow bank . . . I just hung behind the steering wheel and just thanked the Lord that I'm still alive . . . I couldn't explain it. I didn't do anything . . . I believe the Lord heard my prayer, right then and there . . . And nobody can talk me out of it. And people . . . when I share with unbelievers . . . "Oh, that was just a coincidence." No, it wasn't. Not for me.

For nineteen out of the twenty-one active affiliates that I interviewed, God is very active in the world and they can depend on Him, though some were quick to comment that humans also have a role to play in life; God helps those who help themselves. This was particularly noticeable when I asked participants about good and bad events in their life. Active affiliates were quick to credit God for the good things in their life, but were equally quick to shoulder the blame for bad

turns of events that could be explained by human error, such as a failed business venture or marital relationship.[5] A man who owns his own business says to me:

> If I made a decision that was wrong or I did something that was . . . questionable by . . . ethics-wise, then I would blame that aspect on me. It had nothing to do with God. But, if everything's running smoothly, and I'm . . . not making decisions that are . . . unjust . . . because I believe that if you're . . . to be men and women of integrity, and I think—once we're not—we open ourselves up to any possibility. And so I don't believe my business will fail because God is with me, and if there's anything that does fail because of it, it would have had to do something with the aspect of something that I did on the side of things.

On the other hand, when it came to the death of a loved one, something that could not necessarily be reduced to human action, active affiliates often rationalized this on the grounds that everything happens for a reason (a stark contrast from marginal affiliates, as will be noted shortly). They offered similar explanations when losing a job, as the following active affiliates' story demonstrates:

> I lost my job on Tuesday . . . it was an action of one person, the choice of one person against, literally, a hundred others that caused me to lose my job, and I feel like God's will was in that, like God's blessing in that . . . that's actually God's desire, that God is going to renew me and take care of me . . . I have something overwhelming that I know like peace. Am I upset? Absolutely. Do I have millions of dollars saved? No. But I'm not worried, and that's . . . it shocks me, you know what I mean? . . . And that's, to me, and example of depending on God.

It was clear from the bulk of these interviewee's stories that they had been socialized at home and church to adopt these legitimations.

At the level of sociological theory, what we find here is a clear illustration of Peter Berger's (1967) discussion of anomie and alienation. Briefly, Berger works from the social interactionist assumption that humans are co-creators of their social worlds (p.3-4). Humans

[5] Max Weber (1963 [1922]: 32-33) makes a similar point when analyzing the relationship between gods, priests, and worshippers. When the gods do not satisfactorily respond to human prayers, priests rationalize this so that "the responsibility falls, not upon the god or themselves, but upon the behaviour of god's worshippers . . . the problem of why god has not hearkened to his devotees might then be explained by stating that they had not honoured their god sufficiently, that they had not satisfied his desires for sacrificial blood or soma juice, or finally that they neglected him in favour of other gods" (p.33).

create culture and culture shapes humans. In this dialectical process humans strive for stability in their social worlds, particularly because of the anomie, or meaninglessness, that they experience in the face of chaotic and uncontrollable events in life, like death. However, this quest is an arduous one given the central role of humans, who are unstable, in the process (p.4-6). One way of staving off anomie is to provide the types of socially constructed explanations seen above, that God is in control and everything happens for a reason (p.22, 44, 53). Doing so provides a framework of meaning for individuals to interpret their social worlds. Berger suggests the problem that arises with this response is that humans incur the cost of alienation; they forget that they are the co-producers of the social world that they live in (p.81-101). As soon as individuals claim that God is the producer of their world, they abandon control over that world. According to Berger, the prospect that humans have no agency or control over their surroundings is scary because this sense of control gives people a feeling of stability. However, this is a double edged sword—they cannot manage the uncontrollable facets of life, and yet they give up power if they project control of those events on to God. In this, anomie and alienation are constantly held in tension against one another. Stated simply, most active affiliates are willing to be more alienated to stave off anomie, while, as we will see, marginal affiliates overwhelmingly incur anomie in order to stave-off alienation.

One qualification to the above should be made regarding active affiliates in the United Church of Canada, who are rather anomalous. A few individuals indicated that they do not believe that God is active in the world and that humans control everything. In a related manner, these individuals are ambiguous about whether God even exists, they do not pray, and they are less likely to believe that there is life after death. Characteristic of others in my sample when asked if they believed that God was dependable, one active affiliate responds, "I'm not sure that there is a God or is not a God. If you accept the fact that there is a God, I believe that God gave

us free will and gave us the ability to use our brains and to do what's right. And that's why I think that God does not interfere in day-to-day activities of people." His final statement suggests that he perhaps does believe in God, so I push him further and ask whether this means that he does believe in God. He clarifies his response by saying, "I'm not sure. I don't know. You know, I . . . I struggle with that, and, I guess, if I had to . . . if I had to make a choice, a definitive choice, I'd say no."

Although marginal affiliates are less likely to believe that they can depend on God or that God cares about people, just under half of those that I spoke with believe that they can depend on God and that He is concerned about humans. Some prayed to God during difficult times, such as when a family member died, or when life was stressful, believing that prayer made a difference. God helped them to cope, to experience comfort and peace, and to find new friends at different stages of life. In this, marginal affiliates were not any different from active affiliates.

Still, about one quarter of marginal affiliates believe that they cannot depend on God, while an additional 25% hold a primarily humanistic outlook on the world. When I asked Emerson Cairns if he could depend on God, he states, "I don't know if I can say yes or no to that . . . I've always been sort of a believer in, you know, put your head down. You can work through any problem or that sort of thing." Another marginal affiliate asserts that "you have to depend on yourself." In Max Weber's discussion of monotheistic religions in *The Sociology of Religion* (1963 [1922]: 138-139), he states that "the more the development tends toward the conception of a transcendental unitary god who is universal, the more there arises the problem of how the extraordinary power of such a god may be reconciled with the imperfection of the world that he has created and rules over." He goes on to highlight an early 20th century questionnaire findings from German workers who did not believe in a god because of "their difficulty in reconciling the idea of providence with the injustice and imperfection of the social order" (1963 [1922]: 139).

Weber's findings resonate with some that I interviewed, speaking not only to rational choice theory's axioms about God's dependability but also about His scope of power and influence. For those who do not believe that they can depend on God, it is mainly because they believe that God has let them down before. One woman cites her husband's death at a young age as an example where God could have intervened, but for one reason or another, did not. For individuals with these experiences, they fear that God will let them down again if they risk depending on Him.

In terms of those marginal affiliates who believe that humans have significant control over their lives, they were not unlike active affiliates of a similar mindset, except some marginals were more agnostic and atheistic in their views about the existence of God. They questioned, at a purely rational level, whether a god really exists, and if so, whether a god would intercede in human affairs. In general, these marginal affiliates concluded "no" to at least one of these questions.

It is hardly surprising that marginal affiliates, who already possess a low level of confidence in the gods, would want to pursue any extensive involvement in a religious organization, the supposed place where exchanges between humans and the gods are encouraged and supervised. However, I wanted to find out if this was definitely the case, and also whether any past experiences in a church influenced marginal affiliates' current levels of involvement in their congregation. Therefore, I asked active and marginal affiliates about whether they could depend on others in their congregation and whether their congregation was responsive to people's needs both inside and outside their congregation.

An overwhelming majority of active affiliates (nineteen out of twenty-one) believe that they can depend on people in their congregation, and that people in their congregation demonstrate an authentic concern for its own members and people at large. For some, they have successfully asked others to pray for them, to help them in a volunteering capacity in the church,

to babysit their children, or to help them move homes. Others indicate that they can depend on people in their church, though they are more likely to turn to others outside their congregation whom they know better. Some suggest that they are not the type of people to ask others for help, though if push came to shove, they can turn to people in their congregation in a time of need. Looking beyond their own needs, active affiliates provided several examples of ways in which people in their congregation demonstrate genuine care and concern for others. These ranged from serving the ostracized in society, such as the homeless, the drug addicts, and the mentally ill, to providing for fellow congregants' practical financial, emotional, and spiritual needs. While active affiliates are highly optimistic about how dependable and responsive their congregations are, some also comment that their congregations act with the best of intentions, but are not always successful in meeting the needs of others. For instance, they note that every group in society has people who deviate from the groups' ideals, including politicians, educators, business executives, and social service providers. Sometimes people in church groups are too judgmental, other times they fail to respond to the needs of the homeless, and on some occasions they are too selfish to pay attention to the physical, emotional, or spiritual needs of others.

When I asked marginal affiliates if they could depend on people in their congregation, they were far less positive than active affiliates (twelve out of twenty-one marginal affiliates responded affirmatively to this question). For some, this was due to the simple fact that they did not know others in their congregation. Personality and gender also factored into people's explanations. Some were just more independent in life and did not turn to anyone in times of need. Males sometimes indicated that it was more of a female response to turn to friends, thus church or no church, they (males) were less inclined to ask anyone for help. But for others like Debbie Fisher, their apprehension toward depending on others in their congregation was directly connected to bad experiences in the past where people in the church let them down, making them

almost hostile to the thought of having to turn to their congregation again. A Roman Catholic woman in her early fifties spoke of several negative experiences in different congregations. One experience especially stands out after she missed a few services:

> I missed a few Sundays, and I was shopping, and I ran into this lady, ['Jane,'] I think her name was. And I saw her, and I said, "Hi! How are you?" And she looked at me. She said, "I don't have time to talk to you." And I thought, "There you go. She thinks that I don't have time for them. I don't have time for church. I don't have time for ['Sister Mary,'] . . . and to help anymore, and she's just going to give me the cold shoulder." So, like, that's really hurtful.

Later in the interview she described the lack of dependability among those in her congregation in this way: "I felt . . . as long as I was saying the right things and doing the right things, showing up when I was supposed to, that I would be accepted. But if I made a mistake or, you know, any one of the human conditions, you experience from time to time, I was out. And that, in fact, is what happened." One male in his late forties from an evangelical Protestant tradition shared this experience: "There was, I guess, a lot of emotional turmoil in my life, and I sort of reached out to the church for support and got nothing back. In fact, I got chastised several times by the pastor for my lack of strength in the face of those things and was completely taken aback by it, shocked by it, very hurt by it . . . I was coming to terms with a lack of outreach by my church, and it was just, like, 'Okay. Hold it. Enough is enough.'"

Despite being sceptical that they could depend on people in their church, marginal affiliates (eighteen out of twenty-one) largely believe that their congregations are responsive to people's needs in their church and broader society. Overall they believe that churches genuinely desire to love and care for people, providing countless examples of how their church or other churches have done so (e.g., caring for the homeless and for immigrants). Yet, the negative things that churches are responsible for, such as sexual or financial scandals, wars, or corrupt leadership

remain on marginal affiliates' minds. The following Roman Catholic male highlights the perception of several others that I spoke with:

> I have a real thing with these Benny Hinn's and other zealots out there pushing people over and you're cured. I mean, 'God blessed me with this'; 'God told me this.' And the people that just buy into this looking for something. Looking for a cure. Buying a vial of whatever-the-hell water they call it. Magical water . . . and the people who buy into it. We had a friend . . . he had been sending thousands of dollars down to Jimmy Swaggert . . . it behoves me to say that some people get sucked in . . . so much of that goes on . . . and, with all the promises of wealth . . . I mean you're in credit card debt when you send us a payment, and you're just going to disappear shortly thereafter. So they'll make their fifty dollar payment on this month's Visa card, pay the eighteen percent increase, which will keep accumulating, and think that the miracle spring water may bring this to an end. Do I have some issues with religion? Yes. Charlatans.

Though not exclusive to this group, agnostics and atheists in my sample who strictly attend church services out of obligation to family members stress this negative side of religious organizations as a leading explanation for why they do not desire any further involvement in church life.

These findings resonate with Kinnaman and Lyons' recent empirical discoveries in *unChristian* (2007). Through survey and interview data in the United States, they document six leading criticisms by non-Christians towards those who identify as Christians and attend religious services regularly. Non-Christians perceive Christians, particularly evangelicals, to be hypocritical, homophobic, sheltered within a Christian subculture, too political, judgmental, and motivated to make friends with non-Christians only because they wish to convert them. Christians are known not for what they stand for, but what they stand against. They are perceived as closed-minded, arrogant, and highly exclusive relative to the surrounding culture. Such perceptions are based in large part on people's first hand experiences, like those of the marginal affiliates that I interviewed, with Christians. As I highlight in chapter six and develop in chapter seven, when it comes to people's realities, social perception means everything and this negative perception among many in society towards Christians is probably the most significant challenge

that religious groups face in contemporary culture. It is unsurprising then that there is a growing sympathy for prominent atheist writers such as Dawkins (2006), Harris (2006), and Hitchens (2007).

To summarize this section, the empirical evidence highlights the strongly subjective nature of the religious decision-making process, evident in the variety of rewards and costs mentioned. This illustrates the challenge that exists when measuring rewards and costs. Still, we do gain some clarity of the rewards that people benefit from and the costs, if any, that they incur in the process. Active affiliates are more likely to attach religious rewards and motivations for their participation in a religious group, and they are more likely to say that they make sacrifices along the way. When it comes to past exchanges with the gods and the churches, active affiliates are more prone to say that God and those in their church are dependable, however both active and marginal affiliates believe that those in their congregation have a genuine care and concern for people within and beyond those in the group. These observations set the context for the following findings and analysis.

Is Religion Really That Social?

Recognizing that religious decision-making processes entails risk, Stark and Finke (2000) explore factors that might reduce the level of risk involved. They theorize that an individual's confidence in religious explanations is strengthened to the degree that others express confidence in the same explanations, that individuals participate in collective religious ceremonies, and that people conserve their religious and social capital (2000: 106-138). In other words, people will have greater confidence in the beliefs and practices that they adopt if people around them share similar beliefs and practices.

Sociologically, their theory makes much sense, as depicted earlier with Stark and Bainbridge's seminal study of conversion in several new religious movements. What is missing in Stark and Finke's theory, however, is a direct empirical study that links the above variables together. As I asked in chapter four: is it actually true that an individual's confidence in religious explanations is improved when others express confidence in them, when individuals participate in religious rituals, and when people conserve their social and religious capital? If this is the case, then to what degree and how precisely is this the case? Addressing these questions will both help us to empirically evaluate Stark and Finke's theory and further compare similarities and differences between the active and marginal affiliates that I interviewed.

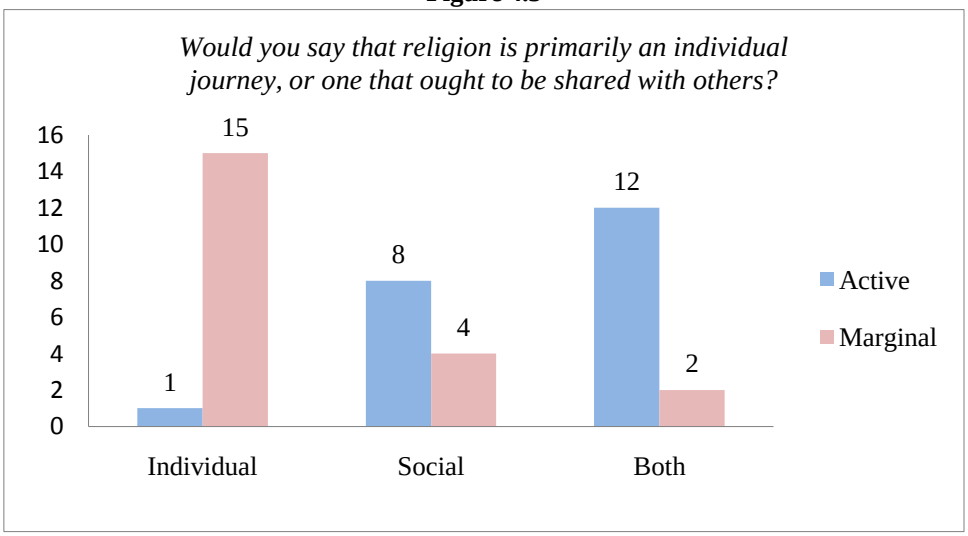
To obtain this information I asked participants a series of questions about the social nature of their religious lives. I asked about their friendships and how many of their close friends participate in the same congregation, another congregation within the same religious tradition, another religious group, or no religion at all. I asked whether they believe that religion is primarily an individual or a social journey and how that is reflected in their own religious life. I also queried about how influential religious groups should be in shaping people's religious beliefs and practices, and how influential their own group is in shaping their religious worldview. Finally, I solicited their level of confidence in the religious explanations that they adopt.

We already know that active affiliates have a significantly higher level of social involvement in their religious life, mainly evidenced in weekly attendance patterns versus marginal affiliates' selective attendance habits. There are a few exceptions among marginal affiliates, one of whom participates in a weekly evangelical Protestant Bible study group and another with Roman Catholic ties who is involved with others in the Oneness movement on

occasion.[6] However, on the whole marginal affiliates are not regularly involved in social activities relative to their faith. Given this, if Stark and Finke are correct, we should find that active affiliates are more confident in their religious worldview than marginal affiliates.

In Figure 4.3 we see that active affiliates are much more likely than marginal affiliates to say that religion should be shared with others, or at the very least, religion is both an individual journey and one that ought to be shared with others.

Figure 4.3



When asked about whether religion primarily is or should be an individual or social phenomenon, twenty active affiliates indicate that religion is primarily social in nature, or that it is a combination of an individual and social activity. One Roman Catholic male expresses it this way:

> Well, I think it should be shared with others because . . . it's a good process . . . and it's sort of like Alcoholics Anonymous . . . if somebody just threw a book at you and said, "Stop drinking," . . . I don't think you'd be successful . . . But if you had a bunch of

[6] The Oneness movement is rooted in India dating back to 1984. It is based on the ideal of alleviating conflict and suffering in the world and avoiding the pursuit of material possessions and success, instead seeking oneness with self, others, and creation. Central to this movement is "The Oneness Blessing," where a Oneness Blessing Giver transmits energy through touch or mental energy to the receiver, which then enables the receiver to grow in consciousness about themselves, other people, and the world around them. It is believed that once a person receives "The Oneness Blessing" they are more enlightened and can live in fully harmonious relations with everything and everyone around (www.onenessuniversity.org).

> support people and said . . . "*We're* going to do this" . . . And I think that's why you go to church together . . . at certain hours . . . because you're all together, and it's reinforcing each other's behaviour . . . rather than, if they just opened up the doors of the church and said, "Everybody come by for a few minutes a week" . . . and then people probably wouldn't do that because . . . we're social animals, and we . . . suffer from the herd instinct, and we flock together . . . and that's the support we derive off of each other. We take . . . kind of, on the days I don't really feel like it, well, I will because I can see that the others are there, too.

Others expressed similar things. One woman states, "I think it has to be shared with others . . . I think humans are made to be in relationship with people, and any time you try and go solo . . . it's too small. Like, you need to talk to people and, I think, get other people's opinions and perspectives, and you need to love, and you need to be loved." Another female says that "as an individual, you make a decision, but when you make that decision . . . you make a commitment . . . to a group of people . . . to be a part of their family, you know, and family's not something you just abandon. You know, you're stuck with them. So both. I think we all have responsibility to each other, but we also have a responsibility to God individually." Overall, active affiliates believe that they model these beliefs in their life.

To the contrary, the marginal affiliates in my study demonstrate a strong leaning to religion as a solitary affair. Similar to Bibby's observations in 1987 and 1993 and Michael Adams' (2006) observations of Canadian life, most (fifteen) believe that religion is a private matter where they can create, customize, and arrive at whatever set of religious beliefs they want. Debbie Fisher says to me, "I don't believe pushing anything onto anybody, I guess. I can talk about how I feel. I can talk about . . . what I believe and what I do, but I don't think I would have a right to push it onto somebody else . . . I think it's a very personal thing. It's a personal journey." The marginal affiliates that I spoke with do not believe that others should be allowed to force their faith on another person, and they admit that they do not talk about religion with their

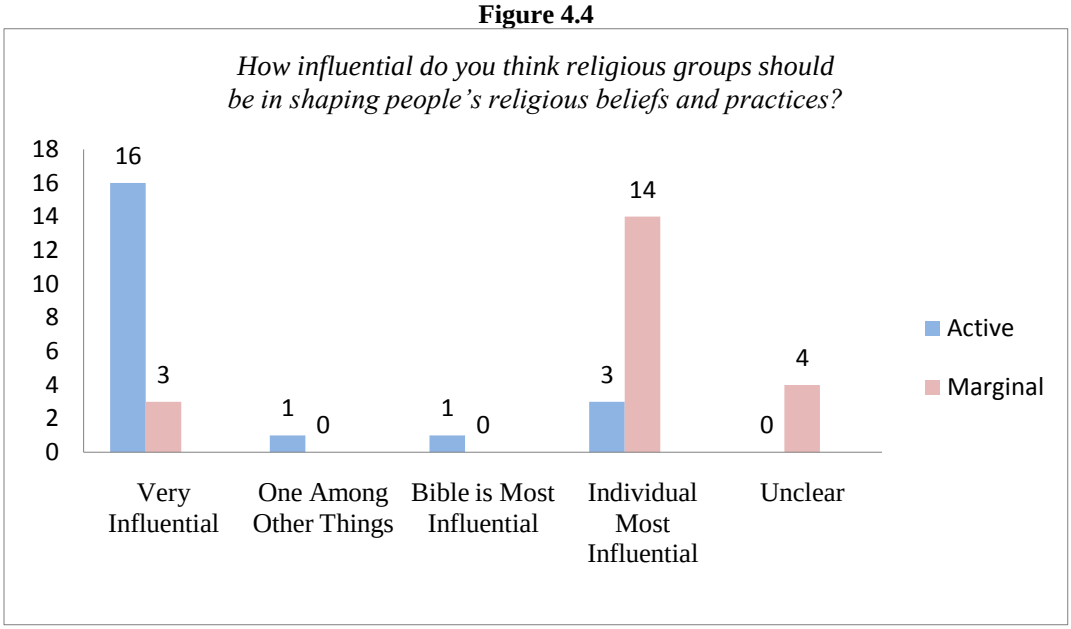
friends nor do some of them even know their friends' religion. Emerson Cairns spoke strongly against forcing one's faith on another:

> I'm not a big fan of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints sending people through my neighbourhood every couple weeks . . . and then showing up with their whole family on my doorstep. I don't think that's fair . . . I think everybody's entitled . . . to believe what they believe, and, granted, they have to be exposed to it somehow. But I think people on their journey . . . will be drawn towards something . . . And there's enough influence out there that they'll gravitate towards something without people have to show up . . . and . . . they'll stand there all day . . . I understand that they're making a pitch, only with God . . . I appreciate that. I'm the wrong guy, but I appreciate the gesture.

A handful of marginal affiliates did indicate that religion is social or that it is both individual and social. Unlike active affiliates, they define "social" as sharing their faith with others by modeling what it means to be a "good" Christian. None of them gave the impression that this meant regular participation in rituals with fellow believers or that they needed to actively proselytize the "unsaved."

I proceeded to ask active and marginal affiliates about their religious groups' role in shaping their personal beliefs and practices. Was their group very influential, not influential at all, or somewhere in-between? Figure 4.4 reveals that active affiliates largely believe that their religious group should play a prominent role in shaping their religious beliefs and practices, whereas marginal affiliates tend to emphasize individual authority over their religious beliefs and practices.

Figure 4.4



Most active affiliates believe that their religious group, particularly the church leader's teachings, should strongly influence their personal religious worldview. One male in his late thirties puts it this way:

> I think they should be fairly influential because, as much as I believe the individual faith experience is important, if we're all just left to our own devices, it's very easy to be led astray and deceived . . . our sinful fallen nature is sort of wired to just go down the selfish route, so it's very easy to get selfish and ingrown . . . and that's not a Christ-like way to live . . . I think one way to counterbalance our fallen nature is to submit ourselves to a larger community of people and a larger authority . . . whether that's church or Scripture or denomination. Whatever larger authority outside of yourself so that you're not just doing your own little thing . . . it's a choice to acknowledge that . . . life's not just about me, and faith's not just about me. And it also takes trust because you have to have a certain amount of trust in your church, your denomination, your pastor, your community in order . . . to buy into what they're saying. If you don't trust them, then, you're obviously not going to be able to . . . and it's not about blind trust because you need to think for yourself, but you do need some trust because you're not always going to . . . believe everything, or you're not always going to agree with everything, but sometimes you just have to trust that these people leading are spirit filled, and these people leading you do have your best interests and the church's best interests in mind, even if, at this particular junction, you might not understand or agree with everything they're saying.

As active affiliates give significant authority to their religious group, they, especially those with some experience in an evangelical Protestant setting, also say that the Bible should inspire what their church teaches and what they ultimately believe to be true.

When asked about how influential their religious groups *actually* are, thirteen active affiliates continue to say that their group is important. Some, like Andrew Donnelly in chapter two, qualified this, saying that their religious group was very significant during their younger years, but as they aged and developed a mind of their own, they take more ownership over their faith. In practical terms this entails that they might (and sometimes do) disagree with various church teachings (e.g., on homosexuality or women in leadership), still confident that they belong to and endorse the group's overall worldview. As a result, active affiliates in my sample, like Cam Bender, tend to seek congregations whose values conform to what they already believe to be true, rather than looking for a congregation that will radically change their religious views. Although some active affiliates in my sample may approach church authority in this individualistic manner, they continue to preserve their religious capital, or level of mastery and affinity with a particular religious culture over time, which Stark and Finke (2000: 120-125) discuss is important for increasing one's confidence in their religious perspective.

The marginal affiliate emphasis on individualism is heightened when we look at Figure 4.4 and the fourteen who believe that the individual, rather than one's religious group, should have authority over shaping a person's religious beliefs and practices. Participant after participant reinforced Emerson Cairns, Emily Foster, and Debbie Fisher's beliefs, including one male in his late fifties who says, "Sometimes I don't agree with them. Sometimes I agree with them. Sometimes you cherry-pick, like everything in life, you know. There's not a lot of black-and-white . . . You pick what you like: 'I like that. That one would be suitable. I'll keep that. This is the way I'll face there.'"

Before examining how confident active and marginal affiliates are in the religious explanations that they believe to be true, it is important to briefly look at their close friends' religious ties. Probably unsurprising, about half of active affiliates have at least one close friend in their congregation, while half are good friends with someone involved in another Christian congregation.[7] Nearly half of the active affiliates that I interviewed, predominantly those who had no religious upbringing or who participate in evangelical Protestant traditions, are close friends with those who are not particularly religious. Before explaining why this is, we should remember that rational choice theorists suggest that converts typically cut off ties to people outside the new group and benefit from the "institutional completeness"[8] and social ties in the new group (see e.g., Iannaccone 1994; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Stark and Finke 2000). It is not surprising that those in this sample with no religious upbringing who became active affiliates (like Cam Bender, and others mainly in the United Church of Canada) have strong ties to those outside the group because they do not participate in groups that demand "strict" separation from the "outside world." For very different reasons, the fact that evangelical Protestants form meaningful relationships with non-religious folk is not surprising given the evangelical theological impetus to evangelize "outsiders" (see e.g., Bebbington 1989; Reimer 2003; Wuthnow 2004). We saw this in Becky's story, and we find this in a Pentecostal male (among others) in his early thirties. As he discusses his relationship with non-Christians and declares that there is only one way to heaven, through Jesus, he offers the following comments:

> We're supposed to be a light to the world. However, it hasn't been that I haven't shared the love of Christ with them. It's just that they have denied it and have decided to believe in what they want to believe, so that's a point where you've just got to leave it, and then you've just got to keep praying. And, through your actions and through the way we live

[7] Other studies also reveal that people are close friends with others in their congregation (see Nemeth and Luidens 2003; Olson 1989, 1993; Wuthnow 2004).
[8] "Institutional completeness" refers to a group's ability to provide for all of its members needs, including things such as "education, work, food and clothing, medical care, or social assistance" (Breton 1964: 194).

> our lives . . . that's what needs to draw them in. Whatever . . . drew people into Christ was because of everything that he did and everything that he represented. So the same for us . . . we can never give up. But, ultimately, it always comes down to the people and their choice.

Unlike active affiliates, marginal affiliates in my study are less likely to have close ties with people in their religious group. Only a quarter of marginal affiliates are good friends with at least one person who regularly attends the same congregation that they drop-in for a few times a year, and an additional quarter of marginal affiliates are close with someone who attends another congregation. Yet, most people that marginal affiliates are good friends with either attend religious services to the same extent that they do, do not attend at all, or marginal affiliates have no idea because they do not talk about religion with their friends.

More than any other measurement on the social nature of religion, this question about people's social ties is at the heart of Stark and Finke's hypothesis about confidence in one's religious views. People in this study seem to conserve their social and religious capital in the sense that they surround themselves with people who are more or less like themselves in terms of religious participation. From this finding, and each of the other measurements on religion as a social phenomenon, one should expect the next paragraph to pronounce that active affiliates are significantly more confident than marginal affiliates. This is, after all, what rational choice theorists have led us to believe. But this is not so. Marginal affiliates express an equal confidence in the religious explanations that they hold on to.

The overwhelming majority of active affiliates (nineteen out of twenty-one) indicate that they are highly confident in the religious explanations that they adopt, and as Heelas and Woodhead (2005) would have predicted following their analysis of the "holistic milieu" in Kendal, England, most marginal affiliates (eighteen out of twenty-one) are strongly or somewhat confident in their religious worldview. Admittedly, some marginal affiliates point out that their

spiritual search is always evolving, but that they are entirely comfortable with this approach—this does not make the religious ground beneath them any less solid. When asked about his level of confidence in the religious beliefs and practices that he adopts, a marginal affiliate male that I interviewed says, "I'd say fairly confident, but because it's . . . an ongoing . . . exploration . . . it's not like I can say for sure that . . . that the afterlife exists . . . from my personal perspective, I'm . . . confident that that belief works for me and is right for me in the space that I'm in right now."

These findings raise a host of further questions that deserve sociological attention. For instance, what do these findings tell us about the social nature of religion? Can a person privately believe and practice, for the most part, without continual social reinforcements?[9] Can a person *sustain* private beliefs and practices in the absence of ongoing social gatherings? Those like Bowen (2004), Bruce (2002), Durkheim (1915), and Smith and Snell (2009) offer a definitive response that religion must be social, while Bibby (2002), Dillon and Wink (2007), Heelas and Woodhead (2005), and James (2002 [1902)]) leave open the possibility that people can sustain their religion in the absence of consistent social gatherings. Maybe we are witnessing a both/and situation. Could it be that people's worldviews are shaped at a younger age in a social context, and once established can be maintained in private? If this is so, maybe this helps to explain how and why marginal affiliates, like Emerson, Emily, and Debbie are able to hold on to their religious beliefs and practices in a relatively autonomous and private way today. Similarly, perhaps this explains how and why active affiliates, like Andrew and Becky can continue to

[9] Of course, an individual's social networks reinforces mainstream societal values of individualism and thus in this sense people's beliefs and practices are shared. However, when I reference private belief and practice, I am following Roof and McKinney's (1987: 40) point about "individualistic religion" as "an autonomous believer, one who is on a spiritual journey, on his or her own quest, and often with little involvement in or connection with a particular religious community." The result of this approach to religion is an emphasis on individual experience apart from the religious establishment, an egalitarian approach to understanding self and the divine, and an opposition to religious organizations' authority over individual belief and practice (p.49-50). In total, Roof and McKinney (1987: 52) argue that "privatism thrives on freedom from pressures of conformity and orthodoxy, and thus allows for a range of possible accommodations."

attend regularly, all the while holding on to beliefs that they developed at a younger age which may conflict with the reigning views of their current congregation. Maybe RCT is correct to assert that one's confidence in religious explanations is strengthened to the degree that others reinforce those values, but that the timing of those social influences is fluid. That is, might we conclude that social ties either from the distant past or the present are equally influential for stabilizing a person's religious beliefs and practices and consequently their level of confidence in their religious worldview?

As we will see in chapter six, this finding on one's confidence relative to the social nature of their religious life is important to the supply-demand argument. Religious suppliers (and rational choice theorists) conjecture that groups can offer something more stable and meaningful for those who are not actively involved, but this logic becomes difficult when the people that they are "marketing" to do not give any indication that they are looking for a worldview that is more "solid." This observation is especially problematic for Bibby's renaissance thesis.

The Failure of Supply-Side Logic

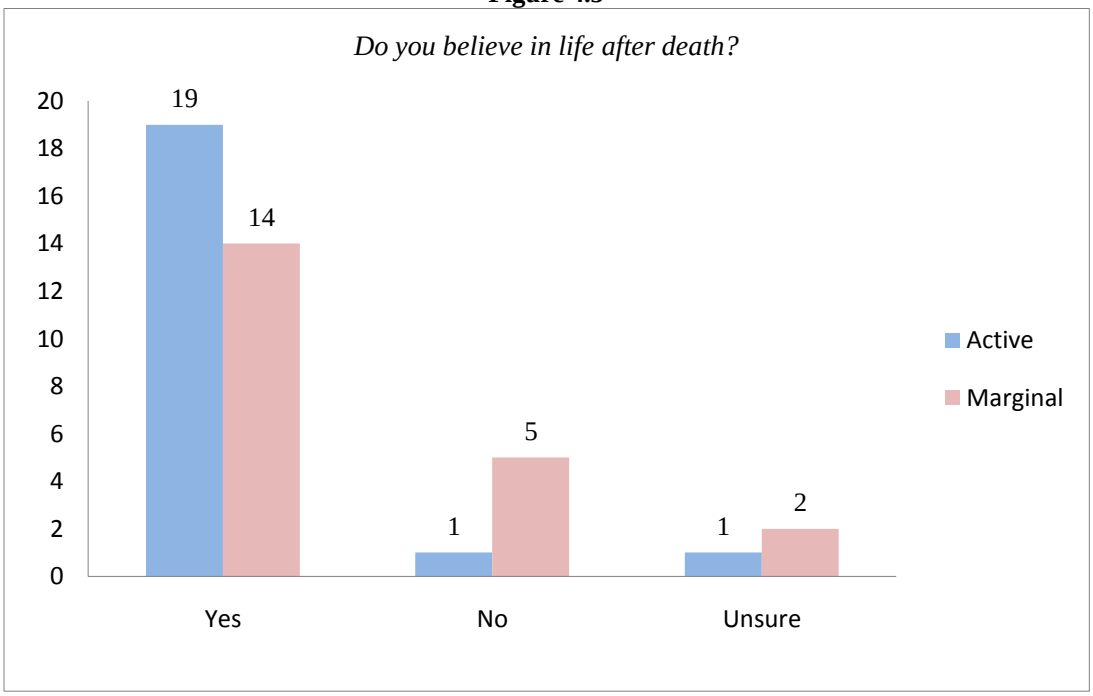
In chapter three I summarized the rational choice view that people have an inexhaustible demand for religion, particularly for life after death, and that people are more willing to join "high cost" religious groups if the rewards that groups offer are worthwhile and desirable. With these things in mind, I raised some theoretical questions about religious supply and demand such as, do people have an inexhaustible demand for rewards that only religion provides and do people turn to religious groups primarily for religious reasons? Is the supply of religion the main variable to consider in shaping people's religious preferences and motivating them to commit to a religious organization? The rational choice response to these questions is "yes," but these claims,

which underpin their entire theory, lack much in the way of empirical verification. The following data and insights hopefully move the conversation beyond just theory.

