

# The Future of Canadian Evangelicalism

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# Modern Canadian Social History

1900-1914: growth

1914-1920: Great War

1920s: boom

1930s: bust

1940s: war & recovery

1950s: “normalcy”

1960s: acting out

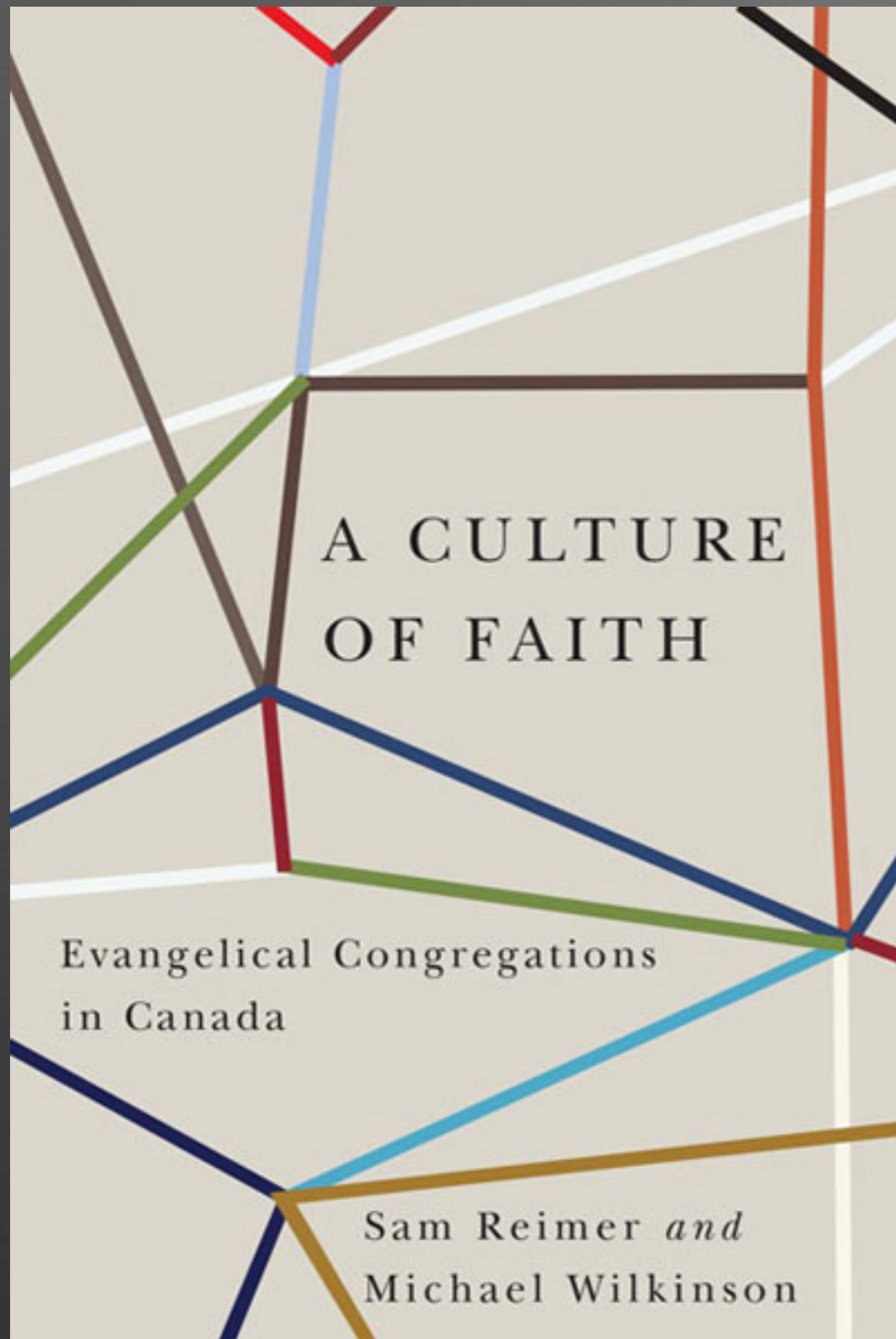
Since then: more & more...