The Afterlife

In terms of belief in the afterlife, we see in Figure 4.5 that there is reason to question the rational choice claim that there is an inexhaustible demand for life after death.

Figure 4.5



Nearly all active affiliates (nineteen out of twenty-one) believe in life after death, while two-thirds of marginal affiliates (fourteen out of twenty-one) believe in the afterlife. What I think is important about this finding is that some do *not* believe in the afterlife, a finding that creates a small leak in the rational choice argument that there exists an ongoing demand for the main thing that religion supposedly has to offer. When we look closer at my interview data, we find that agnostics and atheists who attend religious services out of respect for family members are least likely to believe in an afterlife, followed by marginal affiliates who tragically lost a loved one. For this latter group, the belief that God at the very least did nothing to stop someone close to

them from dying contributes to their lack of belief in life after death. Looking beyond my data, there is evidence that not everyone believes in the afterlife or has a strong desire for life after death. Zuckerman's (2008) research in Sweden and Denmark reveals that many people are not troubled by ultimate questions of life and death. Many do not even think about the meaning of life. In fact, Sweden and Denmark are two of the top three happiest nations in the world (2008: 66), despite having one of the lowest percentages of those who believe in life after death (30% and 33% for Danes and Swedes, respectively) (2008: 24).

What about people's desire for the afterlife? Is there anything to indicate that individuals have a strong desire for life after death, as rational choice theorists posit, so much so that it drives their religious decision-making processes? Despite the fact that nineteen out of twenty-one active affiliates that I spoke with indicate a desire for life after death, it is not a strong desire for most. They do not want to escape this life in anticipation of a much better next life, and most did suggest that life after death is not *the* motivating factor for being religious. Instead, some say that life on earth is more important, either in the rewards that they receive right now, or in the possibility of bringing about "God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven." One Roman Catholic female says, "I don't think I desire it. No . . . I look forward to a time to . . . figure out what it would be like to be in heaven with God. But I don't . . . I don't desire it. I'm not just waiting for it." When asked if she desires life after death, an evangelical Protestant females replies, "Sure. If it's good, sign me up . . . if it sucks, keep me out. I just . . . do I go there sometimes? Sure, I go think about all the angels singing and thinking about it, and maybe there's still just a begrudging of my charismatic days where I refuse to let that be the driver. I believe *more* strongly on 'Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' meaning that God's kingdom is here with us, and the power of Christ is effective in my day today."

Fewer marginal affiliates show a desire for life after death. Aside from the third who do not believe in life after death, another third do desire life after death, and an additional third indicate that life after death is inevitable or that they are unsure of what life after death looks like, thus questions about desire are irrelevant. For those who do desire the afterlife, I did not get the sense that there was a strong desire for it, except for a couple of individuals who wanted to either resolve issues with deceased family members or spend eternity with departed family members. One gentleman says, "I have a lot of unresolved issues with, I'm going to say, God, family members . . . both my parents are deceased, but I have a lot of issues I would like to be able to get through to them, I guess, face-to-face rather than me talking to the air. I'd love to go and see them again, to tell them why I feel the way I do, again, rather than just laying in bed saying it to whatever." Among those who believe that life after death is inevitable, there is a general sentiment along the lines of one woman who says, "I don't have any questions about death. I never question death, so when that happens, I think that's going to be awesome, but I don't have a desire. I just have a knowing . . . that's what it's going to be."

Findings about the afterlife are clearest when respondents spoke about what is required to obtain life after death. Over half of active affiliates, mainly from Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant backgrounds, believe that proper belief and practice are necessary to move on to the next life. In terms of belief, these active affiliates, similar to Becky Eagleton in chapter two, assert that individuals must believe in Jesus Christ, that he was crucified on a cross for people's sins, and that people need to repent and ask Jesus for forgiveness for their sins. They also need to proclaim that Jesus will guide their life, so that their entire worldview is shaped by the Godly things that are typically outlined in the Bible and learned at church. When it comes to practices, active affiliates, especially evangelical Protestants like Becky Eagleton, were hesitant to say that one can earn their way into heaven by religious practices (a belief that several interviewees,

active and marginal, associate with Roman Catholicism),[10] pointing instead to God's grace that is extended to humans who earnestly desire to "have a relationship" with Him. In other words, church attendance was not a prerequisite to go to heaven. Yet, they maintained that true and proper belief inevitably leads to proper practice too. These include not only spiritual practices such as praying, reading religious texts, and serving the less fortunate, but also moral practices of being kind and loving and honest in all circumstances.

The remaining active affiliates, disproportionately from the United Church of Canada, either indicate that they are unsure of what is required to obtain life after death or do not believe in the afterlife. This was clear in some of the quotations cited in chapter two. Also, a couple of others, surprisingly from the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical Protestant tradition, hinted that one does not need to be Christian to go to heaven. One just needs to believe in God, whatever that god might look like and pursue a connection with this transcendent being. As one active affiliate male says to me, "I do believe it's a gift of God, and I believe that God pulls people to . . . the afterlife when they die . . . regardless of faith or religion . . . I believe God speaks to all people. I believe God's breath of life is in all people . . . I believe there's a small percentage of people in all kinds of religions that are deeply connected to the spirit of God."

In contrast to the rational choice position that religious organizations "are social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain, and supply religion to some set of individuals and to support and supervise their exchanges with a god or gods" (Stark and Finke 2000: 103), the marginal affiliates in my sample do not make a connection between making exchanges with the gods (e.g., to obtain life after death) and church involvement. Excluding the

[10] For example, Cam Bender says, "I knew I didn't want to become Catholic, because . . . I don't believe that . . . going and confessing your sins to a priest will help or going and . . . doing any other rituals or doing any other sort of performances or anything like that or . . . you can't buy your way into heaven. You can't be good enough . . . I don't think that there's anything that . . . I can do . . . to obtain that."

six marginal affiliates who do not believe in the afterlife and the four who are unsure of what is required to obtain life after death, eight of the remaining eleven marginal affiliates believe that being a good person is the main criterion for entering the next life. For them this entails following the Ten Commandments and being generous, friendly, cheerful, and honest, while avoiding the major sins such as murder, rape, and stealing. Put another way, a definitive belief in a god or a supernatural being, or active involvement in a religious group is not a requirement for obtaining life after death. People of all religious faiths or no religious faith at all can move on to the next life if they are good, upright, moral people.

In his book *Sex in the Snow* (2006), Environics President Michael Adams plausibly argues that a relationship exists between Canadians' increased orientation toward "this-world" and declining desires for the afterlife (or fear of the afterlife). Commenting on the impact of technology and the sense of urgency and immediacy that it has created for many Canadians in most facets of life, Adams states:

> [Canadians are a] population that is unwilling to defer gratification to the next life, that wants to "have its cake and eat it too." What is the point, after all, of having a cake you don't eat, or waiting till it's stale? Canadians are increasingly focused on immediate gratification, and have pretty much given up on the promises—and *threats*—of an afterlife . . . Canadians are no longer willing to wait for gratification until death's door delivers them into an afterlife they're not even sure exists (2006: 31, 124).

Adams' ideas ring true on two fronts. The first is in the plain fact that several marginal affiliates and some active affiliates do not believe in or desire life after death, and even among those who do desire life after death the intensity of that desire is rather small. Second, the reality that every single person that I interviewed mainly offered "this-worldly" rewards for maintaining some level of religious belief or practice is indicative of the limited role that "other-worldly" rewards

play in Canadian religious decision-making processes.[11] That is, the reward of life after death is not a critical variable that many consider when deciding to be religious, or deciding how religious they will be. Therefore, in terms of religious supply and demand, these findings suggest that maybe there is a lack of demand for the things that religion has to offer in terms of life after death.

If my interpretation of the data is correct, it is hard to understand why rational choice theorists constantly stress the critical role that religious groups play in an individual's pursuit of religious rewards such as life after death. Realistically, how are religious groups supposed to (a) convince people that there is an afterlife, (b) encourage individuals that they should strongly desire the afterlife, (c) persuade people to believe that life after death will somehow be better if they incur more costs along the way, and (d) influence affiliates to connect all of the above with necessary active involvement in their congregation? In my view the answer is simple: they cannot. If people do not believe in the afterlife, or they do not desire the afterlife, or they believe that they can obtain life after death without attending religious services regularly, then it matters very little what is done to the supply-side, at least in this key regard.

Strict Churches

Another limitation of the supply-side argument concerns the notion that people are attracted to strict churches and that strictness helps to explain why conservative congregations are growing versus declining liberal congregations (Iannaccone 1994; Kelley 1972). In response to many church leaders, academics, and the media who believed that religious groups needed to liberalize to stay relevant and succeed, Kelley's classic book *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (1972) demonstrated that the opposite was true. He argues that strict conservative

[11] This conclusion echoes Marx (1970), Norris and Inglehart (2004), and Zuckerman (2008) who believe that advances in modernity and material security leads to lower levels of religiosity.

congregations are so successful because they offer definitive answers to questions of ultimate meaning, giving members a sense that God is on their side if they subscribe to the group's beliefs and practices. Such churches also provide clear boundaries between "insiders" and "outsiders," so that those on the inside are required to commit to ongoing belief in and loyalty to a unique way of life. These features facilitate a mutually supportive environment, rooted in common beliefs, which tend to motivate individuals to subordinate personal desires to the group. As a result, "free riders," or those who are not fully committed to the group, are left on the outside. Iannaccone (1994: 1197) goes on to reason that "increased strictness (or distinctiveness, or costliness) leads to higher levels of church attendance and church contributions, closer ties to the group, and reduced involvement in competing groups." This is because the benefits, this-worldly and other-worldly, that people associate with strict congregations, such as definitive answers to questions of ultimate meaning, are greater than those found in less strict congregations. Accordingly, the stricter a church is, the more likely it is that people will incur higher costs, such as those associated with greater participation.

Kelley and Iannaccone's explanation of strict religious groups are widely accepted. The idea is used to explain both the struggles of Canadian mainline Protestant congregations over the last half-century, as well as the continued stability of Canadian evangelical Protestantism. However, what if strictness proves to be a barrier to active involvement in a church, and furthermore, if low strictness levels are attractive and foster greater participation? In his discussion of the impact that rigid family backgrounds have on long term religious commitment, Wade Clark Roof (1999: 231-232) highlights that while exposure to strict parenting styles help some children to maintain the conservative religious values and behaviours of their childhood into their adult years, authoritative parenting can also lead to "heavy baggage resulting in resistance, if not outright rejection" of those religious values. Dillon and Wink (2007: 34)

conclude that "although religiously strict churches are effective in attracting and maintaining new members . . . our data suggest that the aggregate logic behind this does not necessarily persuade all individuals, nor is it transmitted intact across generations." Data from my study support these contrary views, which raise doubts about the persuasiveness of the rational choice emphasis on the causal linkage of strictness and levels of religiosity. Several marginal affiliates spoke about Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant congregations, among other groups such as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims, and their strictness as a turn-off for considering more involvement in their congregation. They were disgusted with these groups' exclusive views about women in church leadership, women's roles in the home, abortion, the treatment of mothers who had abortions, and homosexuality. One male, in his early seventies, who is marginally affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church repeatedly discussed strict views towards women in religious groups:

> Women make up over fifty percent of the world and still they have no say? . . . And so why would you exclude them . . . in the Catholic Church and a lot of other—like, you take the Mormons and all that—they're still . . . in a way, they still can't vote in the church, so they're non-entities . . . and then you go back to the Muslims. Well, they're totally shut down, there. The women. And I think, you know, to make the world run, we need them both.

Other marginal affiliates that I spoke with are upset with the self-righteous attitudes among Christians in general. They disagreed with groups that claimed to have an exclusive hold on truth, that their way of thinking about God, humanity, or the afterlife is the only acceptable way of thinking. Emily Foster laments, "I think that some religions—and, I would say, especially Catholicism—you're either in the box or you're out." Several marginal affiliates cited wars over the course of history as indicative of strict religious groups' oppressive nature, most recently evidenced in the Christian Right in the United States and Islamic extremism. Combined, these examples of strictness are enough to push and keep marginal affiliates away from organized

religion, particularly when they believe that they can experience and contact God outside the churches without trained specialists holding their hands along the way.[12] These marginal affiliates can still experience the religious rewards that they are after without participating in a religious group that lives in high tension with the surrounding society.

Beyond strictness keeping people away from regular church involvement, congregations that are less strict influenced some, like Cam Bender and others mainly from the United Church of Canada, to pursue active involvement in a church. As Melissa Walker (2003) highlights, United Church of Canada congregations are increasingly filled by people who have no prior exposure to the United Church, attributing much of this to the denominations' cultural sensitivity toward Canadians. David Nock states that "by the 1990s the United Church of Canada had become one of the most liberal and undemanding of churches in Canada, with a wide variation in belief and practice" (1993: 44), and Douglas Cowan echoes this by saying "in terms of costs incurred, for example, it can be demonstrated that within mainline Protestantism in Canada the United Church is among the least 'expensive' to join" (2000: 9) (also see Best 1994; Graham 1990; Milton 1991; O'Toole et al. 1993). Even though Cowan reinforces Kelley and Iannaccone's thesis that religious groups with lower costs tend not to grow (which the evidence in Cowan's article supports), I would submit that there is a niche within the Canadian religious marketplace whereby the least expensive groups, theologically, are actually the most attractive groups. This is not to suggest that low cost religious groups will grow on mass because of their lower cost, as they clearly are not. However, maybe we should not be so quick to accept the logic that people are necessarily attracted to strict churches. The active affiliates that I interviewed who were attracted to the United Church of Canada valued that the denomination did not take an

[12] Still, marginal affiliates want trained religious leaders to be available and offer guidance for important religious holidays and rites of passage (see Roof 1999: 234).

exclusivist position when looking at the world. They were drawn to seminars and discussion groups that explored other religions and worldviews, working towards a more holistic and informed understanding of the world. Ralph Milton expresses it this way: the United Church does not "expect you to park your brains outside when you come in the front door" (1991: 15). Others that I interviewed were enticed by the inclusive posture toward minorities, particularly homosexuals, women in leadership, and the homeless. One woman in her late twenties spoke of these things in the following way:

> Their inclusive views was one of the big things that actually drew us there . . . we went because we saw the rainbow on the . . . sign of the little poster that we were interested in. Neither of us had ever heard of a church that was as inclusive, so in terms of just different types of families and . . . more importantly, what their view in terms of poverty and that sort of social focus was probably the most important thing to me . . . I think on paper, the fact . . . that they marry and that it's not seen as a negative to be a homosexual person is a really big part of it. So that was, sort of, the first one that I understood it as, but now I see by that kind of affirmation . . . I see that they're a more accepting church because of that and that other groups that might be marginalized, although not officially, would be attending there, as well. So that's a big part of it.

Another male spoke of the appeal to the United Church of Canada:

> The United church . . . open, as in open to all groups of people, race, gender, religion. I guess, religion's kind of, you know, we're all Christians, but, you know, we don't have anything particularly against other religions. The United Church itself is very progressive, as in open to same-sex marriage . . . like, it's been at the forefront of those issues, like same-sex marriage, ordination of gay ministers, big push by the United church in the sixties for Medicare. In the thirties, the United church was the first church in Canada to ordain a woman . . . the United church is talking about climate change, poverty, war, all those sorts of things, as well as being a little bit more open . . . spiritually speaking. Congregation, same thing. A lot of . . . it's a variety of people . . . I'm not going to say variety of people because . . . it is mostly white people, but there are . . . a few Asian people, a few African Canadian people, a couple Aboriginal people. You know, there's gay and lesbian couples . . . I really like that about the United church and that particular congregation.

Others reinforced these perspectives, drawn to their church's broad-mindedness and openness to social justice issues. While Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant congregations might also be involved in social justice issues, these active affiliates' perspective was that their

church approached social justice issues with a "no strings attached" framework. When they serve the poor in society, for example, it is not done so with the assumption that people must hear the gospel before they are fed or given a place to sleep. On a personal level, a few years ago I volunteered on a regular basis with a United Church, serving food to the homeless. I was told that evangelism would have no place in this ministry and that if I tried to evangelize the homeless, I would be asked to stop volunteering. Clearly, all of these findings support Kinnaman and Lyons' (2007) discoveries in *unChristian* that Christians, especially evangelicals, are perceived as hypocritical, homophobic, sheltered, overly political, judgmental, and insincere.

These findings have not led me to altogether dismiss the notion that strict churches are appealing, and that this is why such churches are so successful in terms of numerical growth and commitment. However, the interview data is suggestive that strictness could be one, of many, explanations for why marginal affiliates are choosing to participate less in religious organizations, and that less strict congregations could be one motivating reason, among others, for why some people choose to pursue active involvement in a church. Returning to Kelley's argument, it could be that that both liberal and strict approaches to religion are appealing to different segments of the population. In Canada especially, the cultural influences of individualism, pluralism, and relativism reign supreme. As Adams (2006) documents, with advances in technology and the growing multicultural reality in Canada, Canadians prefer to have complete control over constructing their identities, to shape their beliefs and practices without external authorities attempting to do so for them. Thus, for these people in my sample, and like some of those who became actively involved with the United Church of Canada, liberal congregations are a better fit. Conversely, there remain many who are troubled by the uncertainties of life and desire black-and-white interpretations of ultimate questions, for which stricter congregations are more enticing. Many of the social benefits that come along with stricter

organizations, outlined earlier in the chapter, could also help to explain the value of strict churches for some in society. Maybe there is truth in both strict church and liberal church arguments, at least in the Canadian context.

Religious Groups and Competition

Another weakness of RCT is its insistence that religious suppliers should (and often do) think in competitive terms when marketing to current and potential religious consumers, and adjust their supply accordingly (Finke and Stark 2005; Stark and Finke 2000; Stark and Iannaccone 1994). The data that I collected does not speak directly to this issue; however, results from two recent sociological studies cast a shadow over this aspect of RCT, supporting my growing uncertainty of supply-side theory. The first study, conducted by sociologist's Janice Aurini and Linda Quirke (2009), does not deal with religion, but an analogous circumstance. It is a study of the non-elite and non-religious private education sector—a sector that, like for-profit businesses, operates without direct funding from any external source. They set out to test and challenge the "market hypothesis," a hypothesis which suggests that schools make intentional strategic decisions, such as improving curriculum or hiring the best teachers in the field, to win potential customers away from educational competitors, by comparing the views of owners and representatives from independent tutoring businesses, learning center franchises, and private schools. Despite conventional wisdom, that such organizations would strategically alter their supply of education to beat out competitors in profit and efficiency, Aurini and Quirke (2009: 13) discovered that "competitive pressures do not shape short and long-term decision-making, nor are they the levers that drive how entrepreneurs conduct their everyday business or interaction with clients." In fact, most were unaware of their "competitors" in the surrounding neighbourhoods and beyond. Instead, they rationalized their marketing actions around their niche market,

presumably a market that lacks competition. They also stressed that their ethos was about providing quality service that met people's needs, not that generated a profit. Finally, they saw their roles as educators, not business entrepreneurs, and thus did not think of their organization in terms of market competition. Aurini and Quirke (2009: 18) summarize their findings by saying that "competition in and of itself was not the driving force behind their short- and long-term decision-making. Instead, these responses were rooted in their commitment to their clients and self-concept as educators, rather than as educated business people."

Aurini and Quirke's findings are corroborated in another study, in the area of religion. From several email exchanges, I have learned that in their recent study on Canadian evangelical congregations, Sam Reimer, Michael Wilkinson, and Andrew Grenville asked evangelical pastors a series of questions on a range of topics, some of which measured the pastor's sense of or activity in competition with other congregations.[13] Similar to Aurini and Quirke, they discovered that pastors did not think in competitive terms, favouring instead a theological impetus to "save souls" and encourage people in their religious and spiritual journeys, whether in their congregation or another. When churches do sharpen their supply with livelier music, more relevant preaching, or more dynamic programs, their motivation is not to steal people from other congregations. They are moved with the desire to best facilitate a person's set of exchanges with God, particularly among those who do not currently attend a church. Moreover, pastors cited examples of how they cooperate with other congregations in joint services, social service projects, or evangelism events. Here too the goal is to expand and represent the entire Christian community, not a particular congregation or denomination per se.

[13] Data for this study was recently collected, thus no publications or presentations have been made on this data yet (hence my reliance on email exchanges, which I was given permission to cite for the purposes of this dissertation).

If we combine the findings from these two studies and think about religious suppliers in similar terms to the private educational sector, we could logically posit that religious leaders and suppliers do not see themselves in the same way that hard-nosed business entrepreneurs see themselves. There are alternative motivations for why religious suppliers supply religion in the ways that they do, aside or in place of profit (measured not only in dollars but by human resources). Building on Aurini and Quirke's observations, churches are a different type of organization that exists to service people's needs rather than turn a profit.

In the next two chapters I speak to the issue of religious supply head on, in particular dealing with Bibby's assertion that marginal affiliates desire greater involvement in their religious group and that adjustments to the supply of religion is a key step that will lead to their eventual return. As will be seen, most marginal affiliates like Emerson Cairns do not actually desire greater involvement, and for the few like Debbie Fisher who do, the factors that would lead to more involvement are largely beyond religious groups' control. Discussion of this data will expand what I think is a growing body of evidence against the rational choice supply-side emphasis in the sociology of religion.

Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to test some of the most fundamental axioms and propositions in RCT about costs and rewards, the social nature of religion, as well as religious supply and demand, assertions that lack strong, if any, empirical support. In addition to documenting several exploratory observations about RCT assumptions that could and should be developed in future studies, the findings in this chapter both confirm and challenge elements of RCT that move us further along in our comparison of active and marginal affiliates. Beginning with the religious decisions that people make, active affiliates, in general, demonstrate a stronger propensity to

attach religious as opposed to secular rewards to their religious beliefs and practices. This is evident when we consider that active affiliates like Andrew Donnelly, Becky Eagleton, and Cam Bender are largely motivated to attend religious services to experience religious community, to receive meaning and purpose for daily living, and to develop and affirm their faith, while marginal affiliates like Emerson Cairns and Emily Foster are largely motivated to attend religious services because of tradition or family pressures. In terms of religious costs, while active affiliates are more prone to say that they sacrifice something in exchange for desired rewards, the finding that is perhaps most instructive is that many people that I interviewed do not think that they have sacrificed anything, or they do not think of supposed costs as a bad or negative thing. Methodologically, this last finding supports Bruce (1999) and Bryant's (2000) criticisms against RCT, that religious costs are measured subjectively and they need not entail "bad" or "undesirable" sacrifices.

In terms of how dependable, responsive, or powerful the gods are, active affiliates in this study have a more favourable view that the gods will "look out" for them, with the exception of some active affiliates from the United Church of Canada who tend not to believe that God is actively involved in the world—or at least not in a direct manner. Accordingly, in contrast to marginal affiliates, most active affiliates believe that God is active and powerful over all of the world's events. The marginal affiliate reluctance to agree with this position is largely shaped by past experiences where God did not seemingly care for them and their wishes. When I extended Stark and Finke's theory to consider people's perceptions of their congregations, I found that active affiliates are more likely to think that they can depend on others in their congregation. For marginal affiliates, their general negative response to this indicator is because they either know nobody in their congregation or they have had negative experiences in the past with others in their church. However, both active and marginal affiliates are optimistic that people in their

congregations have good intentions when it comes to caring for people at large. Combined, these findings validate rational choice theorist's assumption that past experiences with the gods, and now the churches, help to explain people's current religious views and behaviours.

One question that arises is how and why active affiliates who experienced tragedies in the past do not also adopt less than positive views of God? This is where the findings on the social nature of religion are important. Although both active and marginal affiliates in this study tend to associate with others who are like themselves, religiously, active affiliates are in social settings that offer religious explanations for the chaotic and uncontrollable events of life. Active affiliates and those they are close with turn to God for divine intervention and interpretation, believing that everything in life happens for a reason and that God has a plan. These religious legitimations, grounded in the social, help to distinguish active from marginal affiliates in this sample.

In terms of confidence in religious explanations, contrary to what one would expect, based on the rational choice claim that one's confidence is correlated with their association with others who share similar beliefs and practices, active and marginal affiliates equally show high levels of confidence in the religious beliefs and practices that they adopt. This observation led me to suggest that social components of the religious life are important for enhancing one's confidence, but that the timing of those social encounters can vary. That is to say, marginal affiliates are confident in their religious explanations because at a younger age, when their minds were more malleable, they cultivated their current beliefs in the context of family and friends who shared similar worldviews. This strong grounding enables them to continue to believe and belong in a rather private manner (i.e., they do not regularly gather with other like-minded individuals to reaffirm their religious groups' beliefs and practices) (see Roof and McKinney 1987). Moving forward, it would be good to ask active and marginal religious affiliates more in-depth questions about their religious upbringing and socialization, to better understand the many

and varied factors that contributed to their religious worldview (similar to Dillon and Wink's (2007) longitudinal study of religious change over the life course in the United States). It would also be helpful to know more about the phase of life where individuals decide which aspects of their religious upbringing they will take or leave. Do their beliefs solidify when they move out, when they pursue an education, when they marry, when they have children, or when they lose a loved one? What exactly contributes to the point at which people draw the line in the sand regarding what they believe about religion?

With respect to religious supply and demand, I advanced a couple of reasons for why supply-side logic is flawed and why demand-side interpretations ought to receive more attention in the sociological study of religion. In doing so I demonstrated that people, particularly marginal affiliates, do not have an inexhaustible demand for religious rewards, such as the afterlife, and people do not necessarily turn to religious groups for religious reasons. Consequently, I question how much influence religious suppliers can actually have to attract new members, or encourage existing marginal affiliates to pursue greater involvement in the future. In large part, these are some of the central issues that I pursue in chapter's five and six on secularization.

Chapter 5
The Contours of Secularization Theory in Studies of Religion

Introduction

In this chapter I move toward a more complete understanding and evaluation of Reginald Bibby's religious renaissance thesis in the context of a broader sociological discussion on secularization. I begin by outlining the main evidence and rationale behind Bibby's renaissance thesis. Again, Bibby's forecast builds on many of the RCT assumptions detailed in the last two chapters, especially that religious demand is constant and that changes to religious supply should lead to greater church attendance. I then discuss some methodological problems behind Bibby's thesis (and secularization theory in general) that limit our ability to precisely and correctly identify the current and possible future state of religion in Canada. For instance, from quantitative data alone, it is unclear what meanings and motivations lay behind individuals' religious beliefs and practices. Such knowledge may help us to more accurately assess the likelihood of a potential religious renaissance. In addition, I document the various ways that sociologists have defined the term "secularization," and the subsequent challenges that emerge when scholars conceptualize and operationalize secularization differently. As a result, I turn to Karel Dobbelaere's three-level analysis of secularization and argue that the renaissance-secularization debate at the heart of Bibby's thesis mainly concerns secularization at the individual level. Accordingly, this is the level of secularization that I will deal with in this chapter as I summarize several theories of secularization in the sociology of religion, accounting for those who support or reject secularization theory.[1] The reason for presenting the theories at all is because theory helps to explain data, and data helps support or refute theory. The theoretical overview in this chapter will

[1] See Oliver Tschannen's 1991 article, "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization," Jose Casanova's 2007 article, "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective," and Berger, Davie, and Fokas' book, *Religious America, Secular Europe? A Theme and Variations* (2008) for well-rounded summaries and comparisons of several secularization theories.

set up the discussion in chapter six, where I turn to my data to evaluate Bibby's renaissance thesis and to speak to the potential future of religion in Canada. Together these chapters also will help us to further understand some of the major similarities and differences between active and marginal affiliates.

Setting the Context for the Renaissance-Secularization Debate

In contrast to his own conclusions during the 1980s and 1990s, Reginald Bibby surprised many in *Restless Gods* (2002) when he argued that Canada was experiencing a renaissance of religion, particularly in the churches, and that this was all to be expected. Drawing extensively on Rational Choice Theory and supply-side logic, he rejects that secularization is the best concept for describing the state of religion in Canada. Citing realities inside the churches, interest in religion and spirituality outside the churches, and indicators that Canadians are open to greater involvement in their religious group, Bibby claims that there is evidence that religion is alive and well. I will not review all the supporting statistics here, as that has been done elsewhere (Thiessen and Dawson 2008). Rather, I will just briefly account for Bibby's general conclusions as they pertain to secularization, moving toward a theoretical and empirical response to the second main question of this dissertation: how are we to assess the degree of religiosity or secularity in Canada in light of active and marginal affiliates' religious beliefs, practices, and involvements?

Optimistic about what is happening in Canadian churches, Bibby records ongoing stability in church membership and slightly higher weekly attendance patterns among adult evangelical Protestants since the 1950s (2002: 73), and among teens since the 1980s (2002: 87-88). In mainline Protestant settings, despite significant declines in membership (2006: 198) and weekly attendance (2002: 75) since 1990, he notes that the drop appears to have stopped, possibly signalling an imminent turn upward, as already noted in monthly attendance figures

(2006: 199). Among Roman Catholics, he points out that nearly 50% of all Canadians continue to identify as Roman Catholic, similar to the figure for 1871 (2002: 78). Outside of Quebec, declining numbers attend mass weekly today when compared with fifty years ago (2002: 78), and the same can be said of weekly mass attendance inside Quebec since the 1950s (2002: 80). However, Bibby observes, the actual numerical loss in weekly attendance is minimal (e.g., 1.6 million people attended mass weekly in Quebec in 1990, compared with 1.2 million in 2000). There are also marginal increases in monthly attendance outside of Quebec since the 1990s (2006: 196).

Beyond the churches, Canadians continue to demonstrate an interest in and acceptance of various religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. Bibby shows that as of 2000, between 60 and 70% of Canadians ask questions about meaning in life, 70% ask questions about life after death, and over 90% ponder issues of happiness and suffering. Over 80% of Canadians believe in God, nearly 50% of Canadians claim to have experienced God, and only 26% never pray (Bibby 2002: 93-146). In 2005, Bibby documents noticeable numbers of Canadians who believed in astrology (33%), in extra sensory perception (57%), in communicating with the dead (31%), and in psychics (55%) (Bibby 2006: 188).

Yet Bibby's most pertinent finding is that high percentages of Canadians continue to hold on to and place some value in their religious affiliation, despite not attending on a regular basis. This is evidenced in the fact that 80% of Canadians who do not attend religious services regularly (representing 75% of the Canadian population) continue to turn to their religious tradition for important religious holidays and rites of passage and they have no intention of switching religious traditions (Bibby 1987: 84).[2] Not only this, but Bibby argues that 55% of those who

[2] The raw data from Bibby's 1995 survey, one of two used to produce *Restless Gods* (2002), yields similar observations. This raw data is available online at http://thearda.com/Archive/Files/Codebooks/PC1995_CB.asp.

attend less than monthly are open to being more involved in their religious tradition, if certain ministry, organizational, and personal factors are addressed (2002: 220). For example, if religious groups had more relevant preaching, livelier music, more and improved programs, and focused on helping individuals to live their lives and to feel loved and cared for in a community, then some Canadians would consider greater involvement. Put differently, if religious groups adjust their supply of religion, then we are more likely to witness greater church attendance.

Bibby's optimism has re-engaged a debate that some thought was over, thinking that secularization had reached Canada and was here to stay. On one hand, quantitative studies indicate that weekly attendance at religious services and the social influence of religious institutions are markedly less today than they were fifty years ago (e.g., Baum 2000; Bibby 1987, 1993; Bowen 2004; Egerton 2000; Lyon and Van Die 2000). On the other hand, many Canadians still pray in private, believe in the supernatural, identify with a religious group, and attend religious services at least a few times a year (Bibby 1987, 1993, 2002, and 2006). Further, as Bibby asserts, some marginal affiliates supposedly desire to be more involved in their religious group (Bibby 2002, 2004). So what are we to make of this paradox? Is this state of affairs evidence for or against secularization?

Part of the confusion (and criticism) surrounding secularization theory stems from its reliance on macro quantitative data, which can only tell us so much. Numbers tell us how many people claim to believe something or behave a certain way and how frequently or strongly this is the case. What is missing is the story within the story. What do those numbers actually mean to the individuals who circle "strongly agree" or "somewhat disagree?" When Emily Foster claims that spirituality is very important to her, but religion is not, what does this mean? When Emerson Cairns or Emily Foster attend religious services out of respect for tradition or family, but not necessarily because they are seeking religious rewards, how should we interpret their behaviour?

What about Debbie Fisher who indicates a desire for greater involvement in her religious group? How intense and realistic is this desire and what stands in the way of greater involvement?

Thought of in a different way, consider the recent attention given world-wide to environmental concerns. Canadians, like many in Western countries, have responded by using energy efficient light bulbs, appliances, and building materials in their homes. At the surface it would appear that Canadians are increasingly conscious of their impact on the environment, desiring to be "eco-friendly." What if we found out that Canadians are adjusting their habits primarily for economic reasons, to lower their monthly bills in light of rising energy costs? How might this change our interpretation of people's attitudes and practices? Instead of suggesting that Canadians are making changes because of their care for the environment, we could conclude that Canadians are following the capitalist ethic that is so strongly engrained in our culture. In fact, families might not care at all about their impact on the environment. The same principle applies when it comes to religious beliefs and practices. How are we to interpret the fact that marginal affiliates continue to associate with a religious tradition, selectively turn to their group for religious holidays and rites of passage, indicate no desire to change religious traditions, and possibly desire to be more involved? What motivates these beliefs and behaviours? We need answers to these questions to determine what these responses tell us about the strength or weakness of religion in Canada. Regrettably, quantitative data does not provide us with answers to such questions, questions that sorely need to be addressed in order to adequately test Bibby's renaissance thesis. The strength of qualitative data is that it does yield answers to these types of questions, which is affirmed in the data from this study. While addressing these questions will not suddenly resolve the secularization debate as it pertains to Canada, it is a step in the right direction, especially in the context of Bibby's renaissance thesis.

Evaluating secularization theory is complicated because of the different and inconsistent ways of measuring secularization. Karel Dobbelaere's (2002) three-level analysis of secularization is instructive here. Dobbelaere argues that scholars have different ways of conceptualizing and operationalizing the term "secularization" and that we need to be clear about what type or level of secularization we are talking about. For some scholars secularization refers to the separation of church and state and religion's decreasing influence over public matters. For others, it entails modernizing religious beliefs and practices toward a secular worldview. Still, there are others who reason that individual beliefs and practices diminish with time. This inconsistency prompted Dobbelaere to seek clarity in his influential 1981 article, "Secularization: A Multi-Dimensional Concept." He later developed his ideas in *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels* (2002). When speaking of secularization, Dobbelaere challenges us to consider three levels—societal, organizational, and individual—and to be clear about what type of secularization we are trying to define, measure, and analyze.[3]

Societal secularization refers to "the shrinking relevance of the values, institutionalized in church religion, for the integration and legitimation of everyday life in modern society" (Dobbelaere 2002: 19). This level of secularization can be both a latent (unintentional) and manifest (intentional) consequence of larger social change. For example, the Protestant Reformation unintentionally influenced the spread of secularization, while the First Amendment in the American Constitution was an intentional attempt to keep religion from the public square.

[3] Jose Casanova (1994: 7; 2007: 101) also distinguishes between three types of secularization: secularization as religious decline, secularization as differentiation, and secularization as privatization. However, I will use Dobbelaere to move this discussion forward because he was the first to clearly discuss secularization at different levels, and as will be seen in this section, his ideas are more specific and relevant for addressing Bibby's renaissance thesis (i.e., secularization at the individual level). Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994) is an excellent example of how to apply and evaluate secularization theory, however his primary focus is on secularization at the societal level (i.e., privatization), not the individual level.

Organizational secularization refers to the "modernization of religion" from within (Dobbelaere 2002: 21). The clearest theoretical depiction of this is found in Weber (1963 [1922]), Troeltsch (1960), and Niebuhr (1951) who each distinguish between "sect" and "church." Organizational secularization occurs when a sectarian group transforms into a church group, modernizing and accommodating its positions to better fit the culture around. In her book *Religion in Britain Since 1945* (1994: 33-36), Grace Davie contends that the greatest threat that religious groups face in the modern era is the internal shift away from orthodox beliefs. This shift blurs the boundaries between the sacred and profane, this-world and other-world, insiders and outsiders, which makes it difficult to establish and sustain distinct requirements for membership in the group.

Individual secularization includes any "decline in involvement in churches and denominations" (Dobbelaere 2002: 18). While church attendance is a critical component to individual secularization, I would go further and suggest that individual secularization should also include other personal beliefs and practices such as belief in God, religious affiliation, or prayer. In fact, these additions are at the heart of the unsettling question about secularization in Canada, and the United States and Europe. How are we to interpret the secularization thesis when marginal affiliates do not attend religious services regularly, but continue to maintain a nominal association with their religious tradition, and maintain some degree of belief and practice in private? Again, the meanings and motivations behind individuals' beliefs and practices are of utmost importance for evaluating Bibby's renaissance thesis.

There is no doubt that a separate dissertation could be written to account for the various levels of secularization in Canada and around the world, but I will limit my discussion and analysis to individual levels of secularization. I do this mainly because Bibby's renaissance thesis deals primarily with individual religious attitudes and behaviours, not societal or organizational

secularization per se. Furthermore, my data collection centers on individuals' religious beliefs and practices, not on church-state relations or the theology and practices of religious organizations. While examining the other forms of secularization may lead to interesting observations, it would go beyond the purposes of this dissertation.

Secularization Theory

Few theories have gained as much attention in the sociology of religion as secularization theory (see e.g., Berger 1967; Berger, Davie, and Fokas 2008; Beyer 1999; Casanova 1994, 2007, 2008; Chaves 1994; Cox 1966; Dobbelaere 2002; Gorski 2000; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Lechner 1991; Luckmann 1967; Lyon 1985; Martin 1969, 1978, 1991, 2005; Neuhaus 2009; Swatos and Christiano 1999; Tschannen 1991; Yamane 1997). Proponents of the theory often hail from Europe where there is little doubt that the strength of religion (at the individual level especially) has dramatically declined in the modern era (e.g., Bruce 2002; Crockett and Voas 2006; Davie 1994; Voas 2009; Voas and Crockett 2005; Wilson 1982, 1985, 2001). This is largely attributable to features that coincide with advances in modern society, such as societalization, rationalization, structural and social differentiation, diversity, individualism, and relativism. Those who oppose the theory typically come from America, one of the most religious nations in the modern Western world (e.g., Casanova 1994; Finke and Stark 2005; Hadden 1987; Stark and Finke 2000). They often point to the growth of new religious movements, the resurgent strength of evangelical Christianity in America, the increasingly public presence of religion, the ongoing existence of "spirituality," and the cyclical nature of religious belief and practice due to the relationship between religious suppliers and consumers.

There is not enough space to document everything that has ever been written on secularization, thus I limit the following overview to those theories (for and against

secularization) that directly help us to assess individual levels of secularization.[4] When appropriate, I highlight other theories of secularization that intersect with these ideas. I begin by discussing Peter Berger[5] and Steve Bruce, who are two of the most influential proponents of secularization theory, and whose theories help us to understand secularization at the individual level. With respect to those who reject secularization theory, I single out Jeffrey Hadden and Rodney Stark. Jeffrey Hadden is important to this discussion because until the 1980s it was difficult to find sociologists who rejected the secularization paradigm, and his work sparked a reconsideration of the accepted secularization views among sociologists. Although Glock and Stark (1965), Martin (1969, 1978), Glock and Hammond (1973), and Hammond (1985) each attempted to challenge secularization theory, it was Jeffrey Hadden's 1987 article in *Social*

[4] David Martin and Jose Casanova are two prominent theorists in the secularization debate, but I do not cover them in detail because their theories do not mainly or directly deal with individual levels of secularization. For instance, David Martin (1969, 1978, 1991) is best known for suggesting that there is no universal process called secularization, nor are there uniform causes of secularization that apply across time and space. Secularization, and modernity for that matter, looks different around the world because of the specific historical and contextual differences of nations. In addition, in response to the claim that modernity inevitably brings about secularization, Martin argues that several regions of the world that are modern are also increasingly religious (or at least have remained highly religious in the face of modernization), such as the United States, various countries throughout Latin America, and the Middle East. Jose Casanova's (1994, 2007, 2008) examination of the relationship between religion and modernity leads him to reject secularization theory, mainly because of the strong public (and global) presence of religion, since the 1980s especially. For example, he references the Iranian Revolution, the Solidarity Movement in Poland, the Catholic involvement in Latin American political conflicts, and Protestant Fundamentalism in American politics (1994: 3). To explain his position, Casanova, like Karel Dobbelaere, identifies three levels of secularization: "secularization as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, secularization as decline of religious beliefs and practices, and secularization as marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere" (1994: 211). While Casanova agrees that the first two levels of secularization are present in many modern societies, he rejects assertions that the third level of secularization is also present. Instead, he argues that we are witnessing the "deprivatization" of religion in the modern world. By "deprivatization" he means, "the fact that religious traditions throughout the world are refusing to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them" (1994: 5). Casanova claims that "deprivatization" arises for a variety of reasons. Some groups like the Roman Catholic Church hold the doctrinal conviction that they have a God-ordained commandment to assert themselves in the public sphere (e.g., to speak out on issues like abortion). Some like the Christian Right in the United States are fearful that their religious beliefs and practices have little impact in modern society, and thus seek to revitalize and reform their religious traditions by reasserting themselves in the public square (e.g., aligning political law with religious values). Other transnational groups like Islamic fundamentalists attempt to utilize forces of globalization to spread their influence over individuals and entire societies (e.g., via terrorism). Even in nations that are considered more or less secular (e.g., France or the United Kingdom), Casanova (2007, 2008) argues that religion is at the center of their public debates over immigration and religious diversity.

[5] Berger would later recant his theory in 1998 and 1999. Still, his original theory remains useful and is cited by many today (e.g., Bruce 2002; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Hervieu-Leger 2000; Neuhaus 2009).

Forces, "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory," that finally initiated a wider rebellion against the secularization paradigm in sociology (most scholars who reject secularization reference Hadden's influential 1987 article). Rodney Stark is important because he is one of the most forceful and influential critics of the secularization proponents. Stark proposes an alternative theory of secularization that draws extensively on RCT assumptions, assumptions that are central to Reginald Bibby's renaissance thesis and discussion of religion at the individual level.

Prior to outlining each theory, it is vital that the reader, particularly the non-sociologist, is reminded of the descriptive and explanatory role of sociologists. The fact that a theorist supports or rejects the secularization thesis does not mean that they personally celebrate or lament such a process (see Bruce 2002: xiii; Wilson 1982: 148 and 1985: 11). The sociologist is plainly charged with the task of objectively describing, theorizing, and analyzing social realities based on empirical evidence.

Peter Berger

In Peter Berger's classic *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), he advances that secularization, "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the denomination of religious institutions and symbols" (p. 107), is occurring in the modern Western world. Berger makes a case that secularization is a consequence of increased emphasis on rationalization in industrial and modern societies that result in lessened religious influence and control over modern Western nations. For instance, at the societal level, increasing societal specialization and fragmentation meant that Christian churches gradually lost control over running social institutions such as education, healthcare, and the law. At the cultural level, Berger notes declining religious content in art, music, and literature. Yet, what is most important about Berger's theory of secularization

for our purposes is his emphasis on secularization at the level of individual consciousness. Berger offers the following observation:

> Secularization has a subjective side as well. As there is a secularization of society and culture, so is there a secularization of consciousness. Put simply, this means that the modern West has produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations (Berger 1967: 107-108).

For Berger, secularization at the societal level inevitably leads to secularization at the individual level. This troubles Berger because one of the main functions of religion is to unify a society around a common worldview. If a society lacks common values, beliefs, and symbols, then what will hold members of a society together? In the following discussion I summarize Berger's explanation of secularization, including what he believes are the causes of secularization and the subsequent consequences of secularization for individuals and societies.

To demonstrate how and why secularization develops, Berger distinguishes between internal and external causes of secularization. Internal causes of secularization entail secularization from within a religious organization, occurring mainly when religious groups seek to adapt to the external secular culture. As will be seen shortly, Berger claims that several beliefs and practices within Protestantism (going back to Old Testament forms of Christianity) contributed to the advancement of secularizing processes. External causes of secularization refer to the imposition of secular realities and values on to the religious beliefs and practices of individuals and entire religious organizations. In particular, Berger isolates pluralism as a major cause of secularization, and privatization, relativization, and subjectivization as consequences of external secularization.

Berger, following Weber, begins his explanation of secularization by pointing to factors internal to religion, namely Protestantism (along with Old Testament forms of Christianity), that contributed to fewer people viewing the world through a religious lens. When comparing Roman

Catholic and Protestant beliefs and practices, Berger notices that Protestantism "appears as a radical truncation, a reduction to 'essentials' at the expense of a vast wealth of religious contents . . . Protestantism may be described in terms of an immense shrinkage in the scope of the sacred in reality, as compared with its Catholic adversary" (Berger 1967: 111). In an attempt to place more emphasis on God's majesty and sovereign grace, Protestants abolished many sacraments, gave less significance to miracles, eliminated intercession through the saints, and reduced the central role of the priest for the individual's religious life.[6] These sacred features found in Roman Catholic settings were viewed as "extras" or secular options for the Protestant's religious life. Berger suggests that the unintended result of such changes was a widened gap between sacred and supernatural forces and the human or natural world:

> The Protestant believer no longer lives in a world ongoingly penetrated by sacred beings and forces. Reality is polarized between a radically transcendent divinity and a radically "fallen" humanity that, *ipso facto*, is devoid of sacred qualities. Between them lies an altogether "natural" universe, God's creation to be sure, but in itself bereft of numinosity. In other words, the radical transcendence of God confronts a universe of radical immanence, of "closedness" to the sacred. Religiously speaking, the world becomes very lonely indeed (Berger 1967: 111-112).

As Berger's closing words indicate, the outcome for many is an increasingly solitary and fragmented approach to religion that isolates individuals from the religious community and the divine. While the Catholic has several channels to mediate their connection with God (e.g., sacraments or intercession of the saints), the Protestant's access to the sacred is essentially reduced to the Bible and individual prayer. In sum, the sacred does not penetrate the Protestant's everyday consciousness to the same degree that it does for the Catholic. As we will see, Berger contends that the Protestant's limited access to God is extremely tenuous in a pluralist social milieu.

[6] Weber refers to these changes as the "disenchantment of the world."

While Berger pinpoints Protestantism as a carrier of internal secularization, he traces the sharp separation between the empirical and supernatural world back to the religion of ancient Israel in the Old Testament. He does this by discussing three concepts: transcendentalization, historization, and ethical rationalization. Transcendentalization refers to the Israelite belief that there is a clear distinction and gap between a monotheistic God and human beings, where God is completely transcendent and outside the empirical world (Berger 1967: 115-117). Although the Israelites believed that God was actively involved in the events of the physical world, they were keenly aware that He existed beyond the universe. For instance, God had no genealogical ties to the Israelites and He could not be coerced with magic. He commanded obedience from His followers, yet He was not dependent on their obedience in order to exist. God was entirely self-sufficient, without need for human companions. This perspective on God stands in stark contrast to the broader Egyptian and Mesopotamian belief of the time. Their polytheistic deities were physically and locally present in human affairs, and the supernatural and physical worlds were closely intertwined. Humans could manipulate the gods to do what they wanted and events in the physical world influenced events in the supernatural realm. For example, Berger discusses how human disobedience toward the god-king of Egypt negatively impacts the divine realm. Defiance results not only in punishment for the individual, but also for the entire society so that national security against foreign aggression is threatened or farmers do not receive the necessary rain for their crops.

Historization builds on the idea of a transcendent God who acts in human history, giving it a meaning and purpose (Berger 1967: 117). The Old Testament is filled with historically specific events where God acts in human history, such as delivering the Israelites out of Egypt or forming a covenant with Moses and the Israelites on Mount Sinai. This historical orientation was important to the Israelite religion for two reasons. First, unlike the non-transcendent polytheistic

deities, a historical God meant that individuals began to see themselves as individual actors before a transcendent actor. As Berger says, "Individual men are seen . . . as distinct and unique individuals, performing important acts *as* individuals . . . [individualism] provided a religious framework for a conception of the individual, his dignity and his freedom of action" (Berger 1967: 119). In this, an individual's actions did not impact other people's interactions with God, such as disobedience toward the god-king of Egypt did for the Egyptians and Mesopotamians. Second, a memory of God's historical acts imparted a sense of linear progression to history, so that God's past interactions with humans shape future exchanges with them. Religious rituals and festivals, such as The Passover, mark past events in history, and individuals' faith in God, documented throughout the Old Testament, was frequently based on God's past activities in the world. This historical orientation to the world is unlike the Egyptian and Mesopotamian belief that the gods deal arbitrarily with individuals, and hence past or present exchanges have no impact on future exchanges.

Ethical rationalization is the culmination of transcendentalization and historization. Once more departing from the dominant Egyptian and Mesopotamian polytheistic religious practices, the God of Israel did not act erratically or inconsistently with humans. Instead, God provided a set of unwavering commandments and ethical laws that followers needed to obey. As the Israelites were aware of their separation from the transcendent God, and they were mindful that covenants made with God in the past would impact their future relations with God, they developed a system of rationality to ensure that their attitudes and behaviours were in line with God's commandments (Berger 1967: 120). For example, the priestly ethic formalized God's commandments into religious laws that group members followed. The Israelites were encouraged to devote their life to serving and pleasing God, so they became methodical in their exchanges with God, and they rationalized all facets of life. However, Berger contends that ethical

rationalization contributed to secularization because over time, rationalizing life became an end in itself. The ultimate heirs of the Israelite legacy, the Protestants of modern Europe became so focused on rationalizing all aspects of their life, that they gradually forgot their original religious motivations for rationalizing life in the first place. As such, ethical rationalization worked against their all-encompassing religious orientation to the world (see Weber 1963 [1922] and 2002 [1920]).

In addition to these internal causes of secularization, Berger also identifies several carriers and consequences of secularization in modern society that are external to the control of religious groups, including pluralism and privatization. Berger contends that the differentiation of religion from all other sectors of society (a process that is a consequence of other social forces such as rationalization, societalization, structural differentiation, and societal differentiation) results in religious and social pluralism. Without the state endorsing any particular religion, religious groups are left to fend for themselves as multiple religions converge in a single society. Moreover, religious groups must contend with non-religious voices in society, all of which call for individuals' devotion. In this pluralist setting, religion, which was formerly a "leading" institution, plays a peripheral role, both for the organization of society as a whole and for individuals and their meaning systems (Berger 1967: 130). According to Berger, religious groups lose their "natural" or taken-for-granted status in a pluralist society.

Berger claims that pluralism opens the door to increased religious choice for individuals, thus undermining religious objectivity in the process. Since religion (or at least a single religion) is not reinforced throughout the many institutions in society, individuals and families are left with immense freedom to decide for themselves if they will be religious, and the degree to which they will be religious. One consequence of this freedom is the privatization of religion, where individuals limit religion to the confines of their home and personal relationships (Berger 1967:

133-135). When religion is privatized, even very religious individuals choose to keep their religious perspectives from their public life at work or in politics. Accordingly, Berger states, "Religion manifests itself as public rhetoric and private virtue . . . insofar as religion is common it lacks 'reality,' and insofar as it is 'real' it lacks commonality" (Berger 1967: 134). Emerson Cairns and Debbie Fisher's accounts in chapter two seem to support Berger's prediction that in a religiously and socially pluralistic context, religious beliefs and practices tend to be isolated to one's private world.

For Berger, the secularizing element of pluralism and privatization is that religion no longer provides a "common world within which all of social life receives ultimate meaning binding on everybody" (Berger 1967: 134). He suggests that in a pluralist context, one's religious worldview becomes less plausible or believable in the face of competing worldviews. This occurs as individuals, aware of the religious and social pluralism around them, become suspicious of their own and others' religious beliefs and practices, so that the plausibility structures that religion once provided for an entire society gradually withers away. Expressed differently, individuals are less likely to possess an ultimate meaning system that is grounded in shared religious beliefs and practices when larger social structural shifts have displaced religion in society, marginalizing it.

In the context of pluralism and privatization, Berger (1967: 140-149) argues that religious groups must market themselves if they desire to remain competitive in the religious and social marketplace. The specifics of such efforts go beyond our interests here, except to highlight that due to marketing initiatives different and potentially conflicting beliefs and practices exist within and between religious traditions. For example, liberal and conservative religious groups emphasize their particular beliefs as a way to differentiate themselves from other religious

groups, and to hopefully convince individuals that their religious orientation to the world is the one that individuals should choose.

What is more relevant to note is that the combination of pluralism, privatization, and marketing sets the context for what Berger identifies as relativization and subjectivization—indicators of secularization at the individual level. Relativization implies that people think of their beliefs, behaviours, and experiences relative to others. For instance, Berger (1967: 157-158) shows that in some Protestant contexts, emphasis on pietism results in individuals who turn to their personal experiences, rather than formal religious dogma that is believed to be codified in a religious text, as their source of religious legitimacy. Subjectivization involves individuals subjectively appropriating elements of religious institutions' dogmatic structures for themselves. To some degree we see relativization and subjectivization at work among each of the active and marginal affiliates that we met in chapter two as they draw on personal experience as the source of authority over personal beliefs, even if those beliefs appear to conflict at times with their church or religious leader's teachings. The secularizing feature of relativization and subjectivization is that individuals and groups constantly think of their beliefs and practices relative to other people's attitudes and behaviours that, in turn, make it difficult for people to share a common worldview. And if a society, or even subgroups within society, lack a common worldview, it is unlikely that religion will have much, if any, personal or social significance. Individuals will struggle with a "crisis of legitimacy" whereby they do not know definitely whether their individual beliefs are right or wrong.[7]

In *The Heretical Imperative* (1979) Berger discusses three possible responses to this crisis of legitimacy in a pluralistic context. Some choose the deductive or Neo-orthodox approach,

[7] Harvey Cox (1966) also documents a similar process. Cox suggests that pluralism decreases the likelihood of any single religious worldview dominating a society, resulting in many who question their own beliefs and practices relative to others.

reaffirming the authority of the existing religious tradition (e.g., the Christian Right in the United States). The advantage of this is that individuals find a level of finiteness and stability in the authority of their religious tradition in the face of multiple other options. Others pursue the reductive or modernizing response, seeking to reinterpret the tradition in light of modern realities (e.g., the United Church of Canada). The benefit to this approach is that it reduces the cognitive dissonance that individuals experience between religious and modern worldviews. Finally, some turn to the inductive and experiential approach to authority, which ultimately accepts personal experience as the sole authority over one's worldview. Berger expresses the inductive approach this way:

> When the external (that is, socially available) authority of tradition declines, individuals are forced to become more reflective, to ask themselves the question of what they really know and what they only imagined themselves to know in the old days when the tradition was still strong. Such reflection, just about inevitably, will further compel individuals to turn to their own experience: Man is an empirical animal (if one prefers, an *anima naturaliter scientifica*) to the extent that his own direct experience is always the most convincing evidence of the reality of anything. The individual, say, believes in X. As long as all people around him, including the "reality experts" of his society, ongoingly affirm the same X, his belief is carried easily, spontaneously, by this social consensus. This is no longer possible when the consensus begins to disintegrate, when competing "reality experts" appear on the scene. Sooner or later, then, the individual will have to ask himself, "But do I *really* believe in X? Or could it be that X has been an illusion all along?" And then will come the other question: "Just what has been *my own experience* of X?" (Berger 1979: 32-33).

Berger argues that individuals will inevitably rely on personal experience as the source of authority in a pluralist society, likely reinforcing people's crisis of legitimacy and individual and societal secularization even further.

Steve Bruce

Steve Bruce, the strongest contemporary proponent of secularization theory, begins his book *God is Dead* (2002: xii) by claiming that "liberal industrial democracies of the Western

world are considerably less religious now than they were in the days of my father, my grandfather, and my great-grandfather." He points to:

> the declining importance of religion for the operation of non-religious roles and institutions such as those of the state and the economy; a decline in the social standing of religious roles and institutions; and a decline in the extent to which people engage in religious practices, display beliefs of a religious kind, and conduct other aspects of their lives in a manner informed by such beliefs (Bruce 2002: 3).

Bruce (2002: 4) charts out a twenty-two variable secularization paradigm to explain how and why secularization exists.[8] In short, Bruce contends that individualism and relativism together facilitate a widespread societal vulnerability to attitudes and behaviours that delegitimize traditional, universal, and exclusive religious beliefs and practices. Not only this, Bruce suggests that unless religious beliefs and practices are reinforced in social settings on a regular basis, it is unlikely that the existing remnants of religious belief will continue.

It is not important for our purposes to provide particular statistics of religious decline in Britain, but Bruce (2002: 62-73) builds his defence of the secularization paradigm, especially at the individual level, by pointing to declining figures in the following areas in Britain: church attendance, church membership, Sunday school attendance, and the number of full-time clergy. Bruce also shows that fewer people are turning to religious groups for rites of passage, smaller

[8] Bruce's secularization paradigm captures several elements of Peter Berger's theory of secularization. For this reason I do not detail every facet of Bruce's theory in the main text. Still, it is worthwhile to footnote other variables that Bruce considers are central to the problematic relationship between modernity and religion. Following in the footsteps of Max Weber and Peter Berger, Bruce begins by looking at how monotheism served as a catalyst for rationalization and the everyday conscious organization of thought and action amidst a new worldview that separated the natural and supernatural worlds. He reinforces this rationalizing orientation in the West when outlining Weber's *Protestant Ethic* thesis, a theory that suggests ascetic Protestants structured their lives in rational ways to constantly glorify God in the world in hopes that they were part of God's chosen "elect." Drawing on sociological heavyweights such as Talcott Parsons, Karl Marx, Peter Berger, and Daniel Bell, among others, Bruce highlights how structural differentiation and social differentiation are logical outcomes of the aforementioned modernizing processes and with these follow individualism, social and cultural diversity, compartmentalization, privatization, and relativism. Furthermore, changes in religious groups (e.g., sects and schisms) and advances in economic growth, science, and technology make it increasingly difficult for religious worldviews to remain salient in a culture that places increasing importance on Enlightenment and modern ideals, ideals that tend to reject religion as a legitimate source of knowledge. He is mindful that secularization can slow down, as when religion serves non-religious functions, when religious groups feel threatened by the surrounding culture and re-assert their presence in response, or when religion serves as a system of meaning to help groups through transition (such as immigrants), but he concludes that these retarding tendencies are temporary and should not be the basis for rejecting secularization theory.

numbers of people are attracted to any type of religious belief, and while new religious movements may be growing, their growth pales in comparison to the losses experienced in mainstream religious groups.

Bruce identifies two factors that influenced the spread of secularization: structural differentiation and social differentiation. Similar to Berger (and others like Durkheim and Parsons), Bruce (2002: 8) identifies structural differentiation as the fragmentation of social life among institutions to the degree that societal features and functions that were once controlled by a single institution (e.g., religion) are now divided among many specialized institutions (e.g., politics, economics, education, and family). Building on Karl Marx, Bruce (2002: 9-10) highlights that structural differentiation gives way to social differentiation. Social differentiation refers to the geographic and social separation of individuals, and the emerging hierarchies and inequalities that accompany the societal-wide pursuit of new economic and life opportunities. As institutions are specialized and social life is fragmented, individuals' beliefs and roles within and between institutions are separated to the point that the common worldview (often grounded in religion) that once united people in traditional societies (as Berger notes) no longer exists in modern settings.[9]

[9] Bryan Wilson outlines a similar process that he identifies as "societalization." Societalization occurs when "a collectivity of communities and individuals are drawn into complex relationships of interdependence in which their role performances are rationally articulated" (1982: 154) (also see Durkheim's (1984 [1893]) distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity). To illustrate his point, Wilson draws on the classic *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* distinction, first introduced by Ferminand Tönnies (1957). *Gemeinschaft*, or a traditional community, is described as a society where trust, loyalty, respect for seniority, clear patterns of authority, individual significance, goodwill, and morality are vital to everyday interactions and social stability. This type of society is distinct because of its common understanding that these values are rooted in supernatural sources and that individuals and groups legitimate their attitudes and behaviours as such. This is contrasted with *Gesellschaft*, or a modern society that is built on impersonal associations, coordination of skills, formal and contractual patterns of behavior, role obligation, and duty and role performances that are based on the demands of a rational structuring in society. In this society, people rely on individualism and rationalism instead of custom and tradition to legitimate their beliefs and practices. Wilson's (2001) fear is that without religion as the source of community, demoralization is the logical outcome. He points to increased selfishness, individualism, hedonism, poor manners, social division, and crime in post-industrial societies to support his point.

Bruce asserts that one of the major consequences of these processes is individualism. In particular, Bruce comments on a subtler form of secularization that takes place within religious groups where a group's beliefs and practices merely reflect broader cultural values of individualism. According to Bruce, movements that are especially guilty of this type of secularization include New Age spirituality, Eastern religious movements in the West, and charismatic movements. For instance, among New Agers and Westerners who adopt Eastern religions there are beliefs that the individual is innately divine and holy; that no authority is greater than the individual self; that individuals can select what beliefs and practices work for them; that holism is good; that intuition is sometimes more valuable than rational thought; and that personal health, wealth, and self-confidence is the ultimate goal of religion (Bruce 2002: 82-85, 120-121). Within charismatic movements, Bruce (2002: 179-181) scrutinizes the emphasis on personal experience over shared doctrine, the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that serves a therapeutic and inward need, and the lessened sense of awe from humans toward Jesus (e.g., Jesus is viewed by some as their "homeboy"). Bruce's point is that individualism, a feature of the secular modern culture, has an elevated place in contemporary religious life to the extent that it is difficult to clearly identify the boundary between what is religious and what is secular. Recent scholarly attention given to these movements (Miller 1997; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Roof 1999; Wuthnow 2007), including those who cite such religious activity to refute the secularization argument (Jenkins 2002; Heelas and Woodhead 2005), validate Bruce's point.

Related to individualism is the rejection of authority. It is no secret, and many of the vignettes in chapter two reveal this, that many in Western society are offended when those in authority infringe on individual rights and tell people what they should believe and how they ought to behave. It is not surprising to Bruce then that people are attracted to religions that are

highly individualistic, to groups that offer little accountability between members (e.g., the New Age practice of paying for a religious product such as palm reading or tarot card reading without any expectation for ongoing exchanges), little if any external religious authority, and not much formal or binding dogma.

Bruce contends that individualism and the rejection of authority are linked to larger social features of pluralism and relativism. Similar to Berger, Bruce comments that in a pluralist setting, not only are religious groups competing with external belief systems, religious and secular, but religious groups and individuals are fostering eclectic beliefs and practices internally. If individualism is rampant within religious organizations whereby there is no central authority to guide and determine a group or individual's set of beliefs (or at least where individuals instead choose to turn inward for religious authority), no single belief or group of beliefs can possibly be viewed as ultimately true or binding for all people. This reality sets the stage for the crux of Bruce's conclusions about secularization.

Bruce (2002: 148-150) argues that without constant religious socialization and reaffirmation from others, religions (and religious individuals) will struggle to exist in the face of an individualistic, diverse, and relativistic culture. He proclaims that "the privatization of religion removes much of the social support that is vital to reinforcing beliefs, makes the maintenance of distinct lifestyles very difficult, weakens the impetus to evangelize and encourages a *de facto* relativism that is fatal to shared beliefs" (Bruce 2002: 20). Later Bruce labels this new religious orientation "diffuse religion," suggesting that it is hard for diffuse beliefs to have much social impact on the individual, and it is very likely that beliefs one does hold dear will be diluted and trivialized with time (Bruce 2002: 91). Following a similar stream of thought, Peter Beyer (1999: 296-297), Canadian sociologist and theorist on globalization, posits that this kind of privatized "invisible religion" cannot possibly generate much social influence beyond the individual

because it lacks the communicative resources that are necessary for any ideology or institution to have an impact on society (also see Bowen 2004). Grace Davie (1994: 199) contends that it is difficult for people to maintain their religious beliefs and practices without ongoing attachment to a religious organization. These are important points because as will become clear in the next chapter, the ongoing presence of private spirituality causes some like Bibby to believe that secularization is not taking place, while others like Bruce suggest that private spirituality will eventually fade away without strong social supports in place.

Jeffrey Hadden

In contrast to Berger and Bruce, Jeffrey Hadden, whose ideas were far from definitive or conclusive, prompted scholars to re-consider the widely accepted secularization narrative. Hadden begins his challenge of secularization theory by arguing that the origins of European and American sociology contained an inherent bias towards secularization, which prevented scholars from critically, systematically, and empirically evaluating the secularization thesis to the same degree as any other subject of inquiry. Hadden states the following:

> Secularization theory has not been subjected to systematic scrutiny because it is a *doctrine* more than it is a theory. Its moorings are located in presuppositions that have gone unexamined because they represent a taken-for-granted *ideology* rather than a systematic set of interrelated propositions (Hadden 1987: 588).

For instance, in Europe, the prevailing Enlightenment ideals of science and reason and Darwin's evolutionary perspective that challenged the role of religion for individuals and society, influenced sociologists so that they did not or could not see past the dominant secular realities of the modern world and of their discipline. In the United States, Hadden reveals (drawing on a landmark study by psychologist James Leuba in 1914) at the beginning of the discipline, few sociologists believed in God. Possibly motivated by their non-religious background, most American sociologists wanted to establish a clear line between sociological aims and religious

aims. This sentiment was best captured in William F. Ogburn's presidential statement to the American Sociological Society in 1929: "sociology as a science is not interested in making the world a better place . . . science is interested in only one thing, to wit, discovering new knowledge" (Reed 1975: 122). Hadden's point was that the secular tone among academics and sociologists inclined sociologists to sacralize secularization theory as a given reality rather than an idea that required further examination.

Since European and American sociologists failed to adequately scrutinize ideas about secularization, Hadden challenges the very notion that secularization is considered a theory at all. Aside from the conceptual ambiguity that exists among the different proponents of secularization (i.e., secularization means different things and is measured differently by researchers), Hadden asserts that secularization is more of a proposition than a theory. Secularization "theories" are purely descriptive statements that, in part, connect modernization with religious decline, but few sociologists actually offer a thorough and systematic set of hypotheses that are testable across time and place.

To demonstrate the importance of empiricism to the secularization debate, Hadden references data in the United States to refute the secularization thesis. He shows that levels of religiosity have been stable, as evidenced in levels of belief in God, membership, attendance, personal devotion, and financial giving. Religion has also changed (but not secularized), which is apparent with the fluctuating percentages of Americans who believe that the influence of religion in society is increasing, or the decreasing numbers of those who believe that the Bible should be interpreted literally. Still, people continue to believe in God and affiliate with a religious group. Recently, more scholars are endorsing the position that religion is changing, but not secularizing, with the advances of modernity (see e.g., Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Houtman and Aupers 2007; Wuthnow 2007). For example, Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) "subjectivization thesis"

tries to explain both the secularization (decline of "life as" or churched forms of religion) and sacralization (rise of "subjective life" spirituality) of modern society. Their thesis claims that religions which emphasize the subjective life, a prominent feature of modern western culture, will succeed. Hence, religious institutions that stress hierarchical and authoritative dogmas and obligations have struggled, while broader non-institutional cultural appeals to subjective spirituality have expanded (also see Miller 1997).