# 2 Centuries of Canadian Religious History

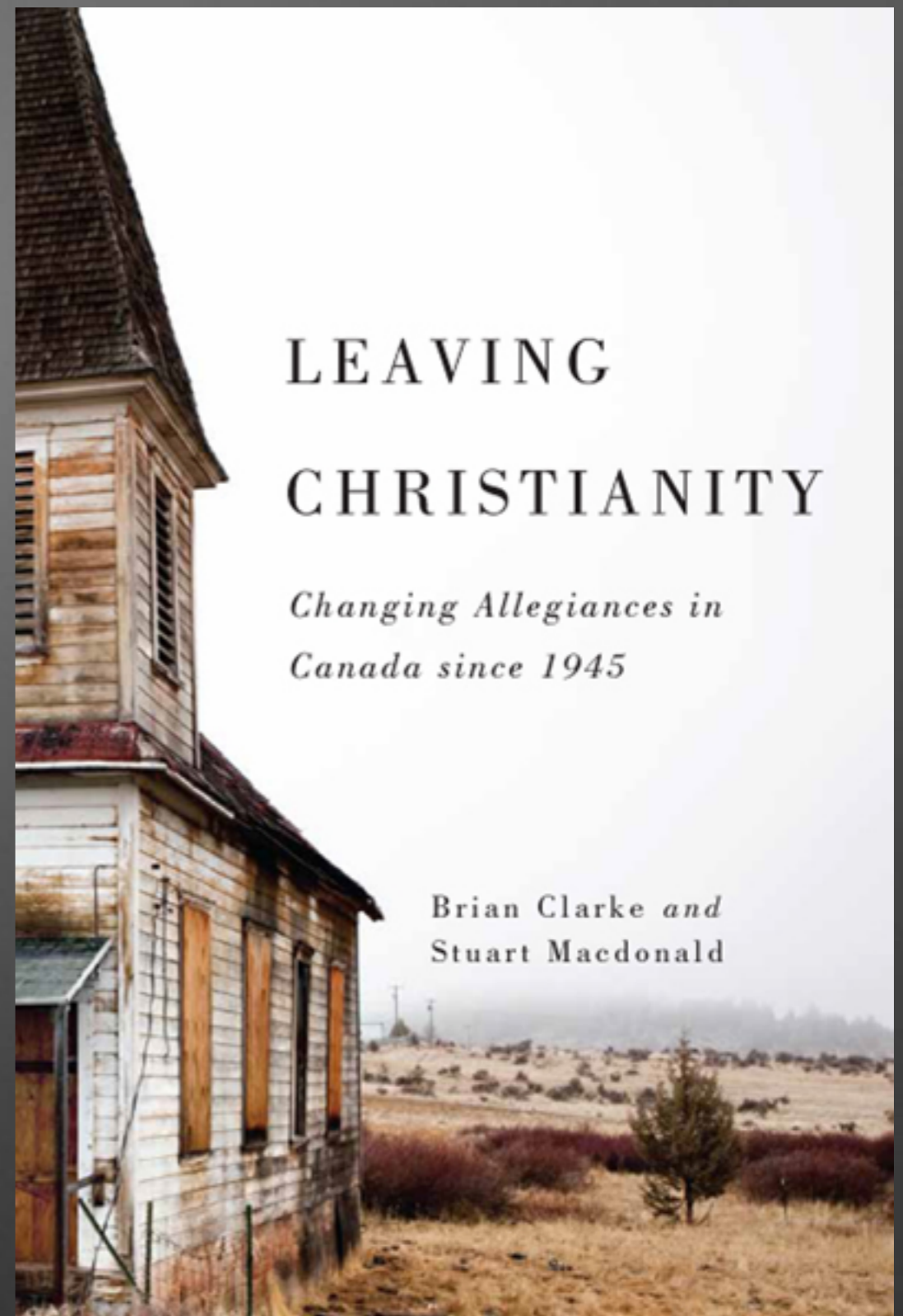
Before the 1840s: colonies were largely unchurched

1850s-1950s: Canada's Christian century

Since the 1960s: Christian hegemony is being replaced by...what?



2015



2017

# Positive Developments

- Equality
- Justice
- Compassion
- Diversity
- Freedom



# Negative Developments

- Equality, Justice, Compassion, Diversity & Freedom...
- ...but only in the particular forms “we” *affirm*.
- “We” cannot affirm difference, let alone dissent
- This culture of *affirmation* is a new form of *hegemony*, much narrower & much worse than *tolerance*.

- **A new orthodoxy, a new *religion*:**  
mandatory beliefs, values, and practices.
  - *Not* mere “procedural liberalism,” nor is it a “principled pluralism”
  - It is a “creed, code, and community” (= *religion*)
- **And it floats on consumer capitalism & statism...**
  - ...which resist (other) religions as resistant
- **...while Canadians increasingly abandon Christianity**
  - ...or grow up not knowing anything about it.

**If this Pressure  
Increases...**



The Evangelical  
Fellowship of Canada





So...

**Let's look at all this**  
***in reverse...***

# **If Canada *Were* Still Strongly Christian...**

**What would we be doing?**

# If Canada Were Still Strongly Christian...

Attend church...maybe *once a week*

- maintain social relationships, get reinforcement of beliefs & values, and enjoy worship
- no strong social pressures to conform to non-Christian patterns

# If Canada Were Still Strongly Christian...

Read the Bible and pray...  
*sometimes*

- mostly to deal with crises
- no concern that every day poses serious challenges & includes formative experiences for which we need guidance from God's Word

# If Canada Were Still Strongly Christian...

Tithe...but *a small amount*

- plenty of others can give
- already contributing to public welfare via taxes
- lots of volunteers, so little need for paid staff

Volunteer...but *not much*

- ditto

# If Canada Were Still Strongly Christian...

Learn...but only *the basics*, and  
in *fun, easy modes*

- no serious intellectual challenges
- no serious ethical quandaries
- what I don't know, others do
- So: attend the occasional Bible/  
book study group & read the  
occasional Web article

# If Canada Were Still Strongly Christian...

Converse with Christians...but  
not about *serious matters*

- no serious intellectual challenges
- no important ethical quandaries
- everyone sees things the same way
- everyone has plenty of spiritual and moral support

# If Canada Were Still Strongly Christian...

Desire to be ethical...but  
without any *discipline*

- everyone is basically good, so no need for regular & searching introspection
- likewise, no need for regimes of accountability

# If Canada *Were* Still Strongly Christian...

Share the gospel...but only with  
*family*

- no one holds a significantly different worldview
- everyone already knows the gospel

# If Canada Were Still Strongly Christian...

Concern for public life...but no  
*worries*

- Only Christian élites dominate public discourse
- Only Christian forces shape society
- No need for strategic preparation of Christians to enter & improve public life:  
It's already so Christian!

# If Canada Were Still Strongly Christian...

Support Christian education...but  
*just in churches*

- private or home schooling needlessly expensive
- public schools teach the same values
- Christian higher education is redundant

**But Canada  
Today Is  
*NOT* Christian**

**Our Christianity Is  
Thin**





**We Need  
THICK CHURCHES**

# THICK CHURCHES

- **Teaching:** substantial & broad & adequate (vs. the typical focus on personal piety + occasional evangelism)
- **Worship:** more than happy (or moody), but informative & transformative, corrective & encouraging

# THICK CHURCHES

- **Fellowship:** real sharing of life, incl. serious conversation + actual accountability + helping each other + fun + consolation
- **Investment:** imagination + attention + money + time on task...enough to make the necessary difference

# **THICK CHURCHES Will Displace Our Idols**

- Job
- Sports & Hobbies
- Comfort & Security
- Family
- Autonomy

**If we attended to  
our *marriages*,  
our *children*,  
or our *businesses*  
the way we attend to  
our *religion*...**

# The Challenge of Spiritual Conversation Then vs. Now

In the 1960s:

- *Everyone else was so much like us*

Now:

- *We are so much like everyone else*

**Nothing else that is  
authentically Christian  
can prosper if the local  
church isn't prospering.**

**More than anything...  
we need good  
churches.**