Hadden also comments on the influence that new religious movements have had both on the American religious landscape as well as the sociological study of religion. As Stark and Bainbridge (1985) demonstrate, the fact that new religious movements are more likely to emerge in places where conventional forms of religion are lowest (e.g., the West coast in Canada and the United States) suggests that the disappearance of religion altogether is unlikely. Hadden also discusses the increased scholarly attention given to religion because of new religious movements. Such insights have been worthwhile in their own right, while also contributing to the social scientific understanding of religion in general.

In addition, Hadden responds to secularization theorists who suggest that religion is increasingly privatized. He highlights the central role that religion plays in politics around the world. From the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, to the violence between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, to the Jewish-Muslim-Christian tensions in the Middle East, to the clashing of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in India, to the rise of the Christian Right in the United States, religion is inextricably linked to significant global challenges and thus it is foolish to conclude that the world is secularizing or even that religion is predominantly privatized. Scholars like David Martin (1978, 2005), Jeffrey Hadden and Anson Shupe (1989), Jose Casanova (1994), Peter Beyer (1994, 1999), Peter Berger (1999), and Peter Berger, Grace Davie, and Effie Fokas (2008) are other influential advocates of this position.

Finally, Hadden conjectures that sociological discussion about secularization will dissipate, but that if secularization theory is going to be useful, it will need to be clearly conceptualized and specified in the way that Karel Dobbelaere proposes.[10]

The kinds of arguments that Hadden initiated against secularization theory prompted influential sociologists like Peter Berger (1998 and 1999) to reverse their stance on the theory of secularization. Once scholars began to openly question secularization accounts, one of the most vocal critics of secularization theory to emerge was Rodney Stark.

Rodney Stark

In chapter three I outlined part of Rodney Stark's reason for opposing secularization theory. To summarize that material, and building on the theoretical and empirical foundation established in *Acts of Faith* (2000) and *The Churching of America* (2005), Stark argues that nations with a religious monopoly have lower levels of religious belief and practice than places with many religious options. This is because religious suppliers compete rigorously for people's allegiances when there is a chance that individuals could choose to belong to another group. Rational choice theorists believe that greater competition leads to better religious products and thus greater rewards for religious consumers. This is contrasted with religious monopolies where there is no need for competition or improvements to a group's religious product, resulting in lazy clergy and lazy members. There is more to Rodney Stark's theory of secularization, however.

In their book *Acts of Faith* Rodney Stark and Roger Finke (2000: 57-79) summarize and ultimately reject what they believe are five arguments common to most secularization theories.

[10] A recent working paper by David Smilde and Matthew May, titled "The Emerging Strong Program in the Sociology of Religion" (2010), suggests that more attention is being given to religion within sociology in recent decades. They document the modest increase of articles focused on religion in the leading American sociology journals (journals that do not specialize in religion). They also note the increased presence of religion as an independent variable in journal publications, along with increased funding (private and public) for projects where people study religion.

The first assertion that secularization proponents claim is that modernization is the causal engine for secularization. As societies modernize in areas of economic development, urbanization, or education, levels of religiosity inevitably decline as individuals' material security increases and people become enlightened about the world around them (i.e., they realize that they no longer need the supernatural to explain things). Stark and Finke reject this claim without reservation, citing evidence both in the United States as well as Europe. In their book *The Churching of America* (2005), Finke and Stark declare that Americans are becoming more religious with the spread of modernization. Rejecting the belief that there was a religious "Golden Age" before that has now disappeared, they document noticeable increases in the number of seminarians, clergy, congregations, missionary efforts per congregation, and new religious movements over the course of American history. They also show that there is an increase in the number of religious adherents, church attenders, and those who hold religious beliefs. In Europe, Stark and Finke (2000: 62-63) contend that there is no evidence to support the claim of long-term decline in Europeans' religious involvements, and moreover, Europeans continue to be religious, at least nominally, with many continuing to believe in God or a supernatural being (also see Davie 1994). In addition, Stark and Finke (2000: 63-68) question how religious Europeans really were during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. For example, they assert that people mainly attended church for rites of passage, and many of those who did attend more regularly, attended for non-religious reasons (e.g., to meet members of the opposite sex). For Roman Catholic adherents, Stark and Finke raise the point that many did not understand Latin, thus how beneficial was attending church for their religious lives. Many congregations were also without a clergy member and there were very few seminaries to train more clergy leaders. They conclude, "The evidence is clear that claims about a major decline in religious participation in Europe are based in part on very exaggerated perceptions of past religiousness" (Stark and Finke 2000: 68).

Second, although secularization proponents are mindful of the different levels of secularization, they are most interested in declining levels of individual piety and religious belief as the chief indicator of secularization. Similar to the type of data that Bibby draws on to support his optimism for religion in Canada, Stark and Finke (2000: 71-72) base part of their rejection of secularization theory on the notable presence of subjective religiosity in Western society. They begin by referencing Grace Davie's (1994) popular "believing without belonging" thesis in Europe, which states that individuals continue to believe in God and in many of their religious group's teachings, though they do not actively observe religious practices, such as church attendance, in their religious tradition. Stark and Finke go on to highlight subjective religiosity in Iceland, one of the supposedly most irreligious nations in the world. There they demonstrate that despite very low church attendance rates, individuals continue to turn to a church to observe rites of passage, many believe in life after death, several believe in reincarnation, most pray sometimes, and very few claim to be committed atheists. In other words, Stark and Finke challenge sociologists who mainly look to church attendance to measure secularization, documenting many areas how many non-churchgoers continue to be quite religious.

Third, advocates of secularization theory generally argue that of the many features of modernization, science is the most problematic for people's continued religious belief and practice. That is, the fundamental principles of science, such as rationality and empiricism, conflict with the superstitious notions and faith that are common in religious settings. Stark and Finke (2000: 52-55; 72-73; 77) refute this position, drawing on several empirical studies that compare levels of religiosity among American professors and scientists. They show that high percentages of professors describe themselves as religious and attend religious services regularly compared to those who either never attend religious services or identify themselves as non-religious. In fact, American professors were as likely to attend religious services regularly as the

average American. Stark and Finke also emphasize that those in the "hard" sciences (e.g., mathematics, physical sciences, and life sciences) are more religious than those in the "soft" sciences (e.g., sociology, psychology, and anthropology). This finding is affirmed in James Leuba's 1914 study, which reveals that nearly half of American scientists claim to believe in God. In response to the common claim that individuals doubt the legitimacy of their faith because of scientific facts, Stark and Finke reference a study by Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy, and Sikkink (1998) who note that very few people doubt religious claims because of science. Instead, people cited personal tragedies, evil in the world, or human hypocrisy as the cause of their doubt.

Fourth, secularization theorists tend to claim that once secularization sets it, it is irreversible. Stark, building on the supply-side logic inherent in RCT, centers his rejection of this point by discussing two concepts: religious revival and religious innovation. Stark begins by acknowledging that religious suppliers are not always effective in supplying religion to consumers (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 435). Over the course of time, he argues religious groups relax their beliefs and practices to appeal to a wider audience and in the process lose their level of strictness and the "costs" that Rational Choice Theory associates with high levels of belief and practice. The result is a widespread decline in religious fervour among congregants. While some interpret this as a sign of secularization, Stark sees this as a catalyst for religious revival and innovation. Religious revival consists of new religious groups that reassert the fundamentals of an existing religion, values that religious groups have seemingly strayed from (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 444-48). Commonly referred to as "sects," these revivalist groups are very demanding, require significant sacrifices on the part of their members, and exist in high tension with the surrounding culture (e.g., Mormons). Religious innovation, on the other hand, is characterized by the creation of new religious traditions that are culturally sensitive and cater to

the current beliefs and interests of a culture (1985: 435-39). These groups, identified as "cults," possess the same qualities as sects, only the basis of cult beliefs and practices are quite different from mainstream religion in the local culture (e.g., Scientology). High cost and high tension groups are so successful because individuals desire the definite rewards that they associate with the high costs of sects and cults.

Yet, what happens when sects and cults eventually modernize their beliefs and practices and decrease their level of tension with culture, looking much like any other conventional and culturally approved religious group? Stark maintains that individuals grow discontent with "cheap imitations" of sects and cults, which leads to the emergence of new sects and cults (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 437-444; Stark and Finke 2000: 205-207). Here we see that secularization is a cyclical process. Low cost and low tension conventional religious groups give way to high cost and high tension sects and cults, which over time evolve once again into low cost and low tension groups, leading to the further formation of high cost and high tension groups. Therefore, society cannot be fully secularized because the cycle of new religious groups rising and falling will never come to an end; people will always demand the rewards that religious groups offer. To summarize, society is not becoming less religious, but rather different forms and expressions of religious life are appearing and disappearing in a steady religious economy.

Finally, secularization theorists apply their theory not only to Christianity, but to all religious groups across the world. They declare that belief in any supernatural power will wane with time. Here too, Stark and Finke and Stark and Bainbridge offer evidence to the contrary. Stark and Finke (2000: 73-76) note that atheism never flourished in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union as many predicted. They show that over time, fewer people claimed to identify as atheists, and more people attended church on a monthly basis. In Islamic countries, Stark and Finke highlight that commitment to Muslim beliefs and practices is positively

correlated with education and occupational prestige. The same can be said of those who practice Asian "folk" religions. In Japan, Shinto religious traditions are more commonly adopted today than in the past. In Taiwan there are more folk temples than any previous time in history and more people are frequenting those temples. In Hong Kong and Malaysia, Chinese folk religions are also increasingly popular. As in Islamic nations, it is the well educated and urban folk who are turning to religion, not the poor, uneducated, rural peasants. In the United States and Canada, Stark and Bainbridge (1985) document that sects and cults continue to emerge in places, such as the West coast, where few people practice conventional religion.

The combination of empirical data and the logic in RCT leads Stark and others to reject secularization theory, ultimately concluding that with modernization we will also witness increased levels of religiosity.

Conclusion

Mindful of the second main research question in this dissertation (how are we to assess the degree of religiosity or secularity in Canada in light of active and marginal affiliates' religious beliefs, practices, and involvements?), my first goal in this chapter was to summarize Bibby's renaissance thesis and to highlight a couple of the major challenges that arise when evaluating his thesis. I began by demonstrating how and why quantitative data is not necessarily the best or only source of information for supporting or rejecting the renaissance or secularization theses. Instead, I suggested that we ought to also look at the meanings and motivations behind people's attitudes and behaviours, a task best fulfilled with qualitative research methods. I then identified the problems that exist with the different and inconsistent ways of measuring secularization that too often result in conversations about different kinds of "secularizations." I favour Karel Dobbelaere's clear distinction between societal, organizational, and individual secularization, and

suggested that Bibby's renaissance thesis deals primarily with secularization or religious resurgence at the individual level.

Upon identifying these limitations in Bibby's renaissance thesis, and secularization theory in general, I turned my attention to several influential theoretical discussions of secularization in the sociology of religion. When it comes to proponents of secularization theory I could have discussed any number of individuals and perspectives, yet I limited my discussion to those who deal most directly with secularization at the individual level. Steve Bruce is the most ardent contemporary scholar in this camp, whose theory is a logical extension of Peter Berger's secularization theory. In sum, these theorists agree that societal differentiation and specialization leads to a series of subsequent social realities, such as pluralism, individualism, and relativism that make it difficult for individuals to believe and practice. This secular reality is particularly the case because of the missing plausibility structure or sacred canopy that once existed over all of society and bound individuals together. As a result, individuals lack the needed social reinforcements for ongoing and consequential religious belief and practice.

Among those who oppose secularization theory, again I could have covered a series of theorists and ideas, but centered my overview on the main individual to move the conversation forward, Jeffrey Hadden, along with the strongest current critic of the secularization paradigm, Rodney Stark. Briefly, Hadden argues that from sociology's inception, sociologists were inherently biased to accept the secularization narrative without systematically evaluating or testing the core arguments common to most secularization theories. When Hadden carefully examined the secularization argument he noted that religious groups are not actually secularizing, they are changing, and there are many signs that religion is not fading away, pointing to new religious movements and the public role that many religious groups play around the world. Stark, applying rational choice principles, argues that there is an ongoing demand for the things that

religious groups offer, evidenced in the empirical data on the continued strength of individual belief and practice, and in the emergence of sects and cults where conventional religious groups are weakest.

In light of the methodological, theoretical, and empirical uncertainties that surround the secularization debate and Bibby's renaissance thesis, I turn to chapter six and attempt to clearly delineate how we should evaluate secularization theory in the Canadian context based on my interviews with marginal affiliates, the very group that Bibby argues may return to the churches as part of an emerging religious renaissance in Canada. What are the meanings and motivations behind their religious attitudes and practices, and in light of their responses, how do the theories outlined in this chapter help to explain those findings and/or in what ways do the following observations support or refute these theories?

Chapter 6
What Religious Renaissance?

Introduction

Marginal affiliates like Emerson Cairns continue to hold on to their religious affiliation, show no desire to switch religious allegiances, and regularly turn to their religious group to celebrate religious holidays and rites of passage. Some like Debbie Fisher are even potentially interested in greater involvement in their religious tradition. With such evidence in hand, it is logical to agree that Bibby's renaissance thesis may be true, or at least to reject the secularization thesis in the Canadian context. On the other hand, the fact that fewer Canadians attend religious services on a weekly basis today (Bibby 2006: 192, 205) combined with the growth of those who claim to have "no religion" (Statistics Canada 2001) can also lead one to plausibly suggest that secularization is alive and well in Canada.

As I have argued, quantitative data can only take us so far in this debate, and in-depth qualitative data and analysis is needed to shed light on the meaning, processes, and context of the responses to surveys that researchers so eagerly use to support or reject secularization theory. To this end, I set out to ask marginal affiliates about their religious identities. Why do they attend religious services for select occasions? What meaning do they draw from such ceremonies? Is it true that they desire greater involvement, and if so, what might lead to greater involvement? Have they ever tried to get more involved? What is the intensity of their desire for more involvement? This chapter documents their responses, which will aid our ability to comment about the present and future place of religion in Canada, especially at the individual level.

Understanding and Explaining Marginal Affiliate Attendance Patterns

Religious Upbringing and Transitions

One of the first things to stand out in the data is that seventeen marginal affiliates attended religious services regularly with one or both of their parents in their childhood, while three others attended with neighbours or friends. Only one person attended only for religious holidays or when they visited a grandparent. This suggests that most marginal affiliates made conscious decisions to attend less frequently, but not to abandon their religious ties altogether.[1] Looking ahead, whether or not teens will actually have a religion to abandon is questionable, given Bibby's (2009: 162-187) recent revelation that, outside of several non-Christian faiths, fewer teens today identify with a religious tradition, attend religious services or express an interest in spirituality.[2] This makes sense when we consider that their parents, similar to the marginal affiliates that I interviewed, are likely attending very little, if at all. Yet the question that concerns us here, relative to secularization, is why marginal affiliates who once attended regularly in their younger years decided to no longer attend on a regular basis?[3]

As we see in Figure 6.1, they provided six main reasons for this, four of which support demand-side explanations of religious behaviour and two of which bolster supply-side interpretations.

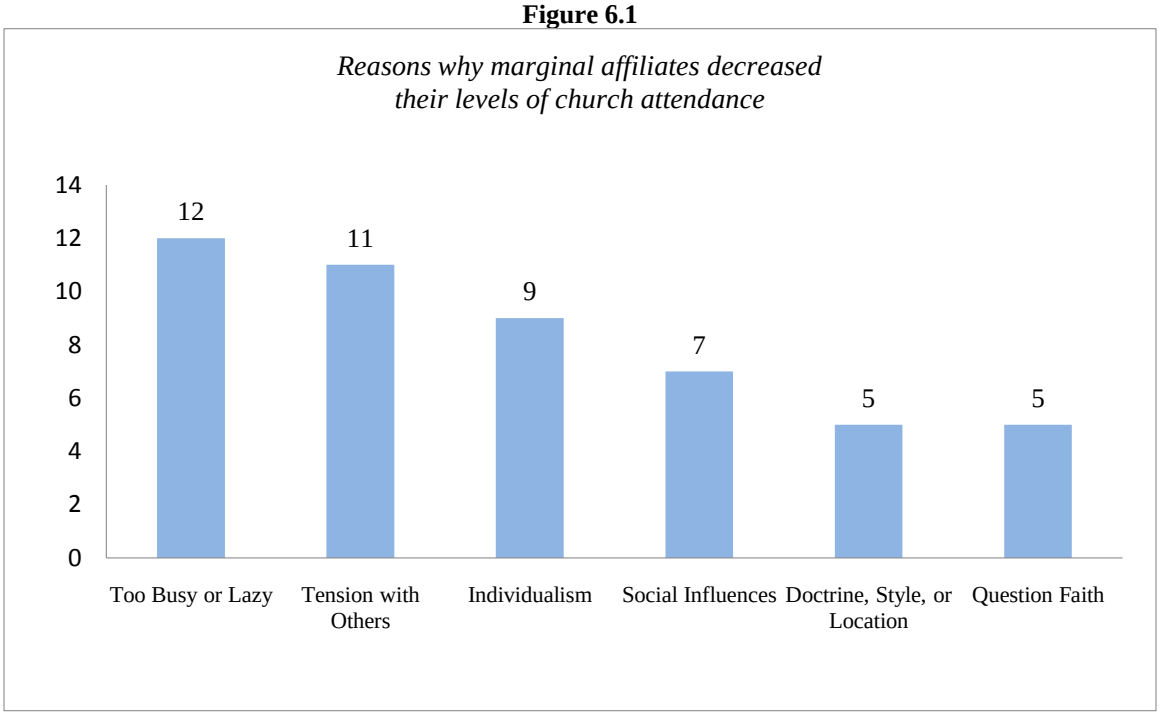
---

[1] Phil Zuckerman (2008: 93) shows that many irreligious or quasi-spiritual adults in Denmark and Sweden had a religious upbringing, but gradually lost their faith.

[2] A 2010 Pew Research Center report in the United States reveals similar findings. Fewer people under the age of 30 identify with a religion today compared with young people in the past (going back to the early 1970s). Similar trends are noted with respect to attendance at religious services, daily prayer, the importance of religion to their personal life, and belief in God.

[3] One of the best Canadian attempts to address this question comes from well-known journalist and author, Pierre Berton (1965). He offers an insightful autobiographical account for why he stopped attending the Anglican Church. He explains how he prayed to God, but God did not answer (akin to marginal affiliates who cannot depend on God). He acknowledges that he left the church largely out of apathy; other things in life were more important. He is also critical of the many congregations who preach different and potentially conflicting messages, yet each claims to have the sole truth, or nations who go to war in the name of religion, each believing that God is on their side. In addition, Berton chastises Christians for being silent on, or delayed in their response to, issues of race, sexuality, business ethics, and science and modernity. Lastly, he takes the churches to task for their archaic ways of presenting their faith in contemporary society.

Figure 6.1



Beginning with the demand-side, over half stopped their ongoing involvement because they were too busy or too lazy. One male expressed that his church involvement decreased because of university commitments: "When I was attending school, there wasn't even time, most of the time, to even make yourself a good meal. You were always studying." Another woman, now in her eighties, reflects on her younger years after her husband unexpectedly died of a heart attack. She was a university student, caring for her children now as a single mother, and was working in order to pay the bills. Church attendance, she felt, could not possibly fit into her schedule. Emily Foster's experience of losing her father at a young age and working several jobs while attending university to help her family reflects how busyness partially influenced her church involvement. Now she largely attributes her infrequent involvement to a lack of desire to drive in from the outskirts of the city to church after her family already commutes during the week for work and other commitments. Others similarly point to the hectic pace of life between work and parental responsibilities that leaves them with little time for themselves or to run

errands and perform chores. One man declares, "Now Sunday is everything else. Like, there's hockey, and you go to hockey and take kids here and do that. Dancing competition . . . you go all the time . . . Sunday's a busy day." Another marginal affiliate reflects, "You work your butt off all week . . . sometimes you have to work two jobs so you get to come home, kiss the kids goodnight, have a bath, go to bed yourself, and then, all of a sudden, next you know, it's Saturday, and you're going grocery shopping, trying to catch up on stuff you've done all week, and then Sunday, honestly . . . you don't feel like it. You're too tired." Such people value their Sunday as a day of rest where they do not need to get up early, dress up, and rush out of the house (see Dillon and Wink 2007; Smith and Snell 2009; Wuthnow 2007: 215).

Second, just under half say that some form of individualism led them away from active church involvement. Three marginal affiliates in my sample suggest that they attended less when their parents gave them the option to attend during their teen years, never to return. A fifty-one year-old male recalls that "as we got into our mid to late teens, we were sort of just let loose to decide what we wanted to do . . . keep going if you want. Nobody's forcing you to be there. Go find another religion if that's what you want to do." A forty-eight year-old male says that he first stopped attending because of the absence of "the driving force of . . . my mother trying to get us to go. And once . . . we hit teenage years, I think she pretty much left it up to us to decide . . . we weren't forced, like, 'You have to go to church every Sunday' . . . she left the decision up to us. And I guess I just didn't find it relevant enough."

Similarly, two participants who are parents themselves stopped attending when their own children complained about going to church. One gentleman says, "We got tired of fighting the kids to go to church. That's not an excuse, I guess, but it's a fact." Another woman speaks about her children: "For about three months before I stopped going, they would just sit there not even looking up. They'd just kind of sit there . . . like they were bored out of their skulls. And I

thought, 'Well, I could go by myself, or I could just not go.' It just kind of fell apart after that." From these examples, we see that some parents place greater importance on their children's ability or right to make religious decisions for themselves, rather than imposing either parental or religious authority to force their children to observe certain religious practices, such as attending church.

Others indicate that they did not want to submit to the church's rules and authority, choosing instead to develop their spirituality beyond the church walls. As one woman highlights, "People are finding the truth, and they're finding that it's not found in a church. It can be under a rock. It's in the rock. It's within ourselves." This last finding, in particular, validates much of what scholars have said about religion and spirituality for some time, that personal experience, beliefs, and practices increasingly exist to the exclusion of organized religion in a social context (see e.g., Barna 2005; Bruce 2002; Davie 1994; Dillon and Wink 2007; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Luckmann 1967; Roof 1999; Roof and McKinney 1987; Smith and Snell 2009; Wuthnow 1998).

Berger (1967) and Bruce (2002), who each analyze the impact of structural differentiation on individual religious beliefs and attitudes, can help to explain the strong link between individualism and the approach of marginal affiliates to religion. For instance, most active and marginal affiliates over the age of fifty-five in my sample commented that when they were young, attending church weekly, getting baptized, and marrying in a church were non-negotiable facets of social life. Church attendance was a socially desirable activity that was normalized in the home, at school, and in the community. One sixty-two year-old male says:

> When I was growing up, the stores were closed on Sunday, and people felt compelled to go to church. And that might have been bad for a lot of people—feeling compelled to go to church and having all the stores closed—but now I think it's gone *way* too far the other way. Now there's no significance to religion hardly at all, anymore . . . when I was a

> young guy, if you didn't go to church, that was your business, but people kind of looked at you as if you're some kind of a . . . degenerate type.

However, as society has changed and institutions have increasingly specialized, religion has moved to the "peripherary," as Berger predicted, including individual levels of belief and practice. One impact of this social change is that individuals no longer interpret church attendance as a socially desirable or necessary activity, especially if it gets in the way of making more money, spending more time with family, participating in extracurricular activities, or enjoying leisure time.

In a related manner, Berger's prediction that pluralism would lead to competition between religious and secular worldviews and activities is clear among those that I interviewed, given that lack of time and individualism are the leading explanations for decreased attendance at religious services (also see Davie 1994: 194; Putnam 2000: 182-284). As both Berger and Bruce argue, rationalization and structural differentiation together pave the way for the convergence of individualism, rejection of authority, relativization, subjectivization, pluralism, and relativism, all manifested to some degree among those who say they left the church under the influence of individualism. These processes are magnified in a Canadian context that values diversity, the preservation of individualism in a democratic, pluralist society, the belief that what is right and wrong varies by individual, and the avoidance of imposing one's views on another. In sum, many marginal affiliates have opted for the inductive and experiential approach to authority that Berger (1979) argued was unavoidable in pluralist societies.

A third reason that seven marginal affiliates cited for reducing their church involvement was because those around them either stopped attending or discouraged active participation in a church. In three cases either good friends moved away or the marginal affiliates themselves moved away, leaving individuals with no close friends in their congregation. They decided to

abandon church attendance. One thirty year-old female recalls, "I don't really just want to go by myself . . . when it was convenient . . . and I had friends going, I would go to church." This finding resonates with the observation in chapter four that community and belonging with others are some of the most common rewards that active affiliates associate with their church involvement. It seems that for marginal affiliates, who were active affiliates in the past, losing this important reward is a serious impediment to their continued involvement. This does raise a question about motivations for attending religious services among both active and marginal affiliates. Are people drawn to active participation in a church because of the community that they find, because of the common beliefs that they share with other people, because of the religious rituals that they experience, or some combination thereof? Of course the answer is probably a combination of these factors (and others). However, it is worth raising the question because clearly for those who leave their religious group when they do not have close friends in the congregation,[4] the religious rituals are not enough to keep them actively involved, nor are the other congregants who supposedly share similar beliefs. This might point to the simple fact that forming and establishing relationships is a chief explanation for some people's involvement in a church. If this is the case, should this be interpreted as a religious motivation for church involvement and is this a sign for or against secularization in Canada? This too is an important question because it gets at whether or not religious groups are actually fulfilling religious functions (such as encouraging and supervising exchanges with the gods, as rational choice theorists contend) or whether they are mainly attractive for quasi-secular reasons, as Sherkat (1997: 73-77) and Bruce (1999: 95-96) suggest. Are churches just another club that people join to make friends? Is this further evidence of "organizational secularization," which Dobbelaere (2002) theorized about, and Bruce (2002) contends is ravaging religious groups today? This

[4] It is difficult to know how common this is on a larger scale, and further research into this would be helpful.

finding and the subsequent questions that arise demonstrate why we need qualitative research to get at the motivations behind people's beliefs and practices, to have a more informed base of information with which to address the secularization issue. If someone does not attend for religious reasons, is it accurate to interpret such behaviour as religious in nature?

Aside from those whose friends move away, four marginal affiliates abandoned church involvement because friends or family members disapproved. Debbie Fisher's experience reveals that her husband is unsympathetic and borderline antagonistic to her desire for greater involvement and that this is the greatest thing that keeps her from pursuing more involvement. Another individual, a male in his early fifties from an evangelical Protestant congregation, talks about social restrictions:

> My social group . . . doesn't really allow for it . . . for me to continue on. I'd almost have to abandon family. So you have to have a really strong belief, be it them or anybody else, any other religion . . . if I wanted to be [more involved], I believe I'd have to cut ties with my family. I'd have to change my whole lifestyle, my whole life, who I am, what I am, where I come from. Yeah, nothing against ['XYZ Church'] or anybody else. It wouldn't matter who it was. I think that the group that . . . or the life that I have, I'd have to abandon it in order to partake . . . in the other thing.

As evidenced in chapter four, and articulated in Bruce's ideas on secularization, we notice once again that one's social ties contribute to a person's level of religious involvement.

Finally, three marginal affiliates left their churches because of personal experiences that caused them to question their faith in God, and consequently their perceived need for the church. A few individuals that I interviewed lost a family member to accidents or diseases. One Roman Catholic male recounts how his brother's death in a car accident at the age of twenty-four was a catalyst for declining involvement at church:

> When you get a phone call so early in the morning . . . saying that something happened . . . you do go to church after that. But then, after a while, you start questioning it: "Why did this happen?" and "Was there a reason for it all?" And, you know, there's no answers because . . . you don't normally get answers, right? . . . indirectly, somewhere along the line, you do get an answer, but you don't know that it was . . . I kind of tapered off.

Two other marginal affiliates, like the following Anglican, speak of the natural inclination for young adults to question everything in life, including religion, which leads to a gradual change in one's worldview:

> I think that at that age, when you're young like that in the world, you tend to rebel a bit against it . . . And you question religious doctrine. You question why this is like that . . . and I probably went through a lot of questioning . . . just like normal kids do when they're that age . . . you scratch your head. If you think a little bit, you think, this doesn't seem right . . . this is stupid. And all in the name of bloody religion. You know? So I went through a lot of that. Yes, yes. Yeah, there was a lot of questioning . . . I didn't find myself going to church on a regular habit.

In addition to these demand-side reasons, marginal affiliates provided two supply-oriented explanations for their declining involvement. The first concerns interpersonal and intra-organizational tension. Eight marginal affiliates had negative experiences with religious leaders and fellow congregants, as evidenced in the discussion of dependable congregations in chapter four, which contributed to people leaving their congregation and the church altogether. In a related manner, three individuals did not believe that their church possessed a warm or safe atmosphere, an observation raised by several single females who felt alienated in a religious group that is dominated by male leadership and that normalizes people who are married and have families. One woman recalls a church that she tried to attend regularly, after not attending church for quite some time: "I started going every Sunday for a while, and I found out that it was no place for a single woman. The priest was afraid to look at you or talk to you. The families were afraid to look at me or talk to me. I just didn't fit in, so I just felt so isolated that I stopped going." I asked her whether people in the church said or did specific things that made her feel this way:

> There was no talking. They just didn't even see me. People didn't see me. They saw husband, wife, kids. Old ladies. Old men. Things like that. Teenagers. That sort of thing. But they didn't see a woman in her thirties . . . that was just a little too dangerous. They didn't quite know what to do with me. Was I going to steal their husband? Was I going to do inappropriate things with the priest? What's she all about here? So they just kind of didn't even really look at me or talk to me. So I was kind of on my own. And I would see

> other people talking to one another and stuff, but they wouldn't talk to me. I would smile and be kind of friendly. I didn't know what to do with them, either, I guess.

From my conversation with this interviewee, it is difficult to tell whether members of her congregation actually communicated attitudes or behaved in ways that would justify her perception of alienation. However, the social sciences are instructive here when considering William I. Thomas's (1966: 301) words that "situations that are defined as real are real in their consequences." Put another way, regardless of whether or not a religious group does something to offend someone, the fact that someone believes that they have been offended and thus responds accordingly (i.e., by leaving their congregation) is sufficient. The result is the same whether we are dealing with realities or mere perceptions. True, this may appear to be a "demand" issue, but when it comes to people's social perceptions, we know that perceptions can change. In this case, it seems obvious that religious organizations can and do have a major role to play in changing people's perceptions. Religious groups should heed this idea carefully. I will say more about this in the concluding chapter as it relates to the strong negative social perceptions that exist towards Christians (see Kinnaman and Lyons 2007).

The second supply-side critique levelled against churches concerns their location, their style and the relevancy of church services, and doctrine. When it comes to location, a few people stopped attending because their church moved from one rental property to another in a different part of the city, or their church closed because of dwindling attendance or insufficient numbers of ministers, or because they could not drive and no churches were in the neighbourhood. Emily Foster's narrative in chapter two revealed that her church closed due to inadequate resources to keep the church doors open and after that she was unwilling to drive long distances to go to church. Another male that I interviewed said, "I stopped going when the church moved . . . they moved it somewhere else . . . then it just became inconvenient, again . . . honestly, I quit going."

In terms of the style and relevance of the religious service, a couple of people left because the music was either too traditional or too modern, and others were displeased that sermons were not relevant to everyday experiences. As one male said:

> How relevant is this to my life today? You know, if you were some Joe Blow who's trying to get a job or working in Calgary and, you know, that kind of stuff, how relevant is this? How relevant is the doctrine and how relevant is, you know, the virgin birth and all these kind . . . How relevant is this to my life, you know? I mean, if I'm living a really hectic life, and I'm balancing career and children, a family . . . you know, all this kind of stuff, the church . . . their challenge is to become relevant to their day-to-day life . . . instead of depending on dogma, like a lot of churches have been, you know: "You believe in me because that's the way it is." You know? They've got to become more relevant and bring you in, you know.

Doctrinal issues were problematic for some, as people questioned the legitimacy of televangelist teachings, exclusion of women from leadership, exclusive claims to salvation, and strong opposition to homosexuality and abortion. I provided several examples and quotations in chapter four of the aversion that some marginal affiliates have toward doctrinally strict churches, which has contributed to the exodus from Canadian congregations.

In total, the combination of reasons that people give for no longer attending regularly suggests that both supply and demand explanations are at work. However, as the evidence unfolds in this chapter, I think it will become clear that religious supply may have more influence over keeping existing participants in a religious group, while demand has more power when it comes to less frequent attenders possibly considering additional involvement.

Why Attend?

After asking marginal affiliates their reasons for leaving behind active involvement in a church, I wanted to test whether they do, in fact, adopt a "fragmented" approach to their religion, which Bibby appropriately suggested in 1987 is a sign of individual secularization. I did this by posing his insightful survey question to those in my sample: "Some Canadians suggest that they

draw selective beliefs and practices from their religious tradition, even if they do not attend frequently. They indicate that they do not plan on changing religious traditions, but they will turn to religious groups for important religious holidays and rites of passages. How well would you say that describes you?" Sixteen marginal affiliates say that this describes them fully, two indicate that it represents them in part (they turn to the religious group selectively and do not plan on changing traditions, but do not see themselves as drawing selective beliefs and practices from the tradition), and three do not believe that this characterizes them. The majority of marginal affiliates responded with statements like, "That would be me;" "Yep. I think that's pretty much it. I definitely have chosen bits and pieces;" "To a tee. Yeah, basically, absolutely everything that just says." This discovery is useful because it validates previous findings about marginal affiliates' fragmented and subjective religious patterns, and it sets the context for then understanding why they believe and behave as they do.

So, why do marginal affiliates attend religious services when they do? In chapter four we learned that the main reasons are because of tradition, family pressures, and God and sacred space. I think these findings are critically important and original to this dissertation because until now, no one has directly asked marginal affiliates why they bother to consistently show up to church once or twice a year. At the same time, the challenge of this exploratory study is that these discoveries lead to further questions about why tradition, family, or connecting with God in a sacred space serve to motivate marginal affiliates to attend when they do. What is it about these variables that bind and motivate marginal affiliates to attend for religious holidays or rites of passage? Unfortunately, concrete answers to these questions did not emerge in the interviews, and further research into such questions would be immensely valuable (something I hope to pursue with additional data collection after completing this dissertation). Still, I think there are some logical explanations and hypotheses that arise out of theoretical discussions, in various

disciplines, of tradition, family pressures, and sacred space that will help us to evaluate why these reasons are so powerful for marginal affiliates. Here I want to expand on these themes with the purpose of better understanding marginal affiliates' beliefs and practices, and then to use such knowledge to support my negative evaluation of Bibby's renaissance thesis.

When it comes to tradition, the critical question to ask is why tradition holds people's current and future actions in its grasp? Why is it so difficult for people to abandon tradition, particularly for those who attend religious services occasionally, and yet do not find religious meaning in those services? Drawing on Berger (1967), Shils (1981), Giddens (1991), and Hervieu-Leger (2000), I think there are four possible explanations. The overarching explanation may have to do with the interplay between identity and stability in a chaotic world. As we saw in the vignettes in chapter two, identity is a critical variable in people's religious beliefs and practices, and tradition is believed to inform one's identity. The following statement demonstrates that people's current sense of self is strongly grounded in their memories of past activities, of traditions that have stood the test of time to shape who they are today:

> The individual has a sense of himself as a continuously existing entity essentially more or less identical through time; fundamentally he sees himself as being what he was . . . the individual's image of himself is constituted from what has been deposited in his memory from his own experiences of the conduct of others in relation to himself and the play of his imagination in the past. The stability of the individual's character, to an external observer and to himself, is possible only through the retention in memory of what he believed before, of what he experienced before. These things retained by memory are important parts of what he perceives himself to be. His sense of his identity is partly a present perception of his past (Shils 1981: 50).

The reason that maintaining one's identity is so important can be understood in the context of Peter Berger's theory of human nature and Anthony Giddens' discussion of late modernity.

In Peter Berger's (1967) theory of religion, we learn of the life-long world building exercise that humans engage in. Born "unfinished," because we lack the necessary instincts and knowledge to function in the world, humans turn to other individuals and to culture to learn the

social order and rules of social interaction. For instance, children learn from parents, teachers, and television programs that it is wrong to abuse others, and that it is good to show kindness to people. Beyond just surviving in the social world, the life-long socialization process is intended to help the individual to effectively and confidently achieve a stable identity and sense of self in their social world. Yet, seeking stability through socialization becomes problematic when one realizes that culture, which is shaped by individuals who are changing, is itself changeable.

In addition, life is chaotic and uncontrollable at times, in ways that challenge the social order. People suffer and die from accidents, diseases, and sometimes people kill others, and unfortunately, humans cannot control these realities. The result is a sense of anomie, or meaningless and normlessness. A person's identity is shaken to the core because their social world is conflicted. Naturally, people turn to loved ones in times of uncertainty, hopeful that they will ease the pain and provide meaning and stability in the face of crisis. But here too, all close relationships end, due to the aforementioned uncontrollable realities of life, throwing one's identity into question once more.

Applying Berger's theory to the question of why traditions shape present and future actions, one could logically say that tradition helps to stabilize and reinforce one's identity amidst one's effort to create a stable world. However, Berger's theory lacks some of the specificity of why this is so, something that can be found in Anthony Giddens' book *Modernity and Self Identity* (1991). Giddens posits that a fundamental feature of human nature is that people are self-consciously aware of why they do what they do, and over the course of their life, they reflexively construct and reconstruct their identity in light of new information or knowledge about themselves and society. In contrast to identity construction in traditional societies where life is localized in the family and the immediate community, identity construction in modern society is filled with radical doubt whereby "all knowledge takes the form of hypotheses: claims which

may very well be true, but which are in principle always open to revision and may have at some point to be abandoned" (1991: 3). In a scientific age, where empiricism and reason are valued over most other forms of knowledge and where many believe that science can provide increased assurance and stability in society, the reality is that "expert systems" and current stocks of knowledge can be wrong or subject to change in light of new discoveries.[5] In fact, as Hervieu-Leger (2000: 73) argues, the fragmented nature of contemporary society has decreased the propensity for individuals to find an overarching meaning system that links them to the social, and as a result, we witness increased levels of insecurity and instability. David Lyon (2000) contends that instability in a fragmented postmodern culture prompts some to turn to religion to establish an overarching meaning system with which to interpret all of life. Although the marginal affiliates in my sample do not claim that their religion provides an overarching meaning system, some do indicate that attending religious services helps them in some areas of life, partially supporting Lyons' assertion. This applies to those who choose to baptize their children or get married in a church, to those like this marginal affiliate male who believes that church helps him to see "right and wrong" in his life: "I have an easier time actually seeing what's right and wrong . . . I need a pre-defined right and wrong. I need somebody to write it down for me . . . I have a set of guidelines. I need guidelines . . . I'll never live up to those guidelines, but at least I have something to . . . shoot for." Similarly, a marginal affiliate female reflects: "I just think it's a good way to kind of get yourself in check that just makes you slow down for a minute and think about what you're doing, how you're living your life. Are you contributing to the world . . . Like . . . with a missionary talking or something, and you're, like, 'I'm so selfish. Like, why am I not

[5] Giddens (1991: 30) discusses how expert systems, which are intended to provide knowledge that is valid and certain, are not as expansive or true as many presume. Experts are only experts in a small area of knowledge, and even among so called experts there is variation in interpretations on any given subject. As such, ordinary individuals regularly ask how true, authentic, or legitimate expert systems really are.

doing more for the world?' I think it's a good time to kind of just reflect on how you've been living your life and maybe how you should be living your life."

More than this, Giddens (1991) reminds us that individuals are exposed to increasing amounts of choice in modern society, from simple things such as food, housing, and automobiles, to jobs and relationships. Giddens states:

> On the level of the self, a fundamental component of day-to-day activity is simply that of *choice*. Obviously, no culture eliminates choice altogether in day-to-day affairs, and all traditions are effectively choices among an indefinite range of possible behaviour patterns. Yet, by definition, tradition or established habit orders life within relatively set channels. Modernity confronts the individual with a complex diversity of choices and, because it is non-foundational, at the same time offers little help as to which options should be selected (Giddens 1991: 80).

According to Giddens, this surplus of choices opens the individual to radical doubt. For instance, when a person enters a new relationship, starts a new job, or moves between cities, they sometimes ask whether they made the right choice, and if not, what the consequences might be. Therefore, when comparing contemporary with traditional societies, people had choice before, but tradition and established habits in such societies reduced the real number and range of choices. In general, as tradition loses its hold, the level of choice increases. Combined, these contemporary realities open the door for uncertainty in a person's quest for stability; their identity potentially becomes meaningless as it is filled with anxiety about the unknown.

Like Berger, Giddens (1991: 3) highlights that people fend off the fearful elements of choice and uncertainty by forming close "trust systems." As we saw in chapter two, Debbie Fisher turned to her husband in her young adult years as a way to cope with the emerging uncertainties of adult life: "I was so young, still, at that time . . . he was kind of my support system." Those who are close to us provide a protective cocoon against the dangers of unknown or unfamiliar worldviews that challenge our sense of self. As stabilizing as this can be, individuals are still mindful of the risks tied to relationships, either in that people die, or some

may choose to leave. It is here where tradition becomes central to human behaviours. In the face of uncertainty, people seek to preserve their "ontological security," or sense of continuity and order, by adhering to traditions:

> The maintaining of habits and routines is a crucial bulwark against threatening anxieties, yet by that very token it is a tensionful phenomenon in and of itself . . . the discipline of routine helps to constitute a 'formed framework' for existence by cultivating a sense of 'being', and its separation from non-being', which is elemental to ontological security (Giddens 1991: 39).

Giddens goes on to say that "tradition creates a sense of firmness of things that typically mixes cognitive and moral elements. The world is as it is because it is as it should be" (1991: 48). With the inevitable uncertainties that arise in modern society, people fight even harder to have control over their world, both for the present and the future. Returning to the safe world of tradition is advantageous because predictable outcomes reduce possible contact with risk and uncertainty. As Giddens (1991: 79, 204) notes, rites of passage are convenient times for people to reflect on personal identity, to ponder possible opportunities and risks in life, and to take steps forward in self-understanding. This idea rings true for a marginal affiliate that I interviewed who expressed to me, "I always think that religion is . . . it's important to have as . . . a prop to your life . . . it's sort of one of those sorts of things like on a wigwam . . . you've got all these wigwams that keep it . . . coming up. And one of those is religion."

Why do some turn to religious groups to mark these occasions then? Giddens suggests that sometimes people want the occasional reminder of basic religious truths that help to maintain their group's "sacred canopy" for themselves. One woman that I met states, "There are times, like when I've been straying, I feel, like, when I've been, maybe, partying too much or whatever . . . checking, like, 'Oh, I'm kind of getting off the path, so I want to go.' Yeah, that's probably the biggest thing." Giddens asserts that others believe that religion offers black-and-white responses

in an age of uncertainty and risk, though no marginal affiliates in my sample offered this explanation for why they attend for rites of passage.

A second reason that tradition may be important to marginal affiliates might have to do with their close social ties and the importance of those social ties for personal identity. Remembering that many marginal affiliates in my sample attend out of obligation to their family, is it possible that marginal affiliates observe tradition to please their family, to avoid losing the protective cocoon that their family provides in life overall? For instance, if it is not a big deal for someone to attend midnight mass on Christmas Eve, why risk disturbing a family member by not attending? The same can be said of those like Debbie Fisher who do not pursue greater involvement because those close to them frown upon such activity. Expressed succinctly, the cost of losing the bond with a close family member or friend over church attendance may be too high when one considers the overwhelming benefits of those ties for other, more serious matters that may confront an individual's identity.

A third possible explanation for observing tradition is found in the following words from Shils:

> The existence of tradition is at least as much a consequence of limited power to escape from it as it is a consequence of a desire to continue and to maintain it. Human societies retain much of what they have inherited not because they love it but because they grasp that they could not survive without it. They have not imagined plausible replacements for it. They have neither the material resources, nor the intellectual nor the moral nor the visual powers to supply what they would need to find a home in the world if they were deprived of the furnishing of tradition. They accept what is given to them by the past but they do so gracelessly for the most part (1981: 213).

The fear of abandoning tradition is not because of a deep felt loss of the tradition itself so much as it is the fear of the unknown in the absence of the tradition. It is not clear from my data what they might be fearful of, but pursuing this issue with marginal affiliates in the future would provide an excellent source of information for understanding their church attendance patterns.

Finally, some might turn to tradition to remember a golden age. Shils (1981: 70) says that traditions are "the occasion for melancholy reflections on the transience of past happiness, on the superiority of the vanished past to the shoddy present." These reflections highlight that "the past times were golden ages, 'good old times,' when life was free of the hideousness of scarcity and from the self-seeking and ugliness which are features of most advanced civilizations" (Shils 1981: 207). Among the marginal affiliates that I spoke with, there are signs that observing a holiday or rite of passage in a church brings back a good nostalgia of growing up. It takes them out of the busyness, and perhaps sadness, of life at the moment, drawing their memory back to times of innocence and a care-free spirit. Characteristic of others that I interviewed, when I asked one woman if she gains any religious significance from the religious services that she attends, she replies, "Childhood . . . it's just pretty carefree . . . memories . . . we were growing up that we had to . . . on Sundays we would sing and so on, and quite often . . . I have some favourite Christmas hymns, both Christmas music and early morning music. That's childhood . . . carefree."

Connecting to God in a sacred place is yet another reason for why marginal affiliates claim to attend when they do. This raises a couple of questions. Why do marginal affiliates in my sample claim that they can connect to God outside of the church (which they prefer, as we saw in chapter two), and yet they equally contend that they feel closer to God on occasions when they are in a church? What function does sacred place serve for marginal affiliates? Why do they visit religious buildings for religious holidays and rites of passages? As with the discussion on tradition, no conclusive answers emerged from the interviews that I conducted, but there are some clues in the literature on sacred place that I think are suggestive. I could begin with a lengthy overview of sacred versus profane (see e.g., Durkheim 1915: 37, 47; Eliade 1959; Smith 1987: 83; Turner 1979: 13) or sacred space versus sacred place (see e.g., Augé 1995; Brueggemann 1977: 4-5; Dillistone 1973: 85-102; McAlpine 2006), but in an effort to stay on

track with my overarching objectives of better understanding why people believe and behave as they do I will focus on the function and role that sacred place potentially serves for those who frequent religious buildings. Harold Turner's *From Temple to Meeting House* (1979) and William McAlpine's (2006) "The Role of the Built Environment in Fulfilling the Mission of the Church: Towards a Missional Theology of Sacred Space" are appropriate places to begin.[6] I want to focus on three functions that they raise, drawing on several other researchers on sacred place in the process: the sacred place as centre, the sacred place as meeting point, and the sacred place as microcosm of the heavenly realm (Turner 1979: 13-33).

First, sacred place functions as a centre of reference either for the individual or the group. Similar to tradition, sacred place has the potential to be a centre of meaning and direction for actions, to reinforce identity in a fluid and fragmented world. Much like Berger's theory of human nature and religion, Sheldrake (2001: 2) reminds us that there is "a crisis of place in Western societies – a sense of rootlessness, dislocation or displacement." Turning to sacred place is one way that individuals and groups seek to be rooted, located, and placed in the world (Mitchell 1977: 117). Both Sheldrake (2001: 10) and Jonathan Smith (1987: 30) reference sacred places as "home," places where people feel safe against the threats of anomie and fragmentation.[7] Both active and marginal affiliates I interviewed used this term when talking about their church experience. One person says, "It's like coming home." Another woman reflects, "It was kind of like a home thing. It was a home environment. It was a security . . . I needed that sense of security and that sense of home that you . . . lose when you start getting more out in the world."

[6] I am aware of William James (2002 [1902]) and Rudolf Otto's (1926) famous discussions of the numinous and *sui generis* experiences that individuals encounter before sacred or holy things. For the purposes of the research question at hand, however, their writings do not advance us toward a clearer understanding of *why* marginal affiliates turn to sacred places when they do; their work does not actually provide us with the function of sacred place for individuals, in the way that other scholars' work does.

[7] Although McAlpine (2006: 142) does not explicitly use the term "home," he does suggest that people are aware of their identity in different places based on perceptions (by themselves and others) of whether they are an "insider" or "outsider."

Another interviewee states, “It’s calming. It’s relaxing . . . it’s like going home. It’s like going home.” One male says, “I feel at home when I go there.”

One feature of a home is memory (McAlpine 2006: 133-134). Many times, family gatherings occur in homes where they recall memories of years gone by. Memories of important moments in life remind people of life decisions, goals, and dreams. Specific places are catalysts for people to think about momentous occasions in life, such as a baptism or wedding, and the importance of those moments to their self-concept (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996: 218-219). Douglas Burton-Christie (1995: 2) reflects on places of memory as “places into which I had poured myself and all the longings of my life and which reflected back to me the shape and texture of my life there.” Memories reinforce identity, by reminding individuals of rituals and values that have stood the test of time. In addition to the relationship between memory and individual identity, memory also helps to locate the individual’s story as part of a larger narrative of stories in a particular place—positioning the individual as part of a “chain of memory” (Hervieu-Leger 2000). As a marginal affiliate female expressed to me, “I go to church now because I remember what it was like to believe it as a child. I have that nostalgia . . . going to church is very much for me like visiting your hometown.” Smith (1987: 13) and McAlpine (2006: 134) emphasize that forgetting memories can be catastrophic to the group who might then lack direction, purpose, and identity in the present or in the future. For this reason, Smith wisely makes a connection between place, home, and memory: “Home is not, from such a point of view, best understood as the place-where-I-was-born or the place-where-I-live. Home is the place where memories are ‘housed.’ As such, home is unique: ‘There’s no place like home’” (Smith 1987: 29).

Second, sacred place is a meeting point between heaven and earth, a place for communication between the divine and humans. This point is implicit in the first function of

sacred place, but is nuanced still. Eliade (1957: 36-39) speaks of an axis mundi, or a sacred place that lies at the middle of the world, or at least of one's social world, which connects heaven, earth, and the underworld. Jeanne Kilde's (2008) thorough survey of architecture and worship demonstrates that architectural features such as domes opening towards heaven, stained glass and natural lighting, tall steeples, and iconography are all intended to remind humans of the connection between the cosmic levels that Eliade discusses. Individuals believe that their prayers are captured in the dome and collected for God and that God resides in a special way in a set apart sacred place, enabling them to be closer to the supernatural than in profane places. Jonathan Smith summarizes it this way:

> Place directs attention . . . when one enters a temple, one enters marked-off space (the usual example, the Greek *temenos*, derived from *temno*, 'to cut') in which, at least in principle, nothing is accidental; everything, at least potentially, demands attention. The temple serves as a focusing lens, establishing the possibility of significance by directing attention, by requiring the perception of difference. Within the temple, the ordinary (which to any outside eye or ear remains wholly ordinary) becomes significant, becomes 'sacred,' simply by being there. A ritual object or action becomes sacred by having attention focused on it in a highly marked way (1987: 103-104).

More than this, entrances into religious buildings mark continuity and transition between the profane and sacred (Eliade 1957: 25). When people walk through doorways into sacred places, they are mindful of both the transition from the profane into the sacred, and perhaps more importantly, the transitions taking place in their life as a result of religious experiences (Kilde 2008: 48-49). Some marginal affiliates that I interviewed attend church to connect "with a higher deity" and to get "reconnected" with God and self.

Third, sacred place sometimes represents an earthly expression of the heavenly realm in its beauty, power, and stature. Religious buildings draw people's attention to the majesty and glory of the divine, to the beauty and splendour of creation and of Heaven on earth (Kilde 2008: 69). Eliade's (1957: 68-113) analysis of sacred time helps to demonstrate why this is important

for individuals. For the religious person, time is seen as sacred; the past, present, and future are divinely connected and sanctified by the holy. Sacred time is particularly influenced by the ongoing struggle between life and death (a prominent theme within Christianity especially), which is reinforced when repeating religious rituals. Christian baptism, for example, marks one's death to self and to their old, sinful way of life, and the birth of a new self, a purer way of life.[8] Intertwined with themes of life and death are redemption and renewal, of making old things new again (Kilde 2008: 107). Among marginal affiliates, it could be that repeating religious rituals in sacred places reflects their desire to create things anew. As one Roman Catholic woman said to me, "I had a couple of sins I thought I should probably go . . . get those out . . . so I told those." One male says, "If I don't attend then, I'm going to hell . . . I swear, I drink, I do bad things . . . But I also ask for forgiveness every time I do it, and, let me tell you, there's a lot of times, but . . . as I was brought up, He will forgive all . . . for certain things. If you commit murder, well, then, forget it. But . . . I'm not saying He won't, but I don't do bad enough things that He won't forgive me. Let's just say that." Eliade references the human ideal of creating things anew on several occasions: "for religious man of the archaic cultures, *the world is renewed annually*; in other words, *with each new year it recovers* its original sanctity, the sanctity that it possessed when it came from the Creator's hands" (1957: 75); "since the sacred and strong time is the *time of origins*, the stupendous instant in which a reality was created, was for the first time fully manifested, man will seek periodically to return to that original time" (1957: 81); "for to wish to reintegrate the *time of origin* is also to wish to return to the *presence of the gods*, to recover the

[8] Eliade (1957: 144, 157, 191-192, and 201), Sheldrake (2001: 76, 89), and Kilde (2008: 32-33) each discuss the centrality of birth and death to religious rituals, especially in baptism and the Eucharist. Beyond the symbolism of death and life, Sheldrake (2001: 76) contends that these rituals move individuals toward reconciliation with self, others, and God, in an effort to strengthen one's identity in a fragmented and chaotic world.

strong, fresh, pure world that existed *in illo tempore.* It is at once thirst for the *sacred* and nostalgia for *being*" (1957: 94).

If Eliade is correct, observing rituals in sacred places helps some to destroy the impurities and negative things in their life, and give birth to other renewed and refined things. The sanctuary is interpreted as a purifying place for people to overcome the struggles in their life (Eliade 1957: 59). Religious nostalgia reminds religious folk of a pure beginning to sacred time whereby God created things anew, and religious rituals have the same potential to provide a fresh beginning for humans (Eliade 1957: 65). Sheldrake (2001: 95) speaks of religious utopias, conceived as a "world transformed where we may live in perfect harmony, free from suffering, divisions and injustice." It could be that people long for a place of innocence, purity, and restoration, and attending religious services each Christmas or Easter, or holding one's wedding in a church, or getting baptized, all signify the possibility that marginal affiliates desire a closer connection to God and self in the confines of a sacred place, even if it is only periodically. Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) document that certain environments, such as sacred ones, assist people to clear the mind of the "noise" of everyday life, to reflect on life's challenges and problems, and to ponder future goals and priorities in their life because such places are set apart for dedicated attention upon the sacred, away from the everyday, profane elements of the world.

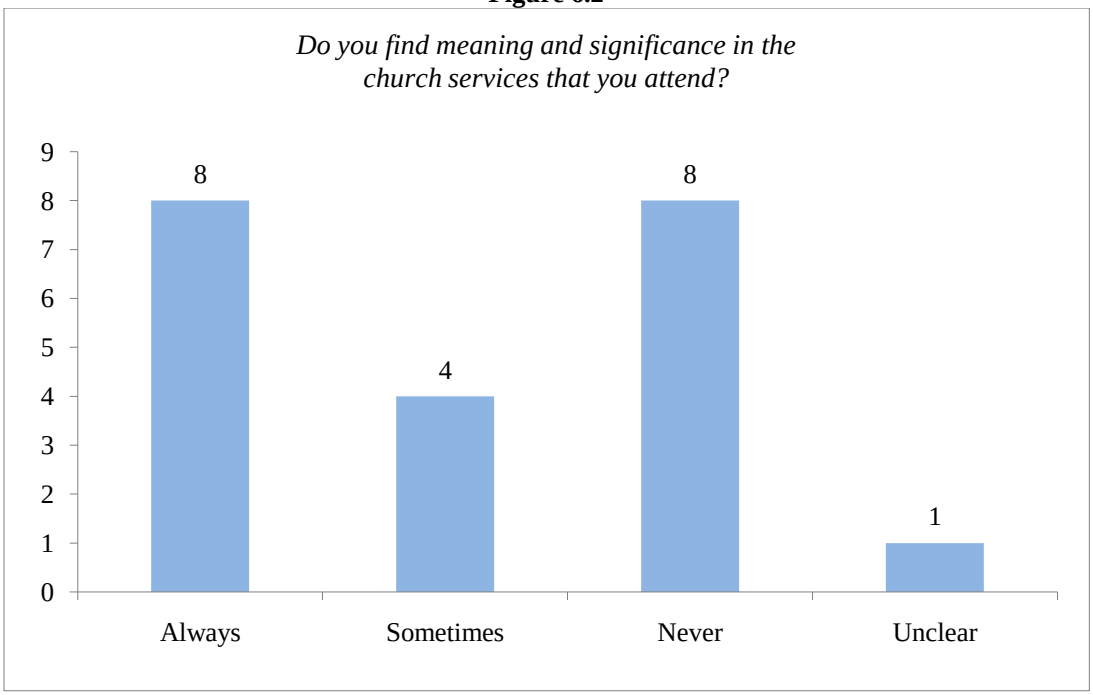
As I stated at the outset of this section, by discovering that tradition, family, and sacred space are three of the leading reasons that marginal affiliates give for attending religious services when they do, I have advanced our knowledge of religious behaviour in an area that, surprisingly, has not been addressed to date. This said, much more empirical work needs to be done to understand why these three variables are so important to guiding marginal affiliates' behaviour. I have attempted to start the conversation by turning to the literature on these three topics, offering

a variety of reasons for why tradition, family, and sacred space might be critical variables for explaining marginal affiliates' attendance patterns.

What meaning and significance do you draw from these occasions?

Another way to assess the extent of religiosity or secularity among marginal affiliates is to ask them about whether they find religious services to be religiously meaningful and significant and if this is a motivating factor for why they attend.

Figure 6.2



In Figure 6.2 we see that eight people said they do find the services that they attend to be religiously meaningful because it helps them to connect with God, to lean on God as a crutch in a time of need, or to avoid the commercialism of Christmas. For example, one marginal affiliate states, "Usually the sermons have more to do with the Christmas season, but I don't go for that reason. I just go at that time because I think I need to . . . deal with the more religious end of it because I'm dealing with way too much of the commercial end of it, and it . . . bugs me so much." Another interviewee attends "to be respectful . . . to God . . . And it's just nice. It's kind

of a reminder of why you're there or why it's Christmas, kind of thing . . . at the end of the night, you're singing, and your candle is lit, and then you're really just worshipping . . . I think that any time that you're worshipping . . . when I'm singing, and everyone around you is singing, then it is . . . uplifting. You feel still closer to God . . . you're doing what He wants you to do. He does want you to worship."

Another four individuals indicated that sometimes the sermons or prayers connect with them, but that this is not the case each time and is not always a motivating factor for attending. When asked whether the religious services that he attends are religiously meaningful or significant, one gentlemen replies, "Every time? No." Emerson Cairns reflected on this question in the context of his wedding and offered the following response:

> No, we wanted the ceremony . . . I didn't want to do it in a field or this or that with just a Justice of the Peace or anything like that . . . I wouldn't say it was overly religious . . . it was shorter, and, to an extent, there were some . . . undertones, but there was no readings . . . He [the priest] said, 'Pick one of these three.' It was, like, 'Pick a box.' And so we had somebody do that and . . . in my mind, that's where you get married: you get married in a church . . . whether it's overly religious or not, we like to do it in a church in that . . . forum, I guess. And I don't know why . . . we wanted people sitting in pews . . . we wanted . . . we were up on . . . stage and that sort of thing, and . . . that worked for us.

Eight of the remaining nine did not attribute any religious significance to these practices, seeing them more as cultural customs and traditions. When asked if the services that they attended were religiously meaningful, some marginal affiliates responded, "Probably not a lot;" "Not with me personally;" and "Christmas is . . . I don't know. You sing some carols, and . . . you see some old friends sometimes . . . but . . . I don't have any religious connections. I think Christmas is a little bit overdone. It's not like it's anything new."

In no way does this data offer conclusive evidence for or against the secularization thesis, but it does demonstrate that just showing up for church is not necessarily a clear sign that religion is alive and well or that a potential renaissance will emerge. The reality is that not everyone who

attends religious services does so for religious reasons and thus it is presumptuous to conclude that just because they are there, something is happening religiously (see Bruce 1999: 95-96; Sherkat 1997: 73-77). When discussing baptism, among other religious rites of passage in Sweden and Denmark, Zuckerman emphasizes:

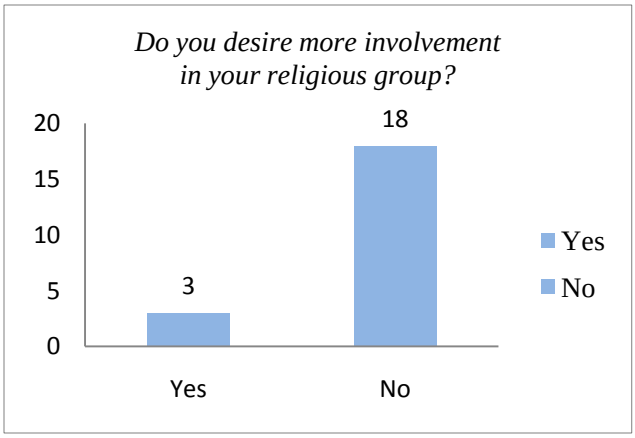
> The majority of Danes and Swedes participate in the ostensibly and historically religious ritual of baptism for a variety of reasons—from pleasing the in-laws, to enjoying it as a nice tradition. But very rarely do they celebrate it with any beliefs about God swelling in their hearts, or deep otherworldly concerns (2008: 161).[9]

In many ways this description is appropriate for at least some marginal affiliates in my sample.

Desire more involvement?

In part, Bibby's denial of secularization in Canada is pinned on the projection that marginal affiliates desire more involvement in their religious group (see Bibby 2002, 2004, 2006; Bibby, Russell and Rolheiser 2009) and that changes to the supply of religion will help facilitate future growth. I have never been convinced of this argument or his interpretation of his own data (Thiessen and Dawson 2008), and now there is data to support my position. I asked marginal affiliates if they desire greater involvement, and if so, what would make greater involvement worthwhile.

Figure 6.3



[9] Also see Palm and Trost's article "Family and Religion in Sweden" (2000).

Figure 6.3 reveals that only three individuals have a clear desire for greater involvement. Two people indicate that there is a chance that they would become more involved in the future (though I make a case that they do not really desire more involvement) and the rest unmistakably say that they do not desire greater involvement and that they are content with their current participation in organized religion. In and of itself, this finding raises questions about the potential religious renaissance that we will see in Canada based on marginal affiliates becoming active affiliates. When we dig beneath the surface, this observation crystallizes.

In terms of what would make greater involvement worthwhile, we can logically return to the things that pushed people away from their church in the first place. If people are less busy, less individualistic, have more social influences that encourage greater participation, and have fewer experiences that cause them to question matters of faith, then maybe we would witness greater involvement. If we see shifts in the supply of religion, in areas of interpersonal and intra-organizational tension or in the individual congregations' location, style, or doctrines, then maybe people would respond with more participation. Many marginal affiliates offered responses in these directions. Still, though they think that addressing these areas might lead people in general to pursue greater involvement, most admitted that changes in such areas would not lead to personal increased participation. Characteristic of other marginal affiliates in my sample, one male simply states, "I have no wish to get more involved."

To be fair to Bibby and to those I interviewed, there are a few who do express a potential interest for more involvement. The three individuals who desire more involvement, and the two who "perhaps" long for greater participation, mentioned six catalysts for possible increased attendance: (1) if friends and family members were more supportive (mentioned by three people); (2) if they were less busy (discussed by two participants); (3) if they were at a different stage of life such as kids either being born or kids moving out (highlighted by two individuals); (4) if a

church was nearby (stated by one person); (5) if a weekday service was offered (raised by one individual); and (6) if the style of service was different (referenced by two participants). Admittedly it is foolish to offer broad conclusions based on a few individuals, but the findings warrant some commentary.

What stands out is that the leading explanations deal with demand-side variables, things which the churches have no control over. Regarding social ties as restrictive to religious choice, Debbie Fisher's lived experience, outlined in chapter two, reveals that her husband is the greatest barrier between her and greater church involvement. The evangelical male quoted earlier in this chapter who fears he would have to abandon his family if he were to pursue greater involvement in his religious group also signals the restrictive nature of people's social ties over religious decisions.

As for busyness, individuals in this study readily accept the old adage that we make time for the things that are important for us, and therefore greater religious involvement must not be as important to them as other things. When I asked if they would attend more if they had fewer commitments elsewhere, were less involved in other social groups, participated in fewer leisure activities, or volunteered less, they clearly stated "no." Still, as has been demonstrated in this chapter, they do acknowledge that it is difficult to make religion a more important facet of their life given the strains of work, parenting, household chores and errands, and the desire for some "down" time.

Being in a different stage of life was a reason offered by a couple of people for potentially getting more involved. One woman, whose husband tragically died some time ago, and who is raising two children on her own, thinks when her children move out and she is on her own, she will ponder the meaning of life more regularly. She already expresses a desire for a more intense

spiritual connection with herself, with God, and with others, and expects to pursue these quests when she has more time after the kids move out. She shares the following with me:

> I'm going through things in my own life, now, where, as the kids are getting older, they're going out more . . . I'm going to be by myself . . . I think when my younger one is on her own more and out more, probably would think about that [greater involvement] more seriously . . . I mean, they're getting older, but they still need me in some ways, and they don't want to go to church . . . it's part of . . . that process . . . kids getting older . . . they'll still be in touch with me, but they won't be living under my roof, and I won't have half the cleaning . . . I think maybe that's it. I would maybe feel there's more of a hole when she's gone, too, than I do now.

Wrestling with the meaning of life and one's existence is sometimes associated with baby boomers that live in a transitional phase of life where their kids move away, they ponder their own existence in the world, and their parents age (see e.g., Bibby 2006; Roof 1999).

Another individual indicates that she will pursue greater involvement when she has children:

> I guess I just want them to be brought up the way that I was brought up, and, for sure, I want them to believe. I guess I feel kind of like when you're still learning and forming an opinion on everything, like, it's good to go. But it doesn't really fit in my life, now, but I would. If I had kids, I would go.

Despite some signs that having children will lead to greater involvement (Bibby 2002: 221-223), research by Roof (1999: 117-118, 233) and Smith and Snell (2009) indicates that even if people do return, they tend not to stick around for long and their orthodoxy wanes with time. David Eagle's (2010) examination of Canadian General Social Survey data and Statistics Canada's National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating data suggests that, at least since the 1950s, religious "nones" do not eventually turn into religious "somethings."

Only three individuals out of the entire sample seem to support the rational choice emphasis on supply-side interpretations of the religious economy. Yet, even the reasons that these individuals provided cannot be interpreted optimistically as future signs of life for the churches. True, some marginal affiliates identify location as an important factor for greater

involvement in their church, particularly for elderly individuals who cannot or prefer not to drive, or for people who are tired of driving long distances to work each week. However, except for one person, none of these individuals suggest that living closer to a church will increase their participation.

For churches that are interested in repairing a supply-demand disconnect, this is an example of where they can help by coordinating rides to and from church, something that active affiliates in my sample would be more than willing to help out with if it meant that a marginal affiliate could turn into an active affiliate. In fact, active affiliates would do almost anything to bring people through their church doors. One woman says, "Come and show us what you want. Whatever you want, we'll give you, and you can be the head of it. You can be in charge. We'd love to have you." Another individual says, "What would you like to do . . . I mean, we're open to anything . . . how do you want to be involved?" Part of the problem, however, is that marginal affiliates do not raise their needs with their congregation, and it is difficult for the congregation to intuitively know of such needs when marginal affiliates only appear once or twice a year. In this circumstance, it is not that religious suppliers are aware of needs and just not meeting those; they are not even aware of them, and the responsibility for this disconnection between consumers and suppliers rests primarily on the shoulders of religious consumers.

For the one marginal affiliate who said not having to drive would make a difference, she also comments that if churches held services on a week night, when she is already in the grind of work and out of the house, she could still enjoy some time at home on Sundays to relax or complete house chores. Others pointed to this possibility too, but again they conceded that if they really wanted to be more involved in a church they could find a church with mid-week services. This woman admits that she has not looked for a church with alternate service times, once more

raising uncertainties about the intensity of marginal affiliates' desire for more involvement and the realistic possibility that they will seek greater participation.

Finally, two individuals mentioned the style of worship service. One Roman Catholic woman comments that the music style at her church is too modern. She says that it feels "like a Billy Graham crusade, and I'm kind of sceptical about, you know, how much of that is really true . . . showing your belief in God more openly. I'm kind of a quiet person, and so being open about all that . . . I hesitate." She prefers the older, traditional ways of performing weekly rituals. Others commented on the music style too (that it is too traditional), but not to the point that they would pursue more involvement if churches changed their music style.

Another woman, from the United Church, desires for the sermons to be more intellectually stimulating, which in part means that they should be less about Jesus:

> I think if they stopped talking about Jesus so much. I mean, the cross of Jesus is still cool, but he's been dead for two thousand years, and I have nothing. Like, what would Jesus say about a mortgage, *really*? I don't know. And I just get frustrated with this idea that Jesus was somehow unique or had all these revelations that no one's ever thought of before and that you really need Jesus in order to have, like, an orderly society, which is incredibly racist.

As presented so far, there is very little evidence to suggest that the marginal affiliates that I interviewed long to participate more in their religious group, and as I hypothesized, any signs that they might pursue greater involvement point more toward demand rather than supply-side explanations. However, there is more information that helps to sharpen our interpretation of the few who show any possible desire for more involvement. In an attempt to extend rational choice theory to its logical end, I asked these select few if they have attempted to deal with their personal circumstances or find a congregation that supplies religion in the ways that they desire. For those with social ties that bind their religious activity, they say that the risks are simply too great to push the matter with family and friends. As mentioned earlier, busyness is frankly

interpreted as one of those things that people could adjust if they thought that more religious involvement was worthwhile—and it is not. And for those who are waiting until a different stage of life, there is little that religious groups can do to change their situation.

An examination of religious supply factors yields similar results. None of the marginal affiliates who indicated a definite or possible desire for greater involvement have sought to find a congregation that meets their individualized criteria. They also admit that they have not put forth much of an effort to make things work better at their existing church. If we apply rational choice theory, this is curious since the things that these people are looking for can be found in other congregations in Calgary (and the same applies to many others in urban centers too). There are churches that offer mid-week services, lively music, dynamic and relevant preaching to everyday concerns, such as finances, family, work life, and relationships. There are some churches that are theologically strict, while others are rather liberal on such contested issues as homosexuality, abortion, or salvation. This could suggest, as I hypothesized, that the intensity of their desire for greater involvement is not that great and thus that the churches should not expect to see marginal affiliates more involved in the future. Yet, building on rational choice terminology, it might also suggest that people feel restricted by the social and religious capital that they already possess. The Roman Catholic does not entertain a Protestant congregation that might meet each of their desires because the religious/cultural shift is too great, or the evangelical Protestant will not consider a mainline Protestant congregation. Of the three who cite supply-side factors as barriers for more involvement, one does not have a desire to look for a different congregation, one is open to any denomination (Roman Catholic or Protestant), and one limits herself to Roman Catholic parishes, but, until I raised the possibility in the interview, had not considered attending a different congregation. For this last participant, she explains that the Catholic tradition of

attending a parish in one's community has limited her from even considering a church in a separate district.

The Future for Religion in Canada?

No one can say for certain what the future of religion in Canada will look like, never mind make predictions based on a small sample of individuals from one Canadian city. We could witness growth (as Bibby hypothesizes), we could see decline, or levels of religious belief and practice might remain static. I think the findings from this study are suggestive that at the very least, Canada is not about to experience any type of renaissance, and it is likely that Canada will grow evermore secular at the individual level (at least as measured by regular church attendance). Before outlining why I think this is the case, I want to be clear that I do not think that modernization inevitably brings about secularization, nor do I argue that secularization is irreversible.[10] Instead, I agree with Steve Bruce that it is more difficult (though not impossible) to remain highly religious *at the individual level* in the face of modernity, and once secularization sets in, it is incredibly difficult to reverse the trend.[11] As outlined in chapter five, I hold this position because the pervasive social changes that accompany modernity, such as pluralism, diversity, individualism, and relativism, make it challenging to be religious, at least in any traditional sense, as Berger and Bruce argue.

The most logical place to begin when speculating about the future of religion in Canada is with recent data on Canadian religious beliefs and practices. In addition to data already presented

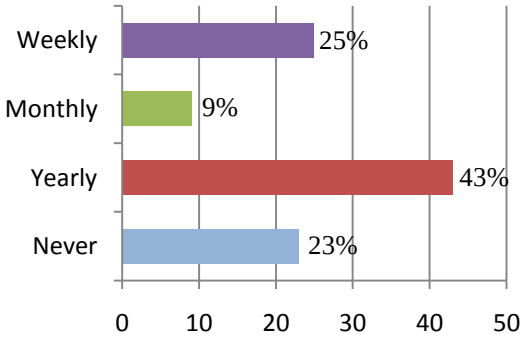
[10] David Martin (1978), Bryan Wilson (1985), and David Yamane (1997) comment that most secularization theorists deal with declines in religious belief, practice, and authority, not the extinction of religion. This is worth noting because those who reject secularization theory incorrectly attack secularization theorists for supposedly predicting the end of religion (e.g., Berger, Davie, and Fokas 2008; Casanova 2007; Stark and Finke 2000).

[11] Casanova (2008) attempts to argue that most nations remain religious as they modernize, but he primarily looks at public conversations about religious matters (e.g., public symbols of religious affiliation in France), not levels of individual belief or practice. When one looks at statistics on individual belief or practice (see e.g., Burkimsher 2009; Voas 2009), it is clear that secularization at the individual level is taking place.

in this dissertation, we know from 2001 Statistics Canada census data that 16% of Canadians claim to have "no religion" (this figure has steadily increased since 1971, when 4% had "no religion").[12] A 2009 Ipsos Reid poll reveals that as few as 71% of Canadians believe in God, down from 84% in 2000 (Harris 2009). Sarah King-Hele's (2009) longitudinal analysis of Canadian General Social Survey data demonstrates that, on the whole, there are consistent declines in religious affiliation, weekly attendance, and level of importance attributed to one's religion with each successive generation since the early 1900s. In Figure 6.4 and Bibby's 2005 national survey data (Bibby 2006: 192, 205), we see that 25% attend religious services weekly (down from 31% in 1975 and stable with the 24% reported weekly attendance in 1990), 9% go monthly, 43% visit yearly, and 23% never attend.[13]

Figure 6.4

2005 Service Attendance in Canada
Source: Bibby (2006: 192)



[12] The United States, the most religious nation in the western world, is also experiencing staggering growth in the "no religion" category. Recent data from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, the American General Social Survey, and the American Religious Identification Survey all indicate that around 15% of the American population claim to have "no religion."

[13] David Eagle (2010) compares three surveys on religious attendance in Canada. The 2006 Canadian General Social Survey shows weekly attendance at 18.9% (down from 25% in 2000), Statistics Canada's 2004 National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating reveals a weekly attendance of 17.4% (stable with 2000 figures), while Bibby's 2005 figures of 25% show a 3% increase since 2000. Eagle hypothesizes that Bibby's figures are inflated because of the smaller size of his sample relative to the other surveys, and the fact that people who are willing to sit down and fill out a 1-2 hour survey are more often than not, religious themselves.

Further, Bibby (2002: 220) shows that only 15% of yearly attenders indicate a definitive desire for greater involvement in their religious group. Despite persistent claims over the years that people do not belong to religious organizations, but they still believe in God, Bibby (2006: 205) shows that since 1975 there are decreasing percentages of Canadians who believe in God or a higher power (from 94% down to 90%) or in heaven (from 89% down to 81%).

Furthermore, in their book *The Emerging Millennials* (2009), Bibby, Russell and Rolheiser comment on recent trends among Canadian teens. Interestingly, while they document widespread declines in belief and practice, they also note a polarization between those who are actively religious and those who are not religious at all. For instance, between 1984 and 2008 teens who "definitely" believe in God or a higher power decreased from 54% to 37%, while those who "definitely do not" or "do not" believe in God or a higher power increased from 6% to 16% and 9% to 17% respectively (Bibby, Russell and Rolheiser 2009: 167-169).[14] What is important about these findings is that unlike their baby boomer parents whose belief in God or a higher power shifted into the middle ground "yes, I think so" category, teens have polarized themselves straight to the "definitely believe" and "definitely don't believe" groupings. Since the 1980s, teens show declining levels in other areas of belief too, including belief in life after death (from 80% down to 75%), miracles (from 63% down to 56%), and astrology (from 53% down to 47%) to name a few areas (2009: 175).

When it comes to affiliation with a religious organization, 32% of Canadian teens claim to have "no religion," Roman Catholics and Protestants alike have gradually lost teen affiliates since 1984, and "other faith groups" such as Muslims and Buddhists show modest signs of growth relative to the entire Canadian population since 2000 (Bibby, Russell and Rolheiser 2009: 176-177). With respect to church attendance, the most remarkable shift is found in the "never

[14] Similar findings are evident in the United States (see Pew Research Center 2010).

attend" category, where percentages have progressively increased from 24% to 40% to 47% between 1992, 2000, and 2008 (Bibby, Russell and Rolheiser 2009: 178).[15] Fewer teens are attending "hardly ever" and less and less of them desire for religious rites of passages in the future, which suggests that teens are skipping this middle "marginal affiliate" involvement altogether.

Despite the grim statistics, Reginald Bibby has attempted to put a good face on the results, suggesting even though Canadians are not attending religious services as frequently as in the past, some still desire more involvement in their religious group. He continues that changes to the supply of religion are critical for potentially witnessing a return of less active religious affiliates. I do not mean to dismiss the possibility over time. People point to anecdotal evidence, of family, friends, and neighbours who have become active affiliates over time. However, I have provided clear qualitative evidence that, on the whole, it is presumptuous and misguided to assume that marginal affiliates will likely become active affiliates. This way of thinking is especially wrongheaded if premised on the idea that changes to the supply of religion will almost inevitably bring about the desired "fit" between religious suppliers and religious consumers.

Beyond these points, my data lends itself to a discussion of religious transmission from one generation to the next, a clear problem evidenced in recent Canadian polls and in my own sample. Depending on how one looks at it, some will take comfort in the fact that nearly all marginal affiliates were raised in a religious home, hopeful that they may eventually return to higher levels of church involvement. Others may interpret this to suggest a point of no return for marginal affiliates. British scholars David Voas and Alasdair Crockett's longitudinal work is instrumental for this discussion. In their examination of religion in Britain and Europe, they

[15] A 1999 report reveals that 23% of Canadian children under the age of 12 attended religious services weekly, followed by 13% on a monthly basis, 22% occasionally, while 42% never attended (Jones 1999).

explore whether secularization can be attributed to age, period, or cohort effects. Age effects refer to changes to one's religious beliefs and practices over the life course, while one's society stays the same. Period effects imply that significant social events occur that influence all of society to change at once (e.g., the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States). Cohort effects means that individuals' religious beliefs and practices remain constant over the life course, but that societal changes influence how and why separate generations believe and practice at different levels.

They look to data on religious affiliation, church attendance, and the importance of religion to a person's life to address religious change in Britain and Europe. They draw on data over a twenty-year period in the British case (Crockett and Voas 2006; Voas and Crockett 2005) and eighty years of data in the European context (Voas 2009). Particularly useful to their analysis, and an advantageous feature of longitudinal quantitative research, is that they compare different cohorts' level of religious belief and practice over the life course. In both circumstances, they document widespread secularizing trends in each of the above measurements of religiosity.[16] Their task then becomes to explain why this is the case. Is it for age, period, or cohort reasons?

They eliminate age as a possible explanation because the data reveals that on the whole, individuals within each cohort did not become noticeably more or less religious with age.[17] This point is reinforced by Smith and Snell (2009), challenging the widespread myth and hope among some that people become more religious with time. Similarly, they set aside period as an explanation for secularization because there are no indications of simultaneous increases or decreases of religiosity at any point in time, across the different generations. When it comes to

[16] Laying out the specific data from their studies goes beyond my purposes here, but it can be found in Crockett and Voas (2006), Voas (2009), and Voas and Crockett (2005).

[17] It is important to remember that their data is longitudinal and holistic, unlike the data in my sample. Thus, the fact that most marginal affiliates in my sample became significantly less religious than they once were (measured by attendance at religious services), or that some active affiliates came from non-religious backgrounds, should not concern us here. In reality, most marginal affiliates abandoned regular church attendance before or around the age that they would even qualify to fill out the surveys that Voas and Crockett rely on in their analysis.

cohort, however, they clearly illustrate that each successive generation is less religious than the previous one. Bibby, Russell and Rolheiser (2009: 162-187) also show cohort effect at play in Canada, between "pre-boomers," "boomers," and "post-boomers."[18] The question becomes why is there a cohort effect?

Voas (2010) postulates potential explanations for why each generation is less religious than its forerunner: structural, compositional, and value changes among young people or value changes among parents. To assess the first possibility, Voas looks to Robert Wuthnow's recent book *After the Baby Boomers* (2007), which accounts for the relationship between declining religious attendance among young adults and seven key changes to their life worlds: delayed marriage, having few children or having them later in life, uncertainties over work and money, increased education, changing nature of relationships, globalization, and the information explosion. Among other things, Wuthnow cautiously suggests that declining church attendance can be attributed to factors from increased university or college education, to the growing presence of women in the workforce who subsequently have less time to spare. However, Voas counters these explanations by noting that, in general, education is positively correlated with church attendance, and church attendance is largely independent of how many hours people work.

Next, Voas considers possible changes in values among parents and/or teens. Here Voas argues that cohort effects can best be explained by shifting values among parents, namely in that they are less committed to ensuring that their children conform to their values and beliefs. To support this assertion, Voas points to changing values among parents that deemphasize strict obedience and loyalty to church, in turn emphasizing independence and tolerance. He also shows

[18] Once more, this is supported in recent survey findings in the United States (see Pew Research Center 2010).

that among parents who attend regularly, there is a sizeable decrease in the percentage of those whose children also attend religious services. My interview data clearly supports this assertion.

With respect to changes among young people, Smith and Denton's (2005) discussion of "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" is instructive. Teens believe in being good, moral beings, and that religion may help toward this end. If they are religious, many teens believe that religion serves a therapeutic purpose, to make people feel good, happy, secure, and at peace with life. While teens might believe that a God exists and created the world, they believe that God is distant from people's personal affairs. Accordingly, "therapeutic individualism defines the individual self as the source and standard of authentic moral knowledge and authority, and individual self-fulfillment as the preoccupying purpose of life. Subjective, personal experience is the touchstone of all that is authentic, right, and true" (Smith and Denton 2005: 173). Perhaps this approach to religion helps to explain how and why religion operates in the background of teens' lives (see Bibby, Russell and Rolheiser 2009; Smith and Denton 2005), and why young adults in their twenties and thirties view religion in a highly individualistic and experiential way (see e.g., Hayes 2007; Wuthnow 2007: 133).

Voas offers some plausible hypotheses that, with further research, are likely to be proven correct. I think the evidence presented in this chapter is suggestive that parents are a source of the disconnection between young people and religious belief and practice. For example, in my sample, five marginal affiliates were either given the option of whether or not to attend church once they reached their teen years, or they gave their own children the option of whether or not to attend. That marginal affiliates are willing to do this for their own children (and even to stop attending themselves because their children do not wish to attend) further epitomizes value shifts among parents. This change in parental values should not be interpreted in isolation however, but rather in the broader context of structural shifts toward individualism that I discussed earlier. If

we follow the earlier findings among those over the age of fifty-five in my sample who recall never being given the option of whether or not to attend religious services when they were growing up, giving choice to children about their level of involvement in their parents' religion reflects a relatively recent (i.e., last fifty years) and large shift in consciousness that favours diversity, pluralism, and relativism at the expense of exclusive and absolute values and beliefs. As in Britain, these values are particularly acute in Canada, a highly liberalized democratic country.

Individualism is also reflected in the shifting priorities among parents away from church attendance, whether it be for work or leisure. When parents say that it is too time consuming to commute to church, or that they want weekends to relax or complete chores instead of going to church, they are communicating to their children that religion is not a high enough priority to set the other desires aside; the rewards for attending are not that great.[19] Once more, these realities must be framed in the context of broader structural shifts. The demands of contemporary society, of two parents working just to pay the bills, of children's exposure to even more extracurricular activities that fill their time, and of urbanization and the growth of suburbs (hence longer commute times to work) leave families in a vulnerable position today, with respect to their time. There is no denying that these modern day strains are real for families, and yet we know that those who attend religious services regularly are equally, if not more busy. Although I err on the side that individuals can choose to invest time in the things that are most important to them, I realize that the added strains of modern society make such decisions increasingly difficult and perhaps this is something that religious groups ought to consider in trying to more effectively minister to their affiliates.

[19] I do not intend to attach any normative evaluation to such a statement.

One of the consequences of declining levels of religious belief and practice from generation to generation is the rise of the "no religion" category. It is more common in Canada today than ever before. Although being raised in a religious home does not guarantee that a child will remain religious throughout their life (as clearly demonstrated by my marginal affiliates), we know that there is a stronger chance of someone being religious in their adult life if they were raised in a religious home (see Dillon and Wink 2007). Further to this, we know (and the data from this study verifies this) that social influences play a significant role in whether a person is religious at all and, if they are religious, how religious they are. If we consider the current religious attendance patterns outlined near the beginning of this section then, with two-thirds of the Canadian population attending religious services yearly or less, and a growing percentage of people who claim to have "no religion," it is easy to see how and why one would argue that secularization at the individual level is likely to continue in Canada. This is certainly the future that I see in store for religion in Canada. Still, even if people do attend religious services, the findings that I have presented in this chapter indicate that religious motivations are not always at the center of people's religious attitudes and behaviours, once more supporting the notion that we should not accept the renaissance thesis.

Chapter 7
Religion in Canada: Myths, Realities, and Implications

Introduction

I draw this dissertation to a close by addressing four matters. First, I return to the fundamental question that this dissertation sought to address: what explains higher and lower levels of religious involvement? I respond to this question by synthesizing some of the defining similarities and differences between the active and marginal religious affiliates that I interviewed, exposing several myths and realities about religion in Canada. In doing so, I reference many rational choice and secularization ideas, ones that not only aid our understanding of active and marginal affiliates, but ones that also further our knowledge of rational choice and secularization theory themselves.

Second, if I am correct to reject the religious renaissance thesis, what are the implications, if any, for Canadian society? Should Canadians be concerned about the social and civic fabric of our society if individuals are less and less religious? This "so what" or "who cares" question ought to be relevant to the broader sociological community, and the Canadian public, as sociologists grapple with the relationship between religiosity levels and everyday social and civic responsibilities in Canada. Incidentally, more and more scholars who study religion are asking this type of question in the context of their research (see e.g., Bibby 2007; Bowen 2004; Dillon and Wink 2007; Putnam 2000; Smith and Snell 2009; Stanczak 2006; Zuckerman 2008).

Third, I offer a series of suggestions for religious leaders on how they might make use of the research findings from my interview data. Connecting academic research findings with practitioners in the field is a growing interest among social scientists (see e.g., Kirby, Greaves, and Reid 2006; Richer 1988). This idea, more generally known as "use value," is perhaps most common among conflict and feminist theorists, who hope that their research findings will lead to

social change that benefits those on the margins of society. Some leading scholars of religion (see e.g., Smith and Denton 2005; Wuthnow 2005, 2007), including Bibby (e.g., 1987, 1993, 2004), have given detailed attention in their writing to helping practitioners in the field, in this case religious leaders, to utilize the knowledge that comes from empirical discoveries about people's religious attitudes and behaviours. I agree with Richer (1988) that research should ideally benefit those who are researched rather than for the acquired knowledge to merely get lost in the ivory tower. In the case of this project, "use value" entails the idea that active and marginal affiliate realities should be communicated to the organizations they are strongly or loosely connected with (something I have begun to do—see Thiessen 2010). Hopefully the recommendations that I offer in this chapter are useful for religious leaders to better understand the cultural context that they are operating in, ultimately for the benefit of their affiliates.

Fourth and finally, I identify a series of research questions and topics that arise from this study that should be addressed in the future.

What Explains Higher and Lower Levels of Involvement?

In light of the evidence presented in this dissertation, there are two overarching explanations for how and why the active and marginal affiliates that I interviewed are different: personal experience and social influence (several other things are also at work, which I note below, but most factors can be explained by their relationship with these two variables). In making this claim, I am not suggesting that there is a universal causal relationship between these factors and an individual's propensity to be involved in a religious group. Yet, from the interviews that I conducted, there is at least a strong correlation between these things. Indeed, future qualitative data collection and analysis with larger sample sizes and multivariate statistical

analysis of large survey data sets would be instrumental to directly addressing cause and effect patterns.

I begin by discussing how and why active religious affiliates are as involved as they are. As Andrew Donnelly's story demonstrates, a fundamental difference between active and marginal affiliates is that active affiliates believe their religion should have a "master status" in their life. Recalling from chapter two, Andrew declares:

> My Christian faith isn't something which is . . . laid on top . . . it's not *part of* my life. My religious faith is an expression of what is ultimately true in my life . . . Being a committed Christian doesn't mean that you say goodbye to all the other parts of life. It is something which is part *of* life...the Christian faith is a way of looking *at* life as a whole . . . There is no conflict between the ordinary and the spiritual. There is no conflict. It is the same thing as two things.

In general, the active affiliates that I interviewed think that everything in life should be influenced by their religious beliefs and practices and as a result many are diligent in faithfully observing religious rituals such as church attendance. While many believe that attending church is a requirement of their belief system, it more importantly helps to reinforce their belief that God should be at the center of their world. They have acquired this strong religious orientation to life in their home, at their church, with their friends, and through using other religious resources such as the Bible, religious music or books. This all encompassing religious worldview leads to a host of other attitudinal and behavioural realities for active affiliates that are developed below.

One feature is that most active affiliates believe that they should submit their lives to the will of God. They do not view their life as their own, but instead as one that belongs to God, to do with what He wants. As highlighted in chapter two and four, over half of the active affiliates that I met with shared something along the lines of one individual who says, "You don't get to make your own decisions. Your life isn't your own anymore. If you're serious about it, it's not your own anymore. So you're not . . . you're not the boss." Church attendance, among other

activities such as reading the Bible or praying, is one of the religious practices that they believe is helpful for knowing how and why God is working in their life. The words people hear at church help to give them a framework for interpreting their experiences and the social world. Although many see submitting one's will to God as a significant cost of faith, they strongly value the subsequent direction and purpose that God offers them in exchange.

Part of the reason that most active affiliates in my sample believe they can submit their lives to God is because they claim to have personally experienced God's active involvement in the world. Reflective of many other active affiliates in my sample, Becky Eagleton's vignette reveals how she depended on God, and when she prayed, she believed that God answered her prayers. Personal experience validates this belief that God is dependable. When good things happen in life, active affiliates are quick to acknowledge God's hand in such events. Further, if or when bad things happen, such as when the woman referenced in chapter four lost her job, active affiliates in my sample tend to justify such events by pointing to human error or they claim that God has a bigger plan in place. Bolstering the social nature to their faith experiences, active affiliates' personal experiences of a God who is active in the world is reinforced in the words, prayers, and songs that are lifted unto God in their religious gatherings each week, which in turn reminds individuals to constantly go to God with all of their joys and pains in life.

Active affiliates like Andrew Donnelly and Becky Eagleton are also more inclined to believe in life after death, maintaining that what they believe and how they act on earth is directly connected to whether or not they will obtain life after death. Still, contrary to RCT, few identified life after death as the main reason for attending church, and it was clear in their responses that attending church is not necessarily interpreted as a required activity that leads to life after death. As a reminder, and reflective of other active affiliates in my sample, a thirty year-old speaks about what is required to obtain life after death, saying, "It's God's grace . . . I think if you . . .

just the willingness to hand yourself over and to ask for forgiveness. And I really believe that it's . . . God's grace. We don't earn our way. It's given to us . . . I don't think you need to pray fifty times a day or that everybody has to go to church. I think that church is . . . a commandment that I'm able to celebrate, but I don't know that it would stop anybody . . . from going to heaven." Instead, active affiliates (particularly those who were not raised in a religious family, like Cam Bender) believe that church attendance is necessary in order to learn, from a trained specialist, how God wants followers to live their lives so that they can please Him, towards obtaining life after death.

The social component to active affiliates' faith binds all of these things together. Most active affiliates are surrounded by individuals, either in their church, another church, or in their family, who share similar beliefs and practices. Regularly gathering with others who are like-minded helps to remind them of what they believe, how they should act, and how they should interpret their daily existence. Reflective of the data presented in chapter two and four, one gentleman expresses that he regularly attends religious services because he enjoys "the community, the camaraderie . . . the group of people . . . group of like-minded people." Another female says that she attends because "you can meet people who relate with you or who you can help grow together in your faith or just have moral support with regarding your faith . . . even just to have someone who . . . you know is there for you and will pray for you if you're going through a tough time." As we saw in chapter four, this sense of community is one of the primary rewards that active affiliates attach to regular church attendance. As a result, the social component to their faith helps to provide individuals with stability and certainty in a chaotic and fragmented world.

In contrast to active affiliates, one of the defining features of marginal affiliates is that they believe that religion is primarily an individual phenomenon. As Emerson Cairns, Emily Foster, and Debbie Fisher's vignettes reveal, marginal affiliates largely reject external authorities

telling them what to believe or how to behave, and they value their ability to pick and choose which religious beliefs and practices they will adopt. As I indicated in chapter six, individualism can be attributed to a combination of societal and parental values. In Canada, individualism is a consequence of broader societal shifts that include pluralism, diversity, liberalism, and relativism. Canadians, especially parents, are shaped by these social realities to the point that many parents opt not to force their children to attend religious services or teach them the "absolutes" of their religious system. Active affiliates are not exempt from the forces of individualism, as I demonstrated in Cam Barker's story in chapter two. Indicative of some active affiliates, Cam states, "I have my own beliefs and . . . things that I hold dear and that I sort of know in my heart . . . I think that that's why . . . I found the church that I did. Because it . . . embraced the things that I . . . believed in. And they're teaching me more about what I wanted to know." In other words, some active affiliates claim authority over their religious beliefs and practices rather than deferring authority to their church tradition or religious leader, associating only with congregations that conform to the things that the individual already holds as true (things that they were socialized to believe at a younger age). However, active and marginal affiliates are distinguishable by the social ties that they have. Marginal affiliates are surrounded by others who do not attend religious services regularly, which from the literature cited in this dissertation, often results in a social setting that values and embraces individualism in the area of faith. The opposite is true for active affiliates. From my data, it is difficult to definitively determine whether the people's social-connectedness causes them to think in individualist directions, or whether their presuppositions about religion and the world draw them to others who reinforce those beliefs. I suspect that both are probably occurring, and further research with larger sample sizes and even quantitative multivariate analysis would be an asset. At the very least it seems clear that there is

some type of correlation at play between one's social ties and their approach to religious beliefs and practices.

Interpersonal and intra-organizational tension also contributed to marginal affiliates adopting an individualist approach to religion. As we saw with Debbie Fisher's experience with the Roman Catholic Church when she got married, marginal affiliates were more likely to have negative experiences with others in the church or to witness either first-hand or at a distance, that Christians caused immense destruction in others' lives. In chapter four I provided several examples of how marginal affiliates were treated poorly by fellow congregants or religious leaders. Characteristic of many other marginal affiliates that I interviewed, one woman summarizes this point by saying, "I think there's also the scandals in the church—not just the Catholic Church, but just the scandals that we see—that really put people off . . . that they can't really trust the people in charge." These experiences and perceptions played a critical role in some marginal affiliates' decision to turn their back on regular church involvement, with many currently holding a strong negative perception towards Christians. While active affiliates are aware that bad things happen at the hands of Christians, their experiences have been much more positive than marginal affiliates. Without question, personal experience does cause some people to become more involved in a religious organization, while for others it leads to reduced involvement.

Active and marginal affiliates are also different in the rewards that they attach to their church involvement. Active affiliates like Andrew Donnelly, Becky Eagleton, and Cam Bender (among many other active affiliates in my sample) attend religious services primarily to be part of a like-minded community, to receive meaning, purpose, and direction in life, and to learn from a trained specialist. Marginal affiliates like Emerson Cairns, Emily Foster, and Debbie Fisher (and others in this study) mainly attend out of respect for tradition or family, or to connect with God in

a sacred space. When it comes to these rewards, one of the worthwhile contributions of this study, as discussed in chapter six, is that less than half of the marginal affiliates consistently associate any religious significance with the religious services that they attend. This finding challenges Bibby's repeated notion that we should hold out optimism that marginal affiliates are connecting with God when they attend religious services or that they supposedly desire to be more involved in the future. The fact that marginal affiliates like Emily Foster say that they are too busy to attend church is an indicator that the rewards offered at church are not enough to convince them to attend more regularly. Mindful that active affiliates are just as busy, one explanation for the difference in attendance patterns could be linked to marginal affiliates' conceptions of life after death, whereby one only needs to be a good and moral person, not someone who is caught up with correct doctrine or proper religious practice. Even when considering that marginal affiliates attend when they do because of tradition, family, and sacred space, clearly even these factors do not warrant a high enough reward to attend more regularly. These are some of the reasons for why I reject supply-side explanations of religious behaviour.

One of the other main reasons why I reject supply-side theory has to do with marginal affiliates' social ties. We already know that they have fewer social ties with people who attend religious services regularly, which is partially a result of their parents' decision to give them the option to attend during their teen years. Yet an even more critical factor that explains involvement at church is that some marginal affiliates like Debbie Fisher are fearful to pursue more involvement because they believe that those close to them will ostracize them in return. The cost of losing these social ties is simply too great when compared with the perceived rewards of religious involvement. In this, along with other areas which were discussed, including that people are too busy, individualism, and individuals who question their faith, religious groups have very little control over attendance patterns. As a result, I am less optimistic than Bibby that we are

about to witness a religious resurgence, and instead, based on the recent empirical findings in Canada that were documented in the last chapter, we should expect to see ongoing secularization at the individual level in Canada.

Religion and Civic Engagement in Canada

Hall, Lasby, Ayer, and Gibbons (2009: 22, 41) demonstrate that if children learn at a young age to volunteer and give money to charitable organizations, then they are more likely to do so as adults (also see Dillon and Wink 2007; Hodgkinson and Weitzman 1996; Wilson and Janoski 1995). Further, children who were active in their religious organization when growing up tend to give more often and in greater amounts when they are adults, compared to any other social setting where children are taught to volunteer and donate money (Hall, Lasby, Ayer, and Gibbons 2009: 22). The same is true in the realm of volunteering (p.41). Considering that fewer Canadian teens are raised in religious homes, adopt basic religious beliefs, or are involved in a religious organization, should we be concerned about the potential impact this might have on Canada's civic fabric in the future? If I am correct that we should not expect many marginal affiliates to eventually become active affiliates, combined with the reality of a growing "no religion" category, how might this influence civic engagement in Canada? Although my data does not help us to answer these questions directly, there are several studies that do.

In his book *Christians in a Secular World: The Canadian Experience* (2004), Kurt Bowen documents that those who attend religious services more regularly are more satisfied with life, have more close relationships, place more importance on relationships with family and neighbours, and demonstrate higher levels of honesty, ethical behaviour, and general concern for the welfare of others. Bibby's (2007, 2009) comparison of teens who are theists versus atheists reveals that theists score higher in the level of importance that they give to values such as trust,

honesty, concern for others, politeness, working hard, and patience. Further, they are less likely to have been in trouble with the police and they show more desire to be involved in the community in the future. Zuzanek, Mannell, and Hilbrecht's (2008) examination of teenagers in Canada also shows positive correlations between teens' religious involvements and their overall well-being, measured, for example, by higher levels of personal happiness, stronger ties with family members, greater concern with doing well at school, and lower levels of anxiety or feelings of boredom and loneliness.

Beyond the personal benefits of religious involvement, research in Canada also shows that there are social benefits. Kurt Bowen (2004) suggests that religious involvement is directly linked to social capital, volunteering and charitable giving, political engagement, and pro-social behaviours such as honesty and compassion. Bowen's findings are supported in many, and more recent, research findings. When it comes to donating money to charitable organizations, Hall, Lasby, Ayer, and Gibbons (2009: 20) show that 49% of weekly attenders are in the "top donor" category[1] compared with only 15% of those who do not attend weekly (also see Reed and Selbee 2001). Ninety-four percent of weekly attenders made donations in 2007, compared to 82% of non-weekly attenders, and weekly attenders donated an average of $1,038 annually versus $295 for those who do not attend weekly (p.23). Among Canadians who volunteer their time, 66% of weekly attenders volunteered somewhere in 2007, compared with 43% of non-weekly attenders, and weekly attenders volunteered nearly twice as many hours than non-weekly attenders (p.43). With 25% of volunteers contributing almost 80% of the total volunteer hours (p.36), 23% of weekly attenders are in the "top volunteer" category compared to 9% of non-weekly attenders (p.41). These findings are all supported in other studies by Berger (2006), Campbell and Yonish

[1] The "top donor" category refers to the 25% of Canadians who account for 82% of all donated dollars.

(2003), Nemeth and Luidens (2003), Piché (1999), Putnam (2000: 117), Smidt, Green, Guth, and Kellstedt (2003), and Wuthnow (2004, 2007).

It is true that many regular church attenders give much of their time and money to their religious organization (see Campbell and Yonish 2003; Hall, Lasby, and Gibbons 2009: 24; Nemeth and Luidens 2003), which begs the question: does their charitable work actually benefit the broader society? One response to this question is that regular attenders give more money and time to secular initiatives than non-religious individuals (Hall, Lasby, Ayer, and Gibbons 2009: 24). Bowen's (2004: 157) research in Canada shows that 35% of those who attend weekly volunteered in a secular agency in 1997 versus 25% of the non-religious. As several scholars note, those who regularly attend religious services share a theological conviction (and are reminded each week at church) to make a positive impact on society, and they are given opportunities through their church to do so (see Berger 2006; Bowen 2004; Cnaan, Boddie, and Yancy 2003; Harris 2003; Smidt 2003; Wuthnow 2004).

Another response is that religious organizations offer services that benefit Canadian society, thus giving time and money to one's church does help those outside one's congregation. For example, religious organizations provide social services to fill the gap where state financial or human resources do not (Cnaan, Boddie, and Yancey 2003). Bowen (2004) points out that despite religious organizations spending large sums of money on buildings and facilities, religious properties actually serve outsiders' needs (e.g., shelter for the homeless or Boy Scouts and Alcoholics Anonymous groups).[2] Expenditures on clergy also save governments money in areas of counselling. At an individual level, religious group members develop practical skills

[2] While churches may serve the needs of the community, Omar McRoberts' (2003) study of church and community in a black urban neighbourhood in the United States offers mixed results. Some churches intentionally seek to distance themselves from the community, on theological grounds, while others are more intentional to bridge the divide, including offering their space as a service to the community. The perception of those in the immediate community of different churches are also mixed, with some seeing the church as an asset to the community while others see it as a place that is closed the entire week other than for worship services.

such as letter writing, planning and chairing meetings, giving presentations, and teamwork that are transferrable into the workplace and overall civic participation (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).[3] These skills are especially helpful for the disenfranchised that are looking to establish themselves in the economic sector.

In his comments at the 2009 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion conference in Denver, Colorado Robert Putnam summarized one of the major findings from his forthcoming book *American Grace: How Religion is Reshaping our Civic and Political Lives* (2010): "religious people are just nicer." Although not arguing that people must be religious in order to improve the civic and political landscape, he does interpret religion as a good thing for society.

Not everyone agrees that religion is necessary for strong civic engagement though. In his book *Society without God* (2008), Phil Zuckerman examines Denmark and Sweden, two of the world's least religious nations and yet two of the happiest and most content countries in the world. Far less than 50% of Swedes or Danes believe in God, believe that religion is important to their life, believe in life after death, or attend religious services, among several other indicators of religiosity (p.24-25). Yet, when looking at the "Human Development Index," which is based on having a long and healthy life (e.g., life expectancy), high levels of knowledge (e.g., literacy and school enrolment rates), and a decent standard of living (e.g., GDP per capita), Sweden and Denmark rank in the top twenty in the world, surrounded by several other non-religious nations such as Norway, Britain, and the Netherlands (p.26). Other indicators of societal health such as the "Quality of Life Index" or low crime rates or suicide also position Sweden and Denmark, alongside other irreligious societies, among the world's leaders. Zuckerman concludes that "it is not the most religious nations in our world today, but rather the most secular, that have been able

[3] Life skills, such as communication skills or organizational skills, are also learned in non-religious volunteer settings (Hall, Lasby, Ayer, and Gibbons 2009: 49).

to create the most civil, just, safe, equitable, humane, and prosperous societies" (2008: 30). He also states that he is "not arguing that the admirably high level of societal health in Scandinavia is directly *caused* by the low levels of religiosity. Although one could certainly make just such a case . . . I simply wish to soberly counter the widely touted assertion that without religion, society is doomed" (Zuckerman 2008: 18).

In addition to Zuckerman's observations, we know that religious individuals and groups are also the source of intense conflict and division in the world. At the macro-level, staunch atheists like Dawkins (2006), Harris (2006), and Hitchens (2007) draw our attention to the Middle Ages which were riddled with religious conflict, the ongoing religious tensions in the Middle East, and the current war on terror that is steeped in religious ideologies. In a different way, and at the individual level, marginal affiliate experiences of interpersonal or intra-organizational tension, and Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) account of Christians as hypocritical, anti-homosexual, sheltered, overly political, judgmental, and insincere also validate the destructive elements of religion for society. Piché (1999) shows that highly religious Canadians, particularly conservative Christians, are the least tolerant of homosexuals acquiring equal rights, and they are the most likely to challenge the belief that all religions are equally good and true. Robert Wuthnow highlights similar things in *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (2005), and, in his presentation at the 2009 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion conference, Putnam also commented, based on findings in his book *American Grace: How Religions Divides and Unites Us* (2010), that religious individuals are extremely intolerant of people who are different than themselves.

Returning to the original question of whether we should be concerned about civic engagement in Canada if we continue to see secularization at the individual level, there are some who suggest that the intersection of church involvement with social capital is paramount for civic

engagement. In referencing Wuthnow (1994), Coleman (2003: 37) states that "even intense, purely personal spirituality that is cut off from churches or some ongoing groups has almost no predictive value for civic engagement or social activism." Nemeth and Luidens echo this idea and claim that "the social capital produced by the relations found in churches and synagogues is evident only among the most frequent attenders. Simply being a member or being an infrequent attender, it appears, does little to increase one's financial support for nonreligious charities" (2003: 114-115).

To the contrary, Siobhan Chandler summarizes the sentiments of many who argue that just because individuals practice their religion privately, or are involved in New Age forms of spirituality, does not mean that they are, by default, selfish or non-contributing members to society:

> Autonomy and self-expression are not synonyms for negative freedom. By the same measure, the autonomous and self-expressive nature of contemporary 'New Age' does not make it *de facto* a selfish religion, even if it is a religion of the self. Sweeping generalizations condemning a massive cohort of post-materialist seekers as narcissists is untenable. That some spiritual but religiously unaffiliated individuals are selfish is inevitable, but so are many of the religiously affiliated. Not all individuals are equally benevolent and moral, no matter what their religious beliefs (2008: 13).

For instance, in a study of New Age students, a group of people who are typically identified to be more individualistic than non-New Age followers, Franz Hollinger (2004) shows that New Agers have higher levels of political activism, involvement in political party activities, and charitable donations when compared with non-New Agers (also see Dillon and Wink 2007; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Stanczak 2006).

I do not deny the points made by proponents of this last position. Indeed, those who do not attend religious services regularly can and do contribute in positive ways to society. Zuckerman's (2008) findings in Scandinavia are a stark reminder of societal health in the absence of religious belief and practice. However, I think it is hard to deny the mounting evidence for the

societal benefits that come with regular church attendance, especially when measured by charitable giving and volunteerism. I agree with researchers like Bowen (2004) and Putnam (2000) who maintain that religion is an important variable for civic engagement. By saying this, I am not suggesting that if individual secularization continues that Canada is heading for a state of moral deprivation or that Canadians will become apathetic to others' needs, as we are a world leader in volunteerism (Curtis, Grabb, and Baer 1992; Curtis, Baer, and Grabb 2001), despite our relatively low levels of religiosity.[4] Still, if my prognosis of the future of religion in Canada is correct, then we may also witness declining levels of civic engagement. In no way am I saying that religion is necessary for social and civic engagement, but based on the evidence at hand, it helps.

Implications for Churches

I am sympathetic to religious groups and their plight. In what follows, I offer six practical suggestions for religious leaders, on how they can use the information presented in this dissertation. I realize that I have a difficult task to offer reasons for optimism because my main conclusion is that there is very little that churches can do to draw in affiliates who are not currently involved regularly; demand-side explanations are more appropriate for understanding religious behaviour, in my estimation. Still, interpersonal and intra-organizational tension is a significant area where religious groups do have control, and I direct my comments in this section to this topic, drawing in large part on Kinnaman and Lyons' (2007) work. I do not deny the challenging road ahead for religious organizations, particularly in Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant contexts. I do not think there is a universal or quick-fix solution, as remedies must be contextualized and interpreted relative to the local congregational settings across the country.

[4] Volunteerism in Canada can, in part, be attributed to an underlying humanitarian concern among Canadians for those in need.

Yet, if there is a chance for religious organizations to survive and thrive, I think the following suggestions give churches the best chance.

Recently I was asked by some national denominational church leaders in Canada what the greatest challenge is for churches in Canada today. I responded by saying that it is the lack of demand for the things that religious groups offer. Many Canadians, like Emerson Cairns, are content with their fragmented consumption of religion. As Bibby rightly suggested in 1987 (p.134-135), it is difficult to convince a person to eat five meals a day when they are content with three. As I think the evidence in this dissertation suggests, there are many more powerful factors outside of the control of religious groups that explain why marginal affiliates are not more involved and why they are not likely to become more involved in the future. Therefore, the first thing that I would say to religious groups is that it is not necessarily your fault that more people are not involved in your congregation; do not beat yourselves up for faulty supply, when really demand is the critical problem.

These things said, I do not dismiss the fact that religious groups need to offer a great religious product. I agree with Bibby (2004) that lively music, relevant preaching, strategic program offerings, and a spirit of excellence need to pervade religious groups if they are to have much hope in Canada. Research by Miller (1997) documents the effectiveness of such initiatives, especially in evangelical Protestant settings. However, I am equally quick to say that, for the most part, offering religion that is "done well" enables religious groups to keep their own, and possibly attract the occasional outsider; it is not likely to many marginal affiliates into active affiliates.

The second noticeable challenge that religious groups face is the negative public perception of Christians held by many Canadians. The public is justifiably suspicious of Christians, given the past and present sexual and financial scandals, the reactionary influence of

the Christian Right in the United States (that some fear characterizes evangelicals in Canada), and the general belief, often based on personal experience, that Christians are judgmental and hypocritical (recall the findings in chapters two, four, and six). Whether or not Christians and individual congregations reflect these qualities (and some do) is irrelevant, so long as the general public believes these things to be true. The challenge for religious groups is to change people's perceptions as well the reality. To their credit, some individuals and their congregations are doing everything they can to distance themselves from the negative perceptions about the church (e.g., speaking out against religious groups that make a concerted effort to condemn homosexuals, challenging groups that limit women's involvement in church leadership, or chastising televangelists who deceive people in order to make a great profit). I highlight the following actively involved Roman Catholic female that I interviewed to illustrate my point:

> The other thing is they're really, really strong anti-abortionists . . . but you know *why*? Because it's a sin . . . as opposed to, 'There's a woman in trouble. The only reason she's thinking of abortion is because her life is so miserable or she's worried about things that, maybe, with some help, she could get past.' So . . . I'm anti-abortion, too, but the thing is to first look at the mother. *Why* is she thinking that, and what can you do to support her. So, really, what I always hear from their perspective is, 'It's a sin to kill the unborn child' . . . that's true. But can you please look at the one who's doing the killing first? Like, *that's* the person they need to help. I get to say that because . . . and I don't . . . I don't know those people's lives. I don't know if they're doing it. I mean it's the Catholic Church type people. I don't know what they're doing, but I . . . believe you cannot make a statement about anything unless you have acted on it. So I had . . . when I had free space at my house, which I did, called Birth Right, and said, 'I have a room. Do you have a mom, or anybody who needs a place to stay?' So, encouraging someone who . . . now the Birth Right people are . . . like, counselling women out of abortions, but they need to support them in some other way. So I thought, 'Okay, I can do that.' So they did all the counselling, and I got this girl to stay with me. So I did it . . . I don't believe you can go along, just feeling and spouting all these things unless you are prepared and have taken action.

I would suggest that more responses like this are necessary for changing people's perceptions of Christianity, but the negative social perception is so deep that they have much work to do. The

question becomes, what can religious groups do to change the social perception towards Christians?

One of the criticisms levelled at church members is that they are too inward-looking and that they condemn and ostracize outsiders, criticisms supported by several of the marginal affiliate quotations in this dissertation. The third statement that I would make to religious leaders then, is to look outward in your ministry and to make this a central focus of your church identity. Dave Gibbons, in his book *The Monkey and the Fish* (2009), builds on sociologists' work on "third culture." This is the culture of an individual who is conversant in two different ways of life and understands how to bridge the gap between those worlds, forming a third hybrid culture in the process. The challenge for religious groups is to become conversant in their own religious culture *and* the larger Canadian culture, and then develop a bridge between the two. How can religious groups direct ministry efforts to outsiders? Perhaps it is by offering each month free oil changes to single mothers. Maybe there are practical ways of helping immigrants adjust to life in Canada. Maybe religious groups can offer activities for kids and families in the neighbourhoods, particularly to help with "latchkey" children who spend hours each day on their own, while both of their parents work. Perhaps religious groups can shovel snow and do yard work for seniors. Possible ideas are limitless, but if religious groups want to change the negative social perceptions of them, there is no denying that they need to invest more of their time engaging outsiders. Their assistance to those outside their congregation needs to be real, personal, and repeated, to have any significant impact on people's lives. Again, Bibby is correct to stress that attention to the supply of religion is important to keep insiders around. A group cannot effectively minister to outsiders if it does not properly care for insiders. Yet, it appears that churches too often neglect outsiders, which poses a problem for religious groups that wish to thrive in the twenty-first century and beyond.

A related point that Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) make is that Christians are criticized for only befriending non-believers with the hope of converting them. If Christians realize that others are not interested in being converted, they tend to abandon them in hopes of finding other "fresh blood." When focusing ministry efforts on outsiders, religious groups must pay careful attention to loving people without strings attached, for if they do not, they risk providing further (and justified) ammunition for those who are critical of Christians.

A fourth comment to religious groups concerns the centrality of relationships and social ties. The fact that breakdowns in interpersonal relationships contributed to many marginal affiliates leaving behind involvement in their church suggests that religious groups need to do a better job in how they relate to people. This applies to religious leaders and lay people alike. Religious leaders need to be conscious of how they interact with lay members, being approachable on issues that matter to congregants and mindful of the ways they deal with conflict in their church. The way that people approach issues can be as important as the content of the conflict itself. Religious leaders also need to try to instil a culture of healthy and caring interactions between and among leaders and members. I am sure that many religious leaders already seek to pass on these values, but individuals in the congregation still offend others and are poor representatives of the Christian message. Religious groups cannot be held responsible for such individuals. Yet as we know, it only takes one bad experience with one individual to color a person's perception of all churches or religious organizations. Therefore, religious leaders and lay people must be extra careful to treat people well in all circumstances and to encourage those they influence to do the same.

In addition to interpersonal relationships with insiders, religious groups should encourage members to build relationships with outsiders. We know from Stark and Bainbridge's (1985) work, for example, that religious converts typically arise from social networks that people have

with current members of a religious group. Not only could relationships with outsiders help some groups possibly grow through converts, as evangelical Protestants and sectarian groups are better known for, but individuals will have the opportunity to change others' perceptions of Christianity, one person at a time. As individuals model love, compassion, grace, and mercy, others' negative perceptions of Christians as exclusive, judgmental, or hypocritical may gradually give way to new perceptions. Walking alongside others, in their high and low moments, demonstrates a commitment to long-term relationships, which we know many Canadians desire (see Bibby 2002, 2006, 2009).

Fifth, Gibbons (2009) indicates that a focus on social justice is a logical way to engage outsiders, particularly young people who are interested in grassroots movements for social change. It is hard to argue against the good things that religious groups can and do for society, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The trouble is, religious groups are more often known for the bad things they do, making the task of emphasizing social justice initiatives that much more important. What are religious groups doing to make a difference in the world and how are these things central to their identity and message to the outside world? In my sample, active affiliates in the United Church of Canada who had no religious upbringing were drawn to the United Church's social justice initiatives for the marginalized in society. This fact is a testament to what I am getting at. Religious groups, if they want to keep and attract people, need to downplay their hostile approach to society, and emphasize the bridges that can be built with other Canadians.[5]

[5] I realize the complexity of this statement, for religious leaders. By its very nature, religion is based on distinctive beliefs and practices, believed by many to come from an unchangeable god. I am not suggesting that religious groups should change their beliefs per se, since boundaries are essential for group identity and commitment, but maybe some distinctive beliefs do not need to be the focal point of the group's message. The religious group should ask: what is core to our message? Are anti-homosexual beliefs a fundamental belief to the group? What about opposition to women in leadership? Must groups build a platform based on distinctions between "us" and "them"? True, all social groups have boundaries and rules for who belongs and who does not. Yet, I think the evidence is clear that emphasizing an exclusive approach is not working well for religious groups in Canada, and thus I think groups need to reevaluate what their core message is and how they will communicate that message to Canadians.

This can be achieved through religious organizations that, as a group, seek to make a positive impact in the world, as well as through individuals in their relationships with outsiders. How are religious groups helping the less fortunate in society? What are religious groups doing for the oppressed? Are religious groups taking action on the environment? Would people in neighbouring communities notice if churches left their vicinity? These are the questions that religious groups should ask if they want to be attentive to the social needs of those around, and wish to change social perceptions and lessen the gap between "insiders" and "outsiders."

Finally, ongoing attention needs to be given to religious socialization. We know that what children learn in the home plays a significant role in whether or not the child will adhere to those beliefs and practices later in life. Although churches cannot control how or if parents reinforce religious teachings in the home or even if parents bring their children to church, groups can and should equip parents with the tools to do so. Leaders may wish to remind parents of the religious "master status" framework, which does not mean pawning their children off to the church to socialize their children, but to seek an integrated approach between the church's efforts and their own initiatives in the home. Perhaps this reinforcement comes through sermons, maybe it is in specific courses designed to equip parents to effectively raise their children with religious values in contemporary culture, or maybe it is through family events that bring parents and children together for fun or specific religious purposes. Regardless, a concerted effort between parents and churches is required, particularly since fewer Canadian teens claim to identify with a religion.

Religious groups should also give ongoing attention to children and teens. One of the reasons that evangelical Protestants are more successful in retaining their own is because they offer children and youth programs that are relevant, experiential, and meaningful. Providing space for children and teens to explore their faith, to ask questions, or to challenge religious beliefs in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere is paramount, otherwise teens will leave and explore

their questions in non-religious settings, as an Anglican gentlemen who was quoted in chapter six did:

> I think that at that age, when you're young like that in the world, you tend to rebel a bit against it . . . And you question religious doctrine. You question why this is like that . . . and I probably went through a lot of questioning . . . just like normal kids do when they're that age . . . you scratch your head. If you think a little bit, you think, this doesn't seem right . . . this is stupid. And all in the name of bloody religion. You know? So I went through a lot of that. Yes, yes. Yeah, there was a lot of questioning . . . I didn't find myself going to church on a regular habit.

The centrality of relationships to teens' lives should also intersect well with church objectives. Church leaders should be encouraged to foster a space for teens to establish meaningful relationships, with leaders as mentors as well as friends and peers, or to bring friends into religious fellowship. Such relationships were essential for Becky Eagleton and Cam Bender, allowing them to pursue greater involvement in their congregations. Understandably, religious supply is critical when it comes to teens. Lively music, relevant teaching and mentoring, and honest and personable exchanges will go a long way to keep or attract teenagers.

In total, I cannot argue with Bibby and others who suggest that religion needs to be supplied well. Beyond the natural and logical suggestions relative to music, preaching, or programming however, the above suggestions tap into other elements of religious supply that may influence how people perceive the Christian community, in turn impacting their potential level of involvement in a church. For the time being, I remain sceptical that mass changes to religious supply will yield a religious renaissance in the way that Bibby forecasted, but intentional efforts in the areas noted here may contribute to religious groups' stability and possible growth in Canada in the future.

Future Research

In this project I investigated questions that sorely needed to be asked, especially relative to marginal affiliates, that survey data to date have not adequately addressed. Still, as beneficial as the findings in this study may be for our sociological understanding of religion (in Canada), one of the drawbacks of a study like this is that it is restricted by the limitations of those theories and studies that it seeks to test. One of those limitations concerns the ways in which we define and measure religion. As Greil and Bromley (2003) note, religion is not universally understood to mean the same thing, nor can it necessarily be studied objectively and neutrally from the "outside." Instead, "religion" is a socially constructed term that is historically situated and defined, often based on the interests of those in power (e.g., law makers). They state that "religion is a term that social actors have used in certain societies and at certain times to understand and describe an important aspect of their experience" (Greil and Bromley 2003: 5). Talal Asad, an anthropologist, similarly argues that "there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes" (1993: 29).

When dealing with Rational Choice Theory, secularization theory, or Bibby's assessment of religion in Canada, we cannot forget that ideas of individual actors choosing to be religious or measuring religiosity based on church attendance or belief in God are social constructions that reflect specific historical realities. In truth, these notions of religion and religiosity are heavily influenced by Protestant and European ideas about religion (Asad 1993). For example, the Enlightenment pursuit of a less religious society contributed to our modern day distinction between religion and society (and politics and education, for example) where individuals voluntarily choose to be religious (an idea reinforced with the Protestant Reformation). European colonization also influenced more sophisticated conceptualizations of religion as different beliefs

were discovered beyond European soil, yielding definitions of religion among academics in particular that are grounded in belief, belonging, and practice. The point of this discussion is to caution us against taking a narrow and ethnocentric view of religion, both in how we define and measure it. Some of the limitations in this regard have been highlighted in the dissertation (e.g., are people actually as free to choose their religion as rational choice theorists assume or is church attendance in and of itself a good measure of religiosity?), and future research that intersects with Rational Choice Theory or secularization theory should pursue these matters further.

Despite these definitional and measurement shortcomings, there are several areas of research that could and should be pursued in light of the findings in this dissertation. A logical next step would be to conduct interviews with active and marginal affiliates across Canada, asking similar questions to the ones posed in this study. A national initiative would help to generate a larger sample size, one that would permit for regional, age, and denominational comparisons. This type of study would also test the reliability and validity of the findings discovered in this project. Do the conclusions and hypotheses advanced here, based on forty-two interviews, hold in a larger sample across Canada?

In this dissertation I tested several taken for granted propositions of Rational Choice Theory, but much more needs to be done. Additional research is needed into how people compare religious rewards and costs, whether people believe in life after death (and if they do, the extent of their desire for the afterlife and what they think is required to obtain life after death), and the relationship between one's confidence in religious explanations and the degree to which their religious beliefs and practices are informed by their association with others in their religious group. Further inquiry with a larger sample size would test the hypotheses that emerged from this dissertation, that people do not necessarily make religious decisions based on a comparison of rewards and costs (especially costs), that life after death is not the most desirable reward that

people seek (and that religious organizations have little control over one's pursuit of the afterlife), and that one's confidence in religious explanations is not necessarily connected to the social ties and influences from their religious group.

Further examination of the role of tradition, family pressure, and sacred space for marginal affiliates would also be worthwhile. Theoretical explanations for why these things are important for marginal affiliates started this conversation, but now people need to be asked directly about these features of their religious life. What are people afraid of if they stop attending church for religious holidays and rites of passage? How and why are tradition, family, and sacred space so important to them, and what does this tell us about self-identity and self-concept in contemporary society? Focused efforts in these directions would, perhaps, provide the most illuminating empirical data.

With the dramatic rise in those who claim to have "no religion" in Canada, an investigation into how and why people choose this categorization would be valuable. An obvious area of research would look at religious transmission between generations, tracking families over a longitudinal period. Are there certain stages of life or other factors that contribute to people's religious and spiritual development, particularly among those who choose to decrease their level of belief in God or level of participation in a religious organization? It is difficult to know for sure, but perhaps the marginal affiliate category, of people with a foot in both the religious and secular door, will become a thing of the past as people are either "in" or "out."[6] The trouble is that we know very little about the subject.

Future research could also look into those who turn their back on religious organizations but who claim that their faith has a "master status" in their life. Books such as *A Churchless*

[6] A decrease in the number of marginal affiliates could also take place as more Canadians choose to remain single or cohabitate, instead of getting married (implying that fewer will turn to the church for weddings because fewer are getting married) (McDaniel and Tepperman 2007).

Faith (Jamieson 2002) or *Revolution* (Barna 2005) highlight those who were once heavily involved in church organizations, often in leadership positions, who have left the church, but not their faith. They are different from the marginal affiliates in this study because religion remains highly important to them, but they are similar to marginal affiliates in their level of church involvement.[7] Some may turn to alternative forms of religious life, such as house churches,[8] while others may rely on Christian friends to journey through life with, but without any formal commitment to gather on a regular basis. Whether or not these individuals currently claim to have, or will claim to have "no religion" is difficult to tell, but it is a growing group that could yield valuable information about contemporary religious life.

In total, pursuing research in any or all of these areas will extend our knowledge of the similarities and differences between active and marginal affiliates and our ability to further evaluate the renaissance of religion and secularization theses. Combined, such initiatives will advance the strong social scientific legacy that Bibby has established in the sociology of religion in Canada. Hopefully this dissertation has contributed, in a small way, to that larger conversation about religion in Canada.

[7] George Barna (2005: 13) estimates that there are over 20 million Americans who fit this description.
[8] House churches are another area of inquiry where very little, if any, empirical data is known (see e.g., Zdero 2007). Empirical research on church plants is also lacking. Both of these areas are probably understudied because of their size and loose affiliation with more formal religious organizations (e.g., denominations), thus they are difficult to locate in order to study. Research into these areas, however, might shed light on another pocket of religiosity in Canada where nothing is currently known.

Bibliography

Adams, Michael. 2006. *Sex in the Snow: The Surprising Revolution in Canadian Social Values.* Toronto, ON: Penguin.

Albanese, Catherine. 2007. *America: Religions and Religion. 4th Edition.* Belmont, CA: Thomson.

Altheide, D. L. and J.M. Johnson. 1998. "Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity in Qualitative Research." Pp. 283-312 in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Methods,* edited by N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln. London, UK: Sage.

Ammerman, Nancy. 1997. "Religious Choice and Religious Vitality: The Market and Beyond." Pp.119-132 in *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, edited by Lawrence Young. New York, NY: Routledge.

Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam.* Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press.

Augé, Marc. 1995. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity.* London, UK: Verso.

Aurini, Janice and Linda Quirke. 2009. "Does Competition Encourage Strategic Action in the Private Education Sector?" (Unpublished Manuscript).

Barker, Eileen. 1984. *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice.* Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Barna, George. 2005. *Revolution.* Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Baum, Gregory. 2000. "Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec." Pp.149-165 in *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity: Canada Between Europe and America,* edited by David Lyon and Marguerite Van Die. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Bebbington, D.W. 1989. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s.* London, UK: Unwin Hyman.

Becker, Gary. 1976. *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bell, Rob. 2005. *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

------. 2008. *Jesus Wants to Save Christians: A Manifesto for the Church in Exile.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Berger, Ida. 2006. "The Influence of Philanthropy in Canada." *Voluntus* 17: 115-132.

Berger, Peter. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of Sociological Theory of Religion.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company.

------. 1979. *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company.

------. 1998. "Protestantism and the Quest for Certainty." *The Christian Century* 115 (23): 782-796.

Berger, Peter, ed. 1999. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Berger, Peter, Grace Davie and Effie Fokas. 2008. *Religious America, Secular Europe?: A Theme and Variation.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Berton, Pierre. 1965. *The Comfortable Pew: A Critical Look at the Church in the New Age.* Toronto, ON: The Canadian Publishers.

Best, Marion and Friends. 1994. *Will Our Church Disappear: Strategies for the Renewal of the United Church of Canada.* Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books.

Beyer, Peter. 1994. *Religion and Globalization.* London, UK: Sage.

------. 1999. "Secularization from the Perspective of Globalization: A Response to Dobbelaere." *Sociology of Religion* 60 (3): 289-301.

Bibby, Reginald. 1987. *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited.

------. 1993. *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited.

------. 2002. *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited.

------. 2004. *Restless Churches: How Canada's Churches can Contribute to the Emerging Religious Renaissance.* Ottawa, ON: Wood Lake Books.

------. 2006. *The Boomer Factor: What Canada's Most Famous Generation is Leaving Behind*. Toronto, ON: Bastian Books.

------. 2007. "Good Without God, But Better With God?" Retrieved October 16, 2007 (http://www.reginaldbibby.com/images/PC_10_BETTER_WITH_GOD_OCT0807.pdf).

--------. 2008. "The Perils of Pioneering and Prophecy: A Response to Thiessen and Dawson." *Studies in Religion* 37 (3-4): 417-425.

Bibby, Reginald, Sarah Russell and Ron Rolheiser. 2009. *The Emerging Millennials: How Canada's Newest Generation Is Responding to Change & Choice.* Lethbridge, AB: Project Canada Books.

Blau, Peter. 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life.* New York, NY: Wiley.

Bowen, Kurt. 2004. *Christians in a Secular World: The Canadian Experience.* Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Brady, H.E., S. Verba and K. Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 89: 271-294.

Breton, Raymond. 1964. "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants." *American Journal of Sociology* 70: 193-205.

Brewer, Stephanie, James Jozefowicz and Robert Stonebraker. 2006. "Religious Free Riders: The Impact of Market Share." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45 (3): 389-396.

Bruce, Steve. 1999. *Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

------. 2002. *God is Dead: Secularization in the West*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Brueggemann, Walter. 1977. *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith.* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.

Bryant, Joseph. 2000. "Review Essay: Cost-Benefit Accounting and the Piety Business: Is *Homo Religiosus,* at bottom, a *Homo Economicus*?" *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 12: 520-548.

Burkimsher, Marion. 2009. "Religiosity, Revival, and Secularisation: Cross-Country Comparisons." Paper presented at Universitair Centrum Sint Ignatius Antwerpen, Antwerp, Belgium, September 6.

Burton-Christie, Douglas. 1995. "Nature, Spirit and Imagination: The Quest for Sacred Place." Unpublished lecture delivered at The College of San Rafael, California.

Campbell, David and Steven Yonish. 2003. "Religion and Volunteering in America." Pp.87-106 in *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good,* edited by Corwin Smidt. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Casanova, Jose. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

------. 2007. "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective." Pp.101-120 in *Religion, Globalization, and Culture,* edited by Peter Beyer and Lori Beaman. Koninklijke Brill NV, Leden, The Netherlands: Brill.

------. 2008. “Public Religions Revisited.” Pp.101-119 in *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, edited by Hent de Vries. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.

Cavey, Bruxy. 2005. *The End of Religion: An Introduction to the Subversive Spirituality of Jesus.* Oakville, ON: Agora Imprints.

Chandler, Siobhan. 2008. “The Social Ethic of Religiously Unaffiliated Spirituality.” *Religion Compass* 2: 1-17.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2004. “Grounded Theory” Pp.496-521 in *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*, edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Chaves, Mark. 1994. “Secularization as Declining Religious Authority.” *Social Forces* 72: 749-74.

------. 1995. “One the Rational Choice Approach to Religion.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34 (1): 98-104.

Clark, Warren, and Grant Schellenberg. 2006. “Who’s Religious?” *Canadian Social Trends* Summer: 2-9.

Clarke, Brian and Stuart Macdonald. 2007. “Simply ‘Christian’: Canada’s Newest Major Religious Denomination.” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 23 (2): 109-125.

Cnaan, Ram, Stephanie Boddie and Gaynor Yancey. 2003. “Bowling Alone But Serving Together: The Congregational Norm of Community Involvement.” Pp.19-31 in *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good,* edited by Corwin Smidt. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Coleman, John. 2003. “Religious Social Capital: Its Nature, Social Location, and Limits.” Pp.33-47 in *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good,* edited by Corwin Smidt. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Cowan, Douglas E. 2000. “‘What’s In It For Us?’: Notes on Membership and Commitment.” *Touchstone* 18 (2): 7-21.

Cox, Harvey. 1966. *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective.* New York, NY: The Macmillan Company.

Crockett, Alasdair and David Voas. 2006. “Generations of Decline: Religious Change in 20th Century Britain.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45 (4): 567-584.

Curtis, James, Douglas Baer and Edward Grabb. 2001. “Nations of Joiners: Explaining Voluntary Association Membership in Democratic Societies.” *American Sociological Review* 66: 783-805.

Curtis, James, Edward Grabb and Douglas Baer. 1992. "Voluntary Association Membership in Fifteen Countries: A Comparative Analysis." *American Sociological Review* 57: 139-152.

Davie, Grace. 1994. *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Dawkins, Richard. 2006. *The God Delusion.* New York, NY: Bantam Press.

Dawson, Lorne. 2006. *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements. 2nd Edition.* Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Demerath III, N.J. 1995. "Rational Paradigms, A-Rational Religion, and the Debate over Secularization." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34 (1): 105-112.

Denzin, N.K. 1990. "The Sociological Imagination Revisited." *The Sociological Quarterly* 31: 1-22.

de Vries, Hent. 2008. *Religion: Beyond a Concept.* New York, NY: Fordham University Press.

Dillistone, F.W. 1973. *Traditional Symbols and the Contemporary World.* London, UK: Epworth Press.

Dillon, Michele and Paul Wink. 2007. *In the Course of a Lifetime: Tracing Religious Belief, Practice, and Change.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dobbelaere, Karel. 1981. "Secularization: A Multi-Dimensional Concept". *Current Sociology* 29 (2): 1-213.

------. 2002. *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels.* Brussels, Belgium: Peter Lang.

Dohan, Daniel and Martin Sanchez-Jankowski. 1998. "Using Computers to Analyze Ethnographic Field Data: Theoretical and Practical Considerations." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 477-498.

Duneier, Mitchell. 2006. "Ethnography, the Ecological Fallacy, and the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave." *American Sociological Review* 71: 679–688.

Durkheim, Emile. 1915. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology*. London, UK: Allen & Unwin.

------. 1984 [1893]. *The Division of Labor in Society*. With an introduction by Lewis A. Coser. Translated by W. D. Halls. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Eagle, David. 2010. "Questions about a Religious 'Renaissance' in Canada." (Unpublished Manuscript).

Eck, Diana. 2001. *A New Religious America: How a 'Christian Country' Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation.* New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco.

Egerton, George. 2000. "Trudeau, God, and the Canadian Constitution: Religion, Human Rights, and Government Authority in the Making of the 1982 Constitution." Pp.90-112 in *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity: Canada Between Europe and America,* edited by David Lyon and Marguerite Van Die. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion.* Orland, FL: Harcourt.

Ellison, Christopher. 1995. "Rational Choice Explanations of Individual Religious Behavior: Notes on the Problem of Social Embeddedness." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34 (1): 89-97.

Emberley, Peter. 2002. *Divine Hunger: Canadians on Spiritual Walkabout.* Toronto, ON: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Espeland, Wendy. 2005. "Thinking about Standards." Paper given at National Science Foundation, Sociology Program in Washington, D.C.

Fine, Gary. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22 (3): 267-294.

Finke, Roger. 1997. "The Consequences of Religious Competition: Supply-Side Explanations for Religious Change." Pp.46-65 in *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, edited by Lawrence Young. New York, NY: Routledge.

Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 2005. *The Churching of America 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy.* Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Frost, Michael. 2006. *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

Fuller, Robert. 2001. *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Gibbons, Dave. 2009. *The Monkey and the Fish: Liquid Leadership for a Third-Culture Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Gibbs, Eddie and Ryan Bolger. 2005. *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Glock, Charles and Phillip Hammond. 1973. *Beyond the Classics?* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Glock, Charles and Rodney Stark. 1965. *Religion and Society in Tension*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.

Goodwin, Jeff and Ruth Horowitz. 2002. "Introduction: The Methodological Strengths and Dilemmas of Qualitative Sociology." *Qualitative Sociology* 25 (1): 33-47.

Gorski, Philip. 2000. "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ca 1300 to 1700." *American Sociological Review* 65: 138-167.

Graham, Ron. 1990. *God's Dominion: A Sceptic's Quest.* Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart.

Greil, Arthur and David Bromley, eds. 2003. *Defining Religion: Investigating the Boundaries between the Sacred and Secular*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science Ltd.

Grenville, Andrew. 2000. "'For by Him All Things Were Created . . . Visible and Invisible': Sketching the Contours of Public and Private Religion in North America." Pp. 211-227 in *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity: Canada Between Europe and America,* edited by David Lyon and Marguerite Van Die. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Hadden, Jeffrey. 1987. "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory." *Social Forces* 65: 587-611.

Hadden, Jeffrey and Anson Shupe, eds. 1989. *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered.* New York, NY: Paragon House.

Hall, Michael, David Lasby, Steven Ayer and William David Gibbons. 2009. "Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating." Retrieved June 28, 2009 (http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/files/giving/en/csgvp_highlights_2007.pdf).

Hammond, Phillip, ed. 1985. *The Sacred in a Secular Age.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Harris, Fredrick. 2003. "Ties that Bind and Flourish: Religion as Social Capital in African-American Politics and Society." Pp.121-137 in *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good,* edited by Corwin Smidt. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Harris, Misty. April 9, 2009. "Fewer Men Believe in God: Poll." *The Vancouver Sun*. Retrieved April 9, 2009 (http://www.vancouversun.com/Life/Canadians+losing+faith+religion+Poll/1482206/story.html).

Harris, Sam. 2006. *Letters to a Christian Nation.* New York, NY: Knopf.

Harrison, Michael. 1974. "Sources of Recruitment to Catholic Pentecostalism." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13 (1): 49-64.

Hayes, Mike. 2007. *Googling God: The Religious Landscape of People in their 20s and 30s.* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

Heath, Anthony. 1976. *Rational Choice and Social Exchange: A Critique of Exchange Theory.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hechter, Michael. 1997. "Religion and Rational Choice Theory." Pp.147-159 in *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, edited by Lawrence Young. New York, NY: Routledge.

Heelas, Paul, Linda Woodhead, Benjamin Seel, Bronislaw Szerszynski and Karin Tusting. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Hervieu-Leger, Daniele. 2000. *Religion as a Chain of Memory.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy. 2004. "Unleashing Frankenstein's Monster? The Use of Computers in Qualitative Research." Pp.535-545 in *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*, edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Leavy, eds. 2004. *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hewitt, Warren Edward. 1993. *The Sociology of Religion: A Canadian Focus.* Toronto, ON: Butterworths.

Hirsch, Alan. 2006. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Hitchens, Christopher. 2007. *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.* New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.

Hodgkinson, V.A. and M.S. Weitzman. 1996. *Giving and Volunteering in the United States: Findings from a National Survey.* Washington, DC: Independent Sector.

Hollinger, Franz. 2004. "Does the Counter-Cultural Character of New Age Persist? Investigating Social and Political Attitudes of New Age Followers." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19 (3): 289-304.

Homans, George. 1961. *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms.* London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Hood Jr., Ralph. 2003. "The Relationship between Religion and Spirituality." Pp.241-64 in *Defining Religion: Investigating the Boundaries between the Sacred and Secular,* edited by Arthur Greil and David Bromley. Kidlington, Oxford: Elsevier Science.

Houtman, Dick and Stef Aupers. 2007. "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981-2000." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46 (3): 305-320.

Iannaccone, Laurence. 1988. "A Formal Model of Church and Sect." *American Journal of Sociology* 94: S241-S268.

------. 1990. "Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29 (3): 297-314.

------. 1992. "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives." *Journal of Political Economy* 100 (2): 271-291.

------. 1994. "Why Strict Churches are Strong." *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (5): 1180-1211.

------. 1995a. "Voodoo Economics? Reviewing the Rational Choice Approach to Religion." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34 (1): 76-89.

------. 1995b. "Second Thoughts: A Response to Chaves, Demerath, and Ellison." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34 (1): 113-120.

------. 1997a. "Skewness Explained: A Rational Choice Model of Religious Giving." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (2): 141-157.

------. 1997b. "Introduction to the Economics of Religion." *Journal of Economic Literature* 36: 1465-1496.

Iannaccone, Laurence, Daniel Olson and Rodney Stark. 1995. "Religious Resources and Church Growth." *Social Forces* 74 (2): 705-731.

Iannaccone, Laurence and Sean Everton. 2004. "Never on Sunny Days: Lessons from Weekly Attendance Counts." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43 (2): 191-207.

Jamieson, Alan. 2002. *A Churchless Faith: Faith Journeys Beyond the Churches.* London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

James, William. 2002 [1902]. *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.

Jelen, Ted, ed. 2002. *Sacred Markets, Sacred Canopies: Essays on Religious Markets and Religious Pluralism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Jenkins, Philip. 2002. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity.* New York, NY: Oxford.

Jick, Todd. 1979. "Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24 (4): 602-611.

Johnson, John. 2002. "In-Depth Interviewing." Pp.103-120 in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method,* edited by J. F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jones, Frank. 1999. "Are Children Going to Religious Services?" *Canadian Social Trends,* Autumn, pp.13-16.

Jones, Tony. 2008. *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kaplan, Rachel and Stephen Kaplan. 1989. *The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Kelley, Dean. 1972. *Why Conservative Churches are Growing.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Kilde, Jeanne Halgren. 2008. *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

King-Hele, Sarah. 2009. "Generational Changes in Canadian Religiosity." Conference Presentation at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Denver, CO.

Kinnaman, David and Gabe Lyons. 2007. *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity . . . And why it Matters.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Kirby, Sandra, Lorraine Greaves, and Colleen Reid. 2006. *Experience Research Social Change: Methods Beyond the Mainstream. 2nd Edition.* Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.

Lamont, Michele. 2005. "Criteria for Evaluation of Qualitative Research." Paper given at National Science Foundation, Sociology Program in Washington, D.C.

Lechner, Frank. 1991. "The Case Against Secularization: A Rebuttal." *Social Forces* 69: 1103-19.

Levan, Christopher. 1995. *God Hates Religion.* Etobicoke, ON: United Church Publishing House.

Lofland, John. 1977. *Doomsday Cult: A Study of Conversion, Proselytization, and Maintenance of Faith.* New York, NY: Irvington.

Luckmann, Thomas. 1967. *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society.* New York, NY: Macmillan.

Lyon, David. 1985. *The Sleepless Shadow: On the Myths and Realities of Secularization.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.

------. 2000. *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Lyon, David and Marguerite Van Die, eds. 2000. *Rethinking Church, State and Modernity: Canada Between Europe and America.* Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Marler, Penny L. and C. Kirk Hadaway. 2002. "Being Religious or Being Spiritual in America: A Zero-Sum Proposition?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2): 289-300.

Martin, David. 1969. *The Religious and the Secular: Studies in Secularization*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

------. 1978. *A General Theory of Secularization.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

------. 1991. "The Secularization Issue: Prospect and Retrospect." *British Journal of Sociology* 42 (3): 465-474.

------. 2005. *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Marwell, Gerald. 1996. "We Still Don't Know if Strict Churches are Strong, Much Less Why: Comment on Iannaccone." *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (4): 1097-1108.

Marx, Karl. 1970. *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right*.' Edited with an introduction by Joseph O'Malley. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

McAlpine, William. 2006. "The Role of the Built Environment in Fulfilling the Mission of the Church: Towards a Missional Theology of Sacred Space." Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Divinity and Religious Studies at King's College, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

McDaniel, Susan and Lorne Tepperman. 2007. *Close Relations: An Introduction to the Sociology of Families. 3rd Edition.* Toronto, ON: Pearson Education Canada.

McLaren, Brian. 2001. *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

------. 2003. *The Story We Find Ourselves In: Further Adventures of a New Kind of Christian.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

------. 2004. *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian.* El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties.

------. 2006. *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

------. 2007. *Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

McRoberts, Omar. 2003. *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood.* Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Miles, Matthew and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis. 2nd Edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, Donald. 1997. *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Milton, Ralph. 1991. *This United Church of Ours. 2nd Edition.* Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books.

Mitchell, Leonel. 1977. *The Meaning of Ritual.* New York, NY: Paulist Press.

Mol, Hans. 1976. *Identity and the Sacred: A Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Neitz, Mary Jo and Peter R. Mueser. 1997. "Economic Man and the Sociology of Religion: A Critique of the Rational Choice Approach." Pp.105-118 in *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, edited by Lawrence Young. New York, NY: Routledge.

Nemeth, Roger J. and Donald Al Luidens. 2003. "The Religious Basis of Charitable Giving in America: A Social Capital Perspective." Pp.107-120 in *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good,* edited by Corwin Smidt. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Neuhaus, John. 2009. "Secularizations." *First Things*, February (190): 23-28.

Niebuhr, Richard. 1951. *Christ and Culture*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.

Nock, David. 1993. "The Organization of Religious Life in Canada." Pp.41-63 in *The Sociology of Religion: A Canadian Focus*, edited by Warren Edward Hewitt. Toronto, ON: Butterworths.

Norris, Pippa and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Olson, Daniel. 1989. "Church Friendships: Boon or Barrier to Church Growth?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28: 432-437.

------. 1993. "Fellowship Ties and the Transmission of Religious Identity." Pp. 32-53 in *Beyond Establishment: Protestant Identity in a Post-Protestant Age,* edited by Jackson Carroll and Wade Clark Roof. Louisville, KY: Westminster Press.

Olson, Daniel and Kirk Hadaway. 1999. "Religious Pluralism and Affiliation Among Canadian Counties and Cities." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38 (4): 490-508.

Olson, Daniel and Paul Perl. 2005. "Free and Cheap Riding in Strict, Conservative Churches." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44 (2): 123-142.

Otto, Rudolf. 1926. *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine.* Translated by John W. Harvey. London, UK: Oxford University Press.

O'Toole, Roger, Douglas F. Campbell, John A. Hannigan, Peter Beyer and John H. Simpson. 1993. "The United Church in Crisis." Pp.273-287 in *The Sociology of Religion: A Canadian Focus,* edited by Warren Edward Hewitt. Toronto, ON: Butterworths.

Pagitt, Doug. 2008. *A Christianity Worth Believing: Hope Filled, Open Armed, Alive and Well Faith for the Left Out, and Let Down in Us All.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Palm, Irving and Jan Trost. 2000. "Family and Religion in Sweden." Pp. 107-120 in *Family, Religion, and Social Change in Diverse Societies,* edited by Sharon Houseknecht and Jerry Pankurst. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Pew Research Center. 2010. "Religion among the Millennials: Less Religiously Active than Older Americans, but Fairly Traditional in Other Ways." Retrieved February 17, 2010 (http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/millennials/millennials-report.pdf).

Piché, Eric. 1999. "Religion and Social Capital in Canada." MA Thesis, Department of Sociology at Queen's University, Kingston, ON.

Prus, Robert. 1996. *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Putnam, Robert and David Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Ragin, Charles. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies.* Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Rawlyk, George A. 1996. *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour? In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990's.* Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Reed, Myer Stratton, Jr. 1975. *Differentiation and Developing in a Scientific Specialty: The Sociology of Religion in the United States from 1895 to 1970*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University.

Reed, Paul, and Kevin Selbee. 2001. "The Civic Core in Canada: Disproportionality in Charitable Giving, Volunteering, and Civic Participation." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30 (4): 761-780.

Reimer, Sam. 2003. *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States*. Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press.

------. 2008. "State of Research in Sociology of Religion in Canada." Paper presented at Religion in Canada Workshop, sponsored by Trinity Western University's Religion in Canada Institute, February 9.

Richer, S. 1988. "Fieldwork and the Commodification of Culture: Why the Natives are Restless." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 25 (3): 406-420.

Roof, Wade Clark. 1993. *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation.* San Francisco, CA: Harper.

------. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Roof, Wade Clark, and William McKinney. 1987. *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Saldaña, Johnny. 2009. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sheldrake, Philip. 2001. *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sherkat, Darren. 1997. "Embedding Religious Choices: Preferences and Social Constraints into Rational Choice Theories of Religious Behavior." Pp.66-86 in *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, edited by Lawrence Young. New York, NY: Routledge.

Shils, Edward. 1981. *Tradition.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Smidt, Corwin, ed. 2003. *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Smidt, Corwin, John Green, James Guth and Lyman Kellstedt. 2003. "Religious Involvement, Social Capital, and Political Engagement: A Comparison of the United States and Canada." Pp.153-169 in *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good,* edited by Corwin Smidt. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Smilde, David and Matthew May. 2010. "The Emerging Strong Program in the Sociology of Religion." Working Paper for the Social Science Research Council. Retrieved February 10, 2010 (http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Emerging-Strong-Program-TIF.pdf).

Smith, Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton. 2005. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Christian, with Michael Emerson, Sally Gallagher, Paul Kennedy, and David Sikkink. 1998. *American Evangelism: Embattled and Thriving*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, Christian with Patricia Snell. 2009. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Jonathan. 1987. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Stanczak, Gregory. 2006. *Engaged Spirituality: Social Change and American Religion.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Stark, Rodney. 1997. "Bringing Theory Back In." Pp.3-25 in *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, edited by Lawrence Young. New York, NY: Routledge.

------. 1999. "Secularization, R.I.P." *Sociology of Religion* 60: 249-273.

Stark, Rodney and William Sims Bainbridge. 1985. *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

------. 1996 [1987]. *A Theory of Religion*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Stark, Rodney and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Stark, Rodney, and Laurence Iannaccone. 1994. "A Supply-Side Reinterpretation of the 'Secularization' of Europe." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33 (3): 230-252.

Statistics Canada. 2001. "2001 Census: Analysis Series. Religions in Canada." Retrieved March 3, 2010 (http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/rel/pdf/96F0030XIE2001015.pdf).

Strauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin. 1998. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. *2nd Edition*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Swatos Jr., William and Kevin Christiano. 1999. "Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept." *Sociology of Religion* 60 (3): 209-228.

Thiessen, Joel. 2006. "The Nature and Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Canada: Examining Reginald Bibby's Renaissance Thesis." MA Thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Waterloo, Canada.

Thiessen, Joel. 2010. "Churches are not Necessarily the Problem: Lessons Learned from Christmas and Easter Affiliates." *Church and Faith Trends* 3 (3): 1-24.

Thiessen, Joel, and Lorne Dawson. 2008. "Is There a 'Renaissance' of Religion in Canada? A Critical Look at Bibby and Beyond." *Studies in Religion* 37 (3-4): 389-415.

Thomas, William I. 1966. *On Social Organization and Social Personality.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tönnies, Ferdinand. 1957. *Community and Society: Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft.* Translated and edited by Charles Loomis. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Troeltsch, Ernst. 1960. *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, Volumes 1 and 2.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Tschannen, Oliver. 1991. "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization." *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 30: 395-415.

Turner, Harold. 1979. *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship.* New York, NY: Mouton Publishers.

Twiggger-Ross, Clare and David Uzzell. 1996. "Place and Identity Processes." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 16: 205-220.

Verba, S., K. Schlozman., and H.E. Brady. 1995. *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Voas, David. 2009. "The Rise and Fall of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe." *European Sociological Review* 25 (2): 155-168.

------. 2010. "Explaining Change over Time in Religious Involvement." Pp.25-32 in *Religion and Youth*, edited by Sylvia Collins-Mayo and Pink Dandelion. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Voas, David and Alasdair Crockett. 2005. "Religion in Britain: Neither Believing Nor Belonging." *Sociology* 39 (1): 11-28.

Walker, Melissa. 2003. "New to the Pews." *The United Church Observer*, September, pp.20-24.

Warner, Stephen. 1993. "Work in Progress towards a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 98: 1044-1093.

Warren, Rick. 1995. *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

------. 2002. *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here For?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Weber, Max. 1963 [1922]. *Sociology of Religion.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

------. 2002 [1920]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spiritual of Capitalism*. With an introduction by Stephen Kalberg. Translated by Stephen Kalberg. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.

Wilson, Bryan. 1982. *Religion in Sociological Perspective.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

------. 1985. "Secularization: The Inherited Model." Pp. 9-20 in *The Sacred in a Secular Age,* edited by Phillip Hammond. Berkeley, CA: University Of California Press.

------. 2001. "Salvation, Secularization, and De-Moralization." Pp.39-51 in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion,* edited by Richard Fenn. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Wilson, John and T. Janoski. 1995. "The Contribution of Religion to Volunteer Work." *Sociology of Religion* 56: 137-152.

Wuthnow, Robert. 1994. *Producing the Sacred: An Essay in Public Religion.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

------. 1998. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s.* Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

------. 2001. "Spirituality and Spiritual Practice." Pp.306-20 in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion,* edited by Richard Fenn. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

------. 2004. *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

------. 2005. *American and the Challenges of Religious Diversity.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

------. 2007. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Yamane, David. 1997. "Secularization on Trial: In Defense of a Neosecularization Paradigm." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36: 109-122.

Yin, Robert. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Young, Lawrence, ed. 1997. *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Zdero, Rad, ed. 2007. *Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader.* Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Zinnbauer, Brian, Kenneth Pargament, and Allie Scott. 1999. "The Emerging Meanings of Religiousness and Spirituality: Problems and Prospects." *Journal of Personality* 67 (6): 879-919.

Zuckerman, Phil. 2008. *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment.* New York, NY: New York University Press.

Zuzanek, Jiri, Roger Mannell and Margo Hilbrecht. 2008. "Leisure, Spirituality and Emotional Well-Being in the Lives of Teenagers." Conference Presentation at the Canadian Congress on Leisure Research in Montreal, QC.

Appendix A

Active and Marginal Affiliate Demographics

	Actives	Marginals	Total
Gender			
Male	10	13	23
Female	11	8	19
Age			
18-34	9	5	14
35-54	6	9	15
55+	6	7	13
Marital Status			
Single	5	5	10
Engaged	0	1	1
1st Marriage	11	8	19
2nd Marriage	2	2	4
Divorced	2	2	4
Widowed	1	3	4
Completed Education[1]			
Less than high school	1	3	4
High School	2	2	4
Diploma or Certificate	2	3	5
Some college or university	2	6	8
BA or B.Ed.	11	7	18
MA	2	2	4
Ph.D.	2	0	2
Religious Identification			
Roman Catholic	7	6	13
Mainline Protestant	6	5	11
Evangelical Protestant	6	4	10
No Denominational Allegiance	2	6	8

[1] The total number for completed education is higher than the total sample size of 42 because three individuals took some college or university courses despite not graduating from high school.

Appendix B

Rewards and Costs for Active and Marginal Affiliates

Rewards for Active Affiliates

Rewards	Frequency
Like-minded community and accountability	14
Meaning, purpose, direction, and morals	13
Learn from a trained specialist	10
Rest from the rapid pace and "noise" of life	8
Honour and worship God with music	7
Tradition	5
Obedience to commandment to attend church	2
Beneficial for children	2
Restless for God	2
To know that they are loved by God	2
Emphasis on social justice	1
Substitute for daily religious practices	1
Youth program	1
Feels like "home" – it is safe	1
Feel good about one's self	1
To become a better person	1
Commitment to other church members	1
To connect with self	1

Costs for Active Affiliates

Costs	Frequency
Social isolation from friends and society	8
Give up control of one's life unto God	7
No time for secular activities	5
No perceived costs	5
Tithing – but do not interpret this as a cost	4
Time – but do not interpret this as a cost	3
Tithing	2
Lifestyle Changes	1

Rewards for Marginal Affiliates

Rewards	Frequency
Sacred space (quality of experience is greater)	18
Family pressure or time to spend with family	11
Tradition	9
Reinforces religious beliefs	8
Commanded to attend and observe rituals	8
Enjoy the rituals (like any social event)	7
Crutch in a time of need	5
Community around a common set of beliefs	5
Fear of going to hell (Pascal's Wager)	3
To avoid the commercialism at Christmas	3
To feel good about one's self	3
Could be doing worse things	2
To learn from a trained specialist	2
To connect with other people	2
Funeral is a testament to others of a "good" life	1
To earn a favour from God	1
To return to childhood innocence	1
To learn more about the person who died	1
Reduced funeral or burial costs	1
Intellectual stimulation	1

Costs for Marginal Affiliates

Costs	Frequency
No perceived costs	16
Give up control of one's life unto God[1]	3
Something is missing in life if not involved	1
Time	1
Cannot treat people poorly or behave poorly	1

[1] Marginal affiliates believe this would be a cost if they took their faith more seriously, but that this is not actually a cost for them because they do not take their faith that seriously.

Appendix C
Reginald Bibby's Recruitment Letter

April 30, 2008

John Doe
12345 Calgary Drive SW
Calgary, AB C1C 1C1

Dear Mr. Doe:

Hello once again!

I wish to again thank you for your willingness to participate in the Project Canada Research Program by participating in one or more of our national surveys that have been carried out every five years from 1975 through 2005.

I want to assure you once again that your name is known only to me and complete confidentiality is being honoured in any reporting of survey results. Complete information on those results can be found by going to the website "reginaldbibby.com".

Recently, a University of Waterloo graduate student and friend, Joel Thiessen, who is from Alberta and is writing his doctoral dissertation while a member of the faculty at Ambrose University College in Calgary, has made contact concerning his doctoral research. He would value being able to speak with any Calgary-area people who have participated in the Project Canada surveys; I am taking the liberty of attaching an information sheet from Joel explaining what he has in mind.

Know that he does not know who you are, nor does he have any information whatsoever about you; as I keep emphasizing, I am the only person on the planet who knows that you participated in a previous Project Canada survey! But, if you are interested, please respond directly to him by e-mail, phone, or mail (he has provided the contact information). If you are not interested, there is nothing that you need to do. I myself will not know who participated in his study and who did not.

His research topic is important, and I hope that many of you will consider participating.

Thank you for giving his request some thought. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact me. Ongoing best wishes.

Cordially,

Reginald W. Bibby, O.C., Ph.D.
Board of Governors Research Chair
Department of Sociology
University of Lethbridge
Lethbridge, AB T1K 3M4
Ph 403-381-0151 Fx 403-381-0231
bibby@uleth.ca; website: reginaldbibby.com

Appendix D
Joel Thiessen's Recruitment Letter

May 7, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Waterloo in the Department of Sociology, from Calgary, and an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Ambrose University College here in Calgary.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research on active and marginal religious affiliates in religious organizations in Canada. By "active religious affiliates" I am referring to those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services nearly every week; "marginal religious affiliates" are those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services primarily at Christmas or Easter, or for events such as weddings and funerals. The research is designed to gain a better understanding of the reasons for people's different levels of involvement.

If you agree to volunteer, your participation would entail a 1-2 hour interview, and would be conducted at a time and location of your convenience, either in person or by telephone. Questions will include: Would you say that religion is primarily an individual journey, or one that ought to be shared with others? How is this belief reflected in your religious journey? What, if any, beliefs and practices shape your religious life? Are there certain beliefs and practices that are more important to you than others? You can decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish and, for that matter, terminate the interview at any time. Any information you provide would be kept completely confidential. In addition, your name would not appear in any written report resulting from this study.

If, after receiving this letter, you have any questions about this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please feel free to contact me at 403-295-8384 or by email at j2thiess@artsmail.uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Lorne Dawson at 519-888-4567 ext. 35340 or email ldawson@uwaterloo.ca. If you are interested, it would be helpful to hear from you by May 31 or shortly thereafter by contacting me either by email or telephone; I hope to complete the data collection by August 31. Please note that Dr. Bibby will not know who has volunteered and who has not, and that your decision to participate or not will not affect your ongoing relationship with Dr. Bibby.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Any comments or concerns can be directed to Dr. Susan Sykes at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005 or email ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

I thank you in advance for considering participating in the project.

Yours sincerely,

Joel Thiessen, Ph.D. Candidate

Appendix E
Interview Schedule

PART 1 – BACKGROUND

(1) Description of Project & Demographic Information

a. How old are you?
b. What is your highest level of completed education?
c. What type of occupation are you currently involved in?
d. Are you married? If so, how long have you been married?
e. Do you have any children? If so, how many, and how old are they?

(2) Tell me a bit about your upbringing:

a. Where did you grow up? Did you have any siblings? What was your parents' occupation while you were growing up?
b. Growing up, was your family affiliated with any religious group? If so, which group? If not, skip to question (f)?
c. How often did your family attend religious services?
d. Would you describe your family as religious? Explain.
e. Growing up, would you say that religion was important to your family and was it important to you personally?
f. Thinking back to when you moved out of your family's place, what effect, if any, did that have on your religious journey? Did your interest in religion increase, decrease, or stay the same? Did your level of involvement in religious organizations increase, decrease, or remain the same?

PART 2 – CURRENT RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

(2) Current religious affiliation, beliefs, practices, and level of importance attributed to each:

a. At present, are you affiliated with any religious group?
b. How often do you attend religious services?
c. Do you participate in any other activities associated with your religious group? If so, which activities, and how often are you involved?
d. How did you decide to affiliate with this group? (If they are having trouble thinking of reasons—were there certain beliefs or practices that were appealing? Did you know others already involved with this group? Preacher? Music? Programs?)
e. Could you indicate for me how important your religious affiliation is relative to other aspects of your life (e.g., family, job, or social activities)? Explain.
f. Have you ever seriously considered affiliating or getting involved with any other congregation, denomination, or religious group? Why or why not?
g. Overall, what, if any, beliefs and practices shape your religious life? Are there certain beliefs and practices that are more important to you than others?

h. In general, would you say that religion is important to you? If so, what does this statement mean for you and in what ways is religion important for you? If not, why not? Explain.

PART 3 – RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

(4) Religious Costs and Rewards:

a. People attend religious services for different reasons. Why do you think that people in general attend religious services?
b. Why do you attend religious services?
c. Do you think you gain something specific from attending religious services?
d. Do you think you gain anything in particular from your religious beliefs and practices outside of attendance at religious services? (If nothing, skip to section 4).
e. Keeping in mind some of these benefits, what are some of the sacrifices that you have made along the way? In other words, what are the "costs" associated with obtaining these benefits?
f. Do you believe in the afterlife? If so, do you desire life after death? What do you think is required to obtain life after death?
g. How confident are you in the religious beliefs and practices that you adopt?

(5) Dependable and Responsive

a. Do you have a sense that you can depend on God and/or another spiritual entity? If so, how? Can you provide an example? If not, why?
b. Do you believe that God and/or another spiritual entity is concerned about, and acts on behalf of humans? Explain.
c. To what extent do you feel that you belong to or identify with a particular congregation? If they do not feel connected to a congregation, ask: do you remember a time when you did feel like you belonged to or identified with a particular congregation? If the answer is still 'no,' skip to section 6.
d. With this congregation in mind, do you have a sense that you can depend on others in the group (either among leadership or lay people), that others in the group could be relied upon in times of need? If so, how? Can you provide an example? If not, why?
e. Do you believe that your congregation is concerned about, and acts in the interests of its members? Explain.
f. How confident are you in the religious beliefs and practices that you adopt?

(6) Role of others in shaping one's religious life:

a. Would you say that religion is primarily an individual journey, or one that ought to be shared with others? If shared with others, what sort of activities do you have in mind? How are these beliefs reflected in your religious journey?
b. Of your closest friends, how many of them are from your local congregation? How many of them share the same religion as you?

c. How influential do you think religious groups should be in shaping people's religious beliefs and practices? How influential is your religious group in shaping your religious beliefs and practices?

PART 4 – SECULARIZATION AND GREATER INVOLVEMENT

(7) Secularization and Greater Involvement:

a. There is some research that suggests that attendance at religious services is on the decline. Presuming for a moment that this is true, what do you think explains this?

   Marginal Affiliates: How would you explain your own level of participation?

b. Some Canadians have suggested that they draw selective beliefs and practices from their religious tradition, even if they do not attend frequently. They indicate that they do not plan on changing religious traditions, but they will turn to religious groups for important religious holidays and rites of passages. Why do you think that this is the case? How well does this describe yourself or others close to you?
c. It is well known that attendance at religious services is higher on religious holidays and for rites of passages. What do you think explains this?

   Marginal Affiliates: How well does this explain your attendance patterns? What draws you to religious services on such occasions? What meaning and significance do you find in these activities?

d. In a related manner, some of those that we have just discussed indicate a desire for greater involvement in their religious group. Why do you think that this is the case? How, if at all, does this desire for greater involvement apply to you?
e. If participants are interested in greater involvement, what factors do you think would make greater participation more worthwhile? If participants are not interested in greater involvement, why not (and then skip to question (g))?
f. If religious groups received the responses that you have just provided and they adjusted their supply of religion to provide some of the things that you mention, how likely would you be to increase your level of participation?
g. There are other theories that suggest that many religious groups already offer such things as good preaching, music, and programs, and have relaxed their doctrinal positions to accommodate to the wider culture, yet people are still not pursuing greater involvement in their religious group. Why do you think that this is the case?
h. For yourself (if they desire greater involvement), are there any efforts that you have made to find a suitable congregation to participate in, one that meets some of your criteria? If so, describe one of those instances.

PART 5 – SOCIAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

(8) Religious Involvement in the context of other Social Involvements:

a. Overall, do you think that religion is a positive or a negative social force in society? Explain.
b. Do you believe that people need religion in order to be moral or ethical beings?
c. Are there other organizations, social activities, or volunteer initiatives that you dedicate your time to? If so, what does this commitment entail? If they have trouble thinking of any, suggest things like sports activities, book clubs, political activities, social protests or movements, and regular meetings with friends and family.
d. How important are these involvements for you? Is there any correlation between these involvements and your religious involvements? Put another way, does your religious involvement influence the type or amount of time given to other activities, or would you be more involved in church activities if you were not involved in any of the above activities?

Appendix F
Consent Form

Date

Dear (Participant's Name):

This information consent letter, a copy of which has been given to you, outlines the details of this project and what your participation entails. This study is part of my doctoral dissertation in the Department of Sociology at the University of Waterloo, under the supervision of Professor Lorne Dawson.

This research centers on active and marginal religious affiliates in religious organizations in Canada. By "active religious affiliates" I am referring to those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services nearly every week; "marginal religious affiliates" are those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services primarily at Christmas or Easter, or for events such as weddings and funerals. The research is designed to gain a better understanding of the reasons for people's different levels of involvement.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. The interview will be approximately 1-2 hours in length. You can decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish and, for that matter, terminate the interview at any time. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Any information you provide is kept completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any written report from this study and your information will be de-identified prior to storage, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. With your permission also, data collected during this study will be retained indefinitely in a locked filing cabinet in my locked office in the Behavioral Science Department at Ambrose University College, with the possibility that it may be used in a future larger follow up study. Only my supervisor at the University of Waterloo and me will have access to the data.

If you have any questions about this study, or would like to discuss the study before reaching a decision to participate, please feel free to contact me at 403-410-2000 ext. 2979 or by email at jathiessen@ambrose.edu. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Lorne Dawson at 519-888-4567 ext. 35340 or email ldawson@uwaterloo.ca.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Any comments or concerns about your participation in this study can be directed to Dr. Susan Sykes at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005 or email ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Please indicate below your willingness to participate in this study. Thank you in advance for your co-operation in this research.

Yours sincerely,

Joel Thiessen, Ph.D. (ABD)

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Joel Thiessen of the Department of Sociology at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Lorne Dawson. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the dissertation and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐YES ☐NO

I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

☐YES ☐NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

☐YES ☐NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G
Participant Thank-You Letter

Date

Dear (Participant's Name):

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, this research centers on active and marginal religious affiliates in religious organizations in Canada. By "active religious affiliates" I am referring to those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services nearly every week; "marginal religious affiliates" are those who identify with a religious group and attend religious services primarily at Christmas or Easter, or for events such as weddings and funerals. The research is designed to gain a better understanding of the reasons for people's different levels of involvement.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the academic and public community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me either by telephone (403-410-2000 ext.2979) or email (jathiessen@ambrose.edu). You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Lorne Dawson at 519-888-4567 ext. 35340 or email ldawson@uwaterloo.ca. If you would like a summary of the results, please let me know whether you wish to receive a copy of the study findings by providing me with your email address. When the study is completed, I will send it to you.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, ext. 36005 or email ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Joel Thiessen, Ph.D. (ABD)

Appendix H
Participant Results Letter

Date

Dear (Participant's Name):

Enclosed is a copy of my dissertation "Active and Marginal Religious Affiliates in Canada: Describing and Explaining the Gap."

I hope you enjoy the dissertation, and in particular I hope you will find that I have been faithful to the information you gave me. If you feel that I have misrepresented you in any way, or if my presentation of events with which you were connected is not as you remember them, I invite you to send me your comments and I shall take them into consideration moving forward. And of course, you may, as always, contact Dr. Susan Sykes of our Office of Research Ethics, at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005, if my dissertation raises any concerns. This project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Some sociological writing, as you know, is an interpretive act, but as professionals we endeavour to tie our interpretations rigorously to the factual record.

I look forward to receiving any desired feedback within the next two weeks. If you do not have time to email them to me (jathiessen@ambrose.edu) feel free to give me a call at 403-410-2000 ext.2979.

Yours sincerely,

Joel Thiessen, Ph.D. (ABD